

Contextual Learning Development in Schools through the Integration of Batak Toba Local Wisdom from Sibandang Island

Harisan Boni Firmando¹, Ade Putra Arif Panjaitan², Robert Sibarani³, Elvri Teresia Simbolon⁴, Eben Haezarni Telaumbanua⁵, Ratna Saragih⁶

¹ Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Tarutung, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia; boni.harisan@iakntarutung.ac.id

² Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Tarutung, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia; panjaitan.ade@iakntarutung.ac.id

³ Universitas Sumatera Utara, Indonesia; rs.sibarani@usu.ac.id

⁴ Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Tarutung, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia; simbolon.elvri@iakntarutung.ac.id

⁵ Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Tarutung, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia; eben.ht@iakntarutung.ac.id

⁶ Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Tarutung, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia; saragihratna@iakntarutung.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

The integration of local wisdom in education is a crucial effort in the development of contextual learning in Indonesia, particularly in preserving and actualizing cultural values such as those of the Batak Toba community. This study aims to examine how the values of Batak Toba local wisdom can be integrated into contextual learning in schools. Using a qualitative approach through a literature review, this research involved a thematic analysis of scientific sources—including journals, academic books, and relevant research reports—published over the last two decades. The inclusion criteria focused on literature discussing local wisdom, character education, and curriculum development in the Indonesian context. The findings reveal that Batak Toba local wisdom contains rich educational values such as *dalihaan na tolu*, mutual respect, communal harmony, and spiritual beliefs that can enrich classroom instruction, foster character development, support the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, and enhance students' cultural literacy. These values, when integrated into learning, not only make education more meaningful and rooted in students' realities but also strengthen national identity in a multicultural society. The study concludes that integrating Batak Toba local wisdom into school-based learning is an urgent and strategic step to ensure that education in Indonesia remains culturally grounded, ethically formative, and responsive to the needs of future generations. This research contributes to the discourse on culturally relevant pedagogy and opens new pathways for designing educational models that harmonize local heritage with national educational goals.

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Corresponding Author:

Harisan Boni Firmando

Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Tarutung, Sumatra Utara, Indonesia; boni.harisan@iakntarutung.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

In the ever-evolving digital age, Christian student spirituality faces complex new challenges. Technology has changed the way students interact, learn, and build self-identity, including in terms of living faith. In the midst of easy access to information and digital connectivity, Christian students are required to be able to maintain deep and authentic spiritual values. Spirituality in this context is not only a matter of formal religious activity, but includes self-awareness, relationships with God, others, and the social environment. Therefore, Christian education and worship learning in higher education need to respond to these changes with a contextual and relevant approach to the dynamics of students' digital lives.

Education in Indonesia faces challenges in grounding local values into the learning process. One relevant approach is contextual learning that relates the subject matter to the students' real environment. Contextual learning emphasizes the importance of students' concrete experiences as a basis for understanding (Anggraini et al., 2019). In this context, local wisdom can be a rich and meaningful source of contextualization. Local wisdom is a collection of values, norms, and practices that develop in a certain community and are inherited from generation to generation (Taufik et al., 2023). Local wisdom not only strengthens cultural identity, but also has high pedagogical value. In the midst of globalization, education needs to be a fortress for the preservation of the nation's noble values. Therefore, the integration of local wisdom into the curriculum is very important. The Toba Batak as one of the major tribes in Indonesia has a wealth of local wisdom that deserves to be raised in the realm of education. This research focuses on how these values can be integrated into contextual learning in schools.

The local wisdom of Batak Toba includes values such as *daliha na tolu* (three family furnaces), mutual cooperation, and respect for ancestors. These values have been the guiding principles of the Batak people for centuries. The integration of this local wisdom in education has great potential to increase the relevance of learning for students in the area. Education rooted in local culture will form a strong national personality (Bertolino & Corrado, 2022). In addition, learning based on local culture can increase student participation and motivation to learn because they feel close to the material being taught. Contextual learning emphasizes the importance of the interconnectedness between knowledge and real life (Clarke & Roche, 2018). When students learn through their own cultural context, the learning process becomes more meaningful. It also strengthens cultural identity and a sense of belonging to cultural heritage. Therefore, it is important to explore the potential of local wisdom as an authentic source of learning. This article will review the literature related to the integration of Toba Batak values in contextual learning practices.

The concept of contextual learning developed by the *Center for Occupational Research and Development* by Komalasari (2011) emphasizes seven main components, namely: constructivism, questioning, discovery, learning society, modeling, reflection, and authentic judgment. These seven components allow learning to be more lively and applicative, especially when it is associated with the local cultural reality of students. Local Batak Toba wisdom can be a means to fulfill these components. For example, in the principle of *daliha na tolu*, students can be invited to discuss social structures and interpersonal relationships. This strengthens their understanding of social and ethical values. Thus, the subject matter is not only cognitive but also affective and psychomotor. Social interaction plays a key role in a child's cognitive development (Kington et al., 2013). Learning that is sourced from local social values will improve students' social competence. This article seeks to map the relevant literature in integrating local wisdom in contextual learning frameworks.

Although students live in a fast-paced technological current, the phenomenon of secularism and value disorientation is increasingly emerging among Christian students. Many of them experience

spiritual crises due to the lack of meaningful and integrated faith reflection spaces in the learning process. Academic routines, achievement pressures, and the influence of social media that dominate daily spaces have also led to a shift in life orientation from spiritual values to a more pragmatic and individualistic direction. This condition is exacerbated by the lack of integration between faith education and the wise use of digital technology. Spirituality becomes something fragmented, no longer forming the character and direction of student life as a whole.

As part of character education, the integration of local wisdom also contributes to the formation of students' moral and ethical values. Character education can not only be built through theory, but it needs to be instilled through example and real experience (Jou et al., 2021). Values such as respect, responsibility, and solidarity that live in the Toba Batak community are in harmony with the universal values of character education. By raising these values in learning, teachers can help students internalize these noble values. Teachers play the role of facilitators in connecting the cultural context with learning objectives. In the contextual learning approach, teachers are required to be able to create meaningful learning situations with relevant resources for students (Haryoto & Narimo, 2013; Ariawan, 2025). Local wisdom is one of the sources that is very relevant and easy for students to understand. When students feel emotionally and culturally connected to the subject matter, their involvement in the learning process increases. Therefore, the development of contextual learning based on local wisdom is a strategic step in strengthening character education in schools. This article explores the literature that links local wisdom with character education in the context of contextual learning.

The Independent Curriculum provides ample space for schools and teachers to develop learning that is contextual and in accordance with local needs. This is a golden opportunity to integrate local wisdom into the learning process at various levels of education. In the latest curriculum document, it is mentioned the importance of strengthening the profile of Pancasila students that reflects local values and diversity (Reddick et al., 2017). The values in the local wisdom of Batak Toba can be integrated to strengthen the dimensions of global diversity, mutual cooperation, and independence. In this context, teachers are not only teachers, but also agents of cultural change. The process of integrating local wisdom requires a deep understanding of culture and creativity in designing learning (Sugihartono, 2024). This research attempts to collect and analyze a variety of relevant literature to provide a theoretical and practical picture. Literature review is an initial approach to build a conceptual framework for cultural integration in learning. Thus, the results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of a more culturally inclusive curriculum and pedagogy. This is especially important in building education that is in accordance with the social and cultural context of students.

Previous studies have shown that the integration of local culture in learning has a positive impact on students' conceptual understanding and engagement. *Culturally responsive teaching* states that teaching based on students' culture can improve academic and social success (Leonard et al., 2018). Culture-based learning strategies are able to increase students' confidence and identity. In the context of Batak Toba, the application of the principle of mutual cooperation can be integrated in collaborative learning. Activities such as group discussions, joint projects, and locally-based case studies strengthen students' competence in solving real problems. This active engagement is in line with the principles of constructivism, where students build knowledge through hands-on experience (Jayendra, 2018). With this approach, students not only learn about abstract concepts, but also apply cultural values in real life. This article reviews a variety of literature that supports the application of culture-based learning in local contexts. It is hoped that teachers will gain practical insights in designing contextual and value-based learning. The results of this study also encourage the development of learning resources that are in accordance with the student's cultural environment.

The integration of local wisdom in learning cannot be separated from challenges, such as teachers' lack of understanding of local culture and limited learning resources. Therefore, training and strengthening the capacity of teachers in understanding and developing local culture-based materials are needed. Multicultural education emphasizes the importance of local cultural representation in the curriculum to create equity and inclusivity (Lozano-Arias et al., 2021). Teacher cultural literacy is one

of the main keys to the successful implementation of learning based on local wisdom. In addition, collaboration between schools, indigenous peoples, and local stakeholders is essential to ensure the authenticity of the values raised. This article will also examine the literature that highlights the challenges and solutions in implementing the integration of local culture into learning. Identifying these obstacles is important so that the development of learning strategies becomes more realistic and applicable. With a literature review approach, this article examines various approaches and strategies for integrating local wisdom. The results of the study are expected to be able to provide recommendations for education policy makers at the local and national levels. The ultimate goal is to create a learning ecosystem that respects the nation's cultural diversity.

Local wisdom not only has cultural value, but also ecological, spiritual, and social value that can enrich the content of cross-subject learning. For example, the principle of living in harmony with nature contained in the Toba Batak culture can be integrated in science and social studies learning. Education should liberate and empower society through a critical understanding of its environment (Junsay, 2016). In this context, students are not only recipients of information, but also actors of social change. Cultural and ecological literacy are two important pillars in 21st century learning. This literature review will explore the dimensions of Toba Batak local wisdom that are relevant to various disciplines. The integration of these values also supports the goals of continuous education and the development of the nation's character. Therefore, a cross-curricular approach can be an alternative in designing learning based on local wisdom. This article reviews the literature that shows the relevance of local wisdom in encouraging students' 21st century competence. It is hoped that learning will become richer, holistic, and future-oriented.

The literature review methodology was chosen in this study to explore various existing findings and theories related to the integration of local wisdom in education. The Systematic Literature Review allows researchers to compile an in-depth and structured synthesis. With this method, conceptual frameworks and empirical findings from various sources can be critically analyzed. This approach is in line with the recommendations Ibrahim et al. (2017) in conducting educational research reviews. This article will classify literature based on pedagogical approaches, areas of Batak Toba cultural studies, and forms of integration into learning. This process allows for the identification of research gaps and potential for new developments. In the context of curriculum and pedagogical development, the results of this review are very important as a basis for decision-making. In addition, the literature approach provides comparative insights into similar practices in other cultural regions. This article not only aims to present theories, but also offers good practices and implementable recommendations. It is hoped that the results of this study will be a foothold in developing learning practices based on local culture more broadly.

A number of previous studies have discussed the importance of Christian education and worship learning in shaping student spirituality, but not many have comprehensively examined how the integration of the two can answer spiritual challenges in the digital age, especially in local contexts such as the Batak Toba community. This literature review offers a new contribution by systematically integrating theological, pedagogical, and cultural approaches to examine the formation of Christian student spirituality. In addition, this study is one of the most comprehensive literature reviews that links the values of local wisdom of Batak Toba with the spiritual needs of students in the digital era. Thus, this research fills the literature gap in the development of contextual, reflective, and culture-based faith learning strategies.

The purpose of this study is to examine in depth the role of Christian education and worship learning in shaping the spirituality of Christian students in the digital era through a literature review approach. This research also aims to explore how the values of local wisdom, especially from the Toba Batak culture, can be integrated into contextual learning that supports the spiritual growth of students. Through an analysis of various sources of scientific literature, this article lays a conceptual and practical foundation for the development of a model of faith education that is adaptive to technological developments and remains firmly rooted in Christian values and local culture.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR) method to explore and analyze various literature sources on the integration of Batak Toba local wisdom into contextual learning. The data were collected from scientific articles, books, dissertations, and research reports published between 2009 and 2024, sourced from databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, SINTA, ERIC, and ScienceDirect. Inclusion criteria focused on literature discussing local wisdom, cultural education, or contextual learning, in either English or Indonesian. Literature was selected through the PRISMA flow process based on relevance and methodological clarity. Only documents that met the quality and topic relevance standards were included in the final analysis. A qualitative approach is suitable for understanding social and cultural phenomena in a naturalistic context (Lozano-Arias et al., 2021; Mohmad & Maat, 2023). PRISMA is used to ensure transparency and accountability in the literature review process (Putra et al., 2023).

The research procedure involved four main stages: identification, screening, eligibility testing, and data extraction. Selected literature was reviewed and organized using a data extraction table to capture essential information such as objectives, methods, findings, and relevance. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key patterns and themes related to Batak Toba values and their integration strategies into the curriculum. The extracted data were grouped thematically and compared across sources (Santoso et al., 2022). To ensure validity and reliability, the process involved source triangulation, peer validation, and detailed documentation (Ioannou, 2016; Israel et al., 2015; Santoso et al., 2022). The findings were synthesized to provide practical insights for education development based on local wisdom integration.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The results of the study show that local wisdom has great potential in enriching contextual learning in schools. Local cultural values such as mutual cooperation, respect for parents, and social structure are a means of shaping students' character. The local wisdom of Batak Toba, especially the concept of *daliha na tolu*, contributes greatly in strengthening students' understanding of social relations. Contextual learning theory underscores the importance of relating lessons to students' real worlds (Chen et al., 2015). Therefore, elevating local cultural values into learning is an effective strategy. The literature also emphasizes that culture-based learning increases student motivation and participation. Students feel more engaged when the subject matter reflects their own cultural values. This is in line with the view that effective learning happens through meaningful social interaction (Siregar et al., 2020). Thus, the integration of local wisdom not only supports the cognitive aspect, but also the affective and social aspects of students. Learning becomes more contextual, meaningful, and has a long-term impact.

The values in the local wisdom of Batak Toba are very much in harmony with the principles of character education. Characters such as responsibility, tolerance, and respect for others are explicitly instilled in the life of the Batak people. Character education requires the cultivation of moral values through learning and example (Maharani et al., 2019). In many literatures, it is found that the values of *dignity*, *dignity*, and *marsipature of hutanabe* are very effective in shaping the character of students. Learning that incorporates local narratives and cultural practices in teaching and learning activities provides opportunities for students to emulate these noble values. In addition, cultural practices such as customary deliberation can be used as a model of collaborative and democratic learning. When students learn from their own culture, the process of internalizing character values is stronger. This provides an authentic learning experience and impacts students' behavior in daily life. Character education through a local approach is also in line with the national curriculum which emphasizes the Pancasila Student Profile. Therefore, local wisdom is an important resource in building contextual character education.

The local wisdom of Batak Toba is very suitable to be applied in contextual learning that prioritizes direct experience and the reality of students' lives. The concept of contextual learning engages students in learning through tangible linkages to their social and cultural environment (Ariawan, 2024). In the context of Toba Batak, traditional stories, local proverbs (*umpasa*), and daily life practices become effective teaching mediums. The literature shows that teachers who use this approach tend to create an active and meaningful learning atmosphere. Learning activities are no longer abstract, but are associated with the real lives of students. Teachers can relate social studies, Indonesian, and Mathematics materials to the local cultural context that is easy to understand. Thus, students are better able to interpret the knowledge they learn. This principle is in line with the theory of constructivism which states that students build their knowledge through interaction with the environment (Maharani et al., 2019). Therefore, the integration of local wisdom strengthens the principles of contextual learning. These findings underscore the urgency of a local approach in school learning design.

Findings from the literature indicate that the integration of local wisdom is in line with the spirit of the Independent Curriculum. This curriculum provides space for schools to develop local content and cultural contexts in learning. Pascarella & Terenzini (2005) in the Pancasila Student Profile encourages the application of cultural values and character in every learning activity. The integration of Toba Batak values such as *somba marhula-hula* and *manat mardongan tubu* enriches learning and encourages students to become polite and responsible individuals. Cultural literacy emphasized in the curriculum can be actualized through exploratory activities and culture-based projects. Teachers and students can conduct field studies, cultural documentation, and presentation of indigenous values in various forms of work. This increases students' creativity, collaboration, and social care. With the flexibility that the Independent Curriculum has, schools can develop learning approaches that are more relevant to students' lives. The results of the study show that the integration of local culture in the curriculum is an effective strategy to bridge formal education with social life. Learning is no longer detached from the cultural roots in which students grow.

The integration of local Batak Toba wisdom also strengthens multicultural education in schools. Multicultural education aims to create equality, appreciation of diversity, and recognition of local culture (Lozano-Arias et al., 2021). The results showed that students who learn through a culture-based approach value their identity and the culture of others more. When local culture is recognized in learning, students feel valued and have a place in the education system. In addition, students become more open to differences and are able to interact healthily with various groups. Schools become inclusive spaces that not only transfer knowledge, but also foster tolerance and appreciation for diversity. Culture-based education strengthens social cohesion and reduces the potential for intercultural conflicts. In the context of a pluralistic society like Indonesia, this is very important. Therefore, the results of the literature review strengthen the position of multicultural education as the main strategy in nation building. Local wisdom is a solid foundation in building harmony in diversity.

The findings also show that learning based on local wisdom improves students' cultural literacy. Cultural literacy includes the ability to understand, appreciate, and express inherited cultural values. Education that integrates local culture helps students build a strong and positive identity (Taufiqurrahman et al., 2024). In the context of Batak Toba, students learn to recognize the origins, cultural symbols, value systems, and social practices in their communities. This activity forms pride in cultural heritage and increases awareness of identity. Students are not only learners, but also active cultural preservationists. Strong cultural literacy also strengthens students' competitiveness in a global context because they have a clear identity. With a contextual approach, students learn to appreciate the diversity of cultures in Indonesia. Therefore, the integration of local wisdom is not only a learning strategy, but also the development of the nation's identity. This study shows that education rooted in local culture creates human beings with character and culture.

In the study, various strategies were found by teachers in integrating local wisdom into learning. The strategy includes the use of folklore, discussions of customary values, deliberation simulations, and the creation of cultural projects. Teachers who are creative and sensitive to local culture are able to

create memorable and meaningful learning experiences. This is in line with the role of teachers as learning designers (Reju & Jita, 2018). Teachers need to understand the cultural context in which they teach in order to design relevant and contextual material. The literature emphasizes the importance of training and professional development for teachers to have good cultural literacy. Learning strategies that raise Toba Batak values have proven to be effective in increasing student enthusiasm and participation. Teachers can also involve parents and traditional leaders as a learning resource in school activities. With this approach, the school becomes an active center of cultural heritage. The results of this study provide practical guidance for teachers in designing learning based on local wisdom.

Although it has many benefits, the integration of local wisdom also faces challenges in its implementation. One of the main challenges is the teacher's lack of understanding of local cultural values. Many teachers from outside the region are unfamiliar with the cultural context in which they teach. This hinders the process of contextualizing learning. In addition, the limitation of local-based learning resources is a serious obstacle. Most of the teaching materials are still general and do not pay attention to the richness of the local culture. The literature suggests collaboration between schools, indigenous peoples, and cultural institutions in the development of materials. Inclusive education requires the active participation of various parties to create equitable cultural representation (Twarog, 2023). Another challenge is the lack of policy support from local governments in the preparation of local curriculum. Therefore, the results of this study emphasize the importance of structural support in the development of culture-based education.

Various literature provides recommendations to optimize the integration of local wisdom in education. First, there is a need for intensive training for teachers on culture-based education and contextual approaches. Second, schools can develop textbooks or learning modules that contain local cultural values thematically. Third, local governments are expected to support the strengthening of local content in the curriculum. Fourth, collaboration with traditional leaders, cultural experts, and local communities needs to be strengthened to maintain the authenticity of the values taught. Fifth, learning evaluations must reflect the process of understanding values, not just cognitive aspects. Sixth, cross-disciplinary approaches can be used to integrate cultural values in various subjects. Seventh, it is necessary to form a teacher learning community to share good practices in culture-based education. These recommendations are compiled based on a synthesis of various sources that have been studied. The overall recommendations aim to strengthen the implementation of relevant, culturally rooted, and contextual education.

The long-term impact of the integration of local wisdom in education is very significant on the formation of the nation's character and identity. Local culture-based education strengthens students' connections with their social and cultural environment. Education must liberate human beings from cultural alienation and foster critical awareness. When students understand and appreciate their own culture, they will grow as confident and characterful individuals. This supports the vision of national education in forming students who are faithful, independent, and globally diverse. By understanding local culture, students can become agents of cultural preservation and bearers of social change. This kind of education produces individuals who are not only academically intelligent, but also wise in their attitudes. The results of the literature review confirm that education based on local wisdom is a long-term investment in the nation's cultural resilience. Therefore, schools need to take an active role in cultural preservation through curriculum and learning practices. This integration is not only a strategy, but a necessity in building education with an Indonesian personality.

Discussion

The local wisdom of Batak Toba plays a strategic role in strengthening the relevance of education to the cultural context of students. Values such as *dalihaan na tolu*, mutual cooperation, and respect for ancestors reflect strong social norms and high educational value. Education rooted in local culture strengthens the connection between students and their cultural identity. This is in line with the view that contextual education will create a whole person that is not uprooted from its social roots (Anggraini

et al., 2019). The interconnectedness between the subject matter and the local culture encourages students to think critically and reflectively. Learning based on indigenous values allows students to understand the realities of their lives more deeply. In this context, teachers are not only teachers, but also agents of cultural preservation. Cultural literacy is important to increase students' historical, moral, and social awareness. This integration supports character education and spirituality based on local values. Therefore, the local wisdom of Batak Toba is not only a cultural heritage, but also a source of pedagogy that is rich in meaning.

This study aims to examine how the values of local wisdom of Batak Toba can be integrated in contextual learning in schools. The results of the study show that values such as *dalihan na tolu*, *somba marhula-hula*, *marsiadapari*, and the spirit of mutual cooperation have high relevance in supporting meaningful and character-based learning. These findings directly answer the purpose of the research, because it is proven that local wisdom is able to strengthen the affective and social dimensions in the learning process. Learning that elevates local culture makes students feel more emotionally connected to the material being taught, thereby increasing participation, reflection, and appreciation. In addition, students' involvement in local cultural experiences fosters an awareness of identity and reinforces moral values in real-life contexts. Therefore, the integration of Toba's Batak cultural values proved to be a strong foundation for relevant and transformative contextual learning.

Contextual learning becomes the basic framework for integrating local culture into the classroom. Contextual teaching and learning links real experiences with subject matter to enhance the meaning of learning (Ariawan, 2025). In this approach, students are invited to relate new knowledge to their personal experiences and social environment. This strengthens retention and understanding of concepts as students build meaning through their own experiences. Local wisdom is a relevant teaching material because it comes from a reality that is familiar to students. For example, Toba Batak folklore can be used as material in learning Indonesian or social studies. In addition to increasing interest in learning, this approach also encourages students' creativity and active participation. Teachers become facilitators who connect cultural values with curriculum competencies. Thus, learning is no longer centered on the teacher, but on the activities and experiences of the students. Contextualization is the key to making learning more lively and meaningful.

Character education is one of the main focuses in the integration of local cultural values. Character education needs to be done through habituation, example, and emotional involvement of students (Kurniawan & Masjudin, 2017). The local wisdom of Batak Toba contains many moral values that can be used as teaching materials, such as responsibility, solidarity, and good manners. The value of *somba marhula-hula* teaches the importance of respecting authority and parents, in line with the values of Pancasila. When these values are raised in learning, students get moral learning that is contextual and easy to internalize. The process of internalizing character values becomes stronger because it comes from the social environment that students are familiar with. In addition, learning local values can increase students' confidence and self-esteem. Character is not only taught theoretically, but also practiced in everyday social interactions at school. Teachers have an important role in conveying these values consistently and explicitly. Therefore, character education based on local culture is an effective and sustainable approach.

The Merdeka Curriculum provides space for the development of local content and culture-based learning. In this policy, teachers and schools have the flexibility to develop teaching materials that are in accordance with the socio-cultural context of students. The Ministry of Education and Culture stated that the Pancasila Student Profile must be developed through a contextual and relevant approach. Batak Toba values such as *marsiadapari* and *manat mardongan tubu* reflect mutual cooperation and harmony, which can be instilled in various subjects. The development of student profile strengthening projects can use local cultural approaches as the main theme. This makes students not only learners, but also cultural preservationists. Schools can develop cross-disciplinary learning programs that combine science with local values. Teachers can design teaching modules based on local culture for various levels of education. With this approach, the Independent Curriculum encourages an education that is

grounded, independent, and meaningful. Local wisdom is a bridge between the national curriculum and the local life of students.

The results of the study also show that the integration of local values contributes greatly to multicultural education. Multicultural education aims to create justice, equality, and recognition of cultural diversity. In the pluralistic Indonesian context, recognition of Toba Batak culture in learning creates a sense of justice and pride in identity. When students' cultures are recognized, they feel valued and become more active in learning. This strengthens the sense of togetherness and tolerance between cultures in schools. Students from different backgrounds can learn to understand each other through cultural learning. It strengthens social competence and prepares students to be global citizens who value differences. Teachers play the role of mediators in building intercultural dialogue in the classroom. Multicultural learning creates an inclusive space that accommodates diversity as a strength. Thus, education based on local culture also strengthens the foundation of peace and national integrity.

The integration of Batak Toba values in learning also improves students' cultural literacy. Cultural literacy is the ability to understand, appreciate, and communicate cultural values reflectively. Cultural literacy is important in forming a positive self-identity in the midst of globalization (Amir et al., 2023). When students know and understand their own cultural values, they grow up to be confident individuals and appreciate ancestral heritage. Learning that raises folklore, traditional ceremonies, and traditional social systems increases students' understanding of their cultural identity. This is important to prevent identity crises among the younger generation. Students also learn to express cultural identity through artwork, literature, or project presentations. With strong cultural literacy, students are able to compete globally without losing their cultural roots. Teachers can use cultural projects as a means of expressive and creative learning. Therefore, cultural literacy is one of the important outcomes in local value-based learning.

Various strategies can be used by teachers in integrating local wisdom into learning. Among them are storytelling (folklore), simulation of traditional deliberation, learning based on cultural projects, to contextual methods with field studies. Variations in learning models increase learning effectiveness because they adapt to the needs and context of students. In the context of Toba Batak, the use of *proverbs* is a deep reflective medium. Teachers can also develop thematic modules with local cultural content that link across subjects. For example, the theme of "togetherness in the Batak family" can be explored through PPKn, Indonesian, and Social Studies lessons. This learning trains students to think integratively and contextually. Teachers need to conduct cultural observation and collaborate with community leaders so that teaching strategies are relevant and accurate. Thus, culture-based learning is not only interesting but also socially evidence-based. This strategy encourages teachers to become innovators in community-based education.

Teachers play an important role as a link between the national curriculum and local culture. Education must liberate human beings through a critical dialogue with their social and cultural realities (Aziz et al., 2018). Teachers act as facilitators, not just conveyors of information, helping students reflect cultural values in their lives. In the integration of Toba Batak culture, teachers must understand the meaning of local values and how to convey them pedagogically. Teacher training is essential so that they are able to adapt their teaching strategies to the local context. Teachers also need to avoid cultural bias and ensure that all student cultures are valued equally. Therefore, the professionalism of teachers in cultural literacy greatly determines the success of contextual learning. Culturally sensitive teachers will be able to create inclusive classrooms and build empathy between students. In this process, teachers become agents of social transformation that educate and at the same time preserve culture. Therefore, strengthening teacher capacity is one of the important recommendations of the results of this study.

Despite its potential, the implementation of local wisdom integration also faces a number of challenges. One of the main obstacles is the lack of literature and teaching materials based on local culture. In addition, many teachers do not have the experience or training to develop contextual learning based on cultural values. Culturally responsive education requires a strong support system,

including curriculum, resources, and teacher training (Adawiyah et al., 2017). The lack of support from education stakeholders also hinders this integration as a whole. Some schools are still focused on academic achievement alone, so the strengthening of cultural identity is not paid much attention. Therefore, policies that encourage locally-based education need to be strengthened. Another challenge is resistance to changing learning approaches among teachers. For this reason, a collaborative and community-based approach is needed so that the integration of local values is more accepted. Cross-sectoral commitment between schools, the government, and indigenous communities is urgently needed. Thus, these challenges can be managed through a systematic and participatory strategy.

Learning based on local wisdom will be effective if schools actively cooperate with indigenous communities. This collaboration allows for authentic cultural knowledge transfer from living sources in society. The school's partnership with local communities reinforces the relevance of education to students' life experiences (Acikgoz, 2011). Activities such as cultural visits, dialogue with indigenous elders, and local art training can enrich the learning process. Traditional leaders can be invited as resource persons or partners in the preparation of locally-based teaching materials. It also increases the legitimacy and accuracy of the values conveyed in the classroom. Community involvement creates a sense of belonging to the school and strengthens the social network of education. Schools become dynamic cultural centers, not just formal institutions. This process strengthens an educational ecosystem rooted in local culture. Therefore, cross-institutional collaboration is an important element in the implementation of culture-based education.

Analysis of the findings revealed a pattern that when local cultural values are presented in learning, there is a significant increase in conceptual understanding, emotional engagement, and character formation of students. For example, the use of Toba Batak folklore in language or social learning not only strengthens the appeal of learning, but also implicitly introduces local ethical values and history. This phenomenon arises because students feel that they have a close sense of meaning to the learning content, which makes them more active in constructively building knowledge. The cause-and-effect relationship is obvious: the more contextual learning is with the cultural reality of students, the higher the motivation and engagement of learning. However, it was also found that there were challenges in the form of a lack of teacher competence in adapting cultural materials and limited local-based learning resources. This shows that there is a gap between the great cultural potential and the readiness of the education system to manage it optimally.

One effective approach to integrating local wisdom is through project-based learning. Project-Based Learning (PjBL) encourages active student involvement and encourages holistic competency achievement (Prayogo & Zulfitri, 2024). In the context of Toba Batak, projects such as documenting wedding customs, making ulos weaving, or staging traditional dramas can be a powerful learning medium. Through this project, students develop critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity skills. In addition, they also learn about ethics, aesthetics, and socio-cultural values. This project strengthens the integration of cross-subjects, such as Indonesian, Social Studies, Cultural Arts, and PPKn. Teachers act as supervisors who provide direction and resources, not as information centers. Assessments in PjBL are also authentic, measuring learning processes and products as a whole. The results of the project can be published in schools or communities as a form of appreciation. This approach has been shown to encourage meaningful, contextual, and real-life oriented learning.

Local wisdom of Batak Toba is very relevant in supporting the six dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile. Dimensions such as faith and piety, mutual cooperation, and global diversity can be developed through cultural values such as *marsiadapari* and *daliha na tolu*. The Ministry of Education and Culture emphasized that character strengthening must be based on local realities to be more grounded. Local cultural values help students understand the meaning of life, social ethics, and the importance of cooperation. Through the integration of local values, students not only understand the content of the curriculum, but also carry out the noble values of the nation. Learning is no longer just cognitive, but includes the affective and spiritual realms. Teachers can design activities that reflect these values in students' daily lives. For example, the practice of customary deliberation can be used in

learning democracy and tolerance. Local values are a powerful tool for character transformation because they are close to the student experience. Therefore, education rooted in local culture strengthens the mission of the Pancasila Student Profile in a real way.

The findings of this study have important implications for the field of education, especially in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum which emphasizes learning based on local contexts. The cultural values of Batak Toba can be used to develop a project to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students through cross-disciplinary activities that strengthen the dimensions of mutual cooperation, independence, and global diversity. In addition, the results of this study also support the importance of teacher training in cultural literacy and contextual learning design to be better prepared to integrate local values into pedagogical practices. This integration requires teachers' creativity in compiling teaching modules, compiling authentic assessments, and building collaboration with indigenous communities. A curriculum that is responsive to local values will create a relevant, inclusive, and rooted learning ecosystem based on local wisdom. Therefore, culture-based education is not only as a preservation, but also as a strategy to strengthen the quality and relevance of learning.

In the midst of globalization, education based on local culture serves as a counterbalance to the homogenization of values. Education must liberate human beings from cultural alienation due to the dominance of external values (Aharoni, 2000). The integration of local wisdom is a form of resistance to the dehumanization of the technocratic education system. Students who know their own culture will be more critical and selective in accepting global influences. They are able to filter foreign information and culture based on local values that have been embedded. Cultural literacy serves as a filter in shaping a global identity that remains rooted locally. In many cases, students who are unfamiliar with their culture tend to lose their way in building their identity. Therefore, education must provide enough space for the exploration of local culture in the curriculum. This integration also supports the concept of global citizenship education which emphasizes the importance of cultural diversity. Therefore, education based on local wisdom is a strategic response to the challenges of globalization that erode cultural identity.

The findings of the study have direct implications for the development of curriculum and teaching materials in schools. Learning modules must be adapted to the cultural context of students to be more meaningful and participatory. A culturally responsive curriculum will increase student engagement because the material is relevant to their lives (Mgova, 2018). Textbooks that elevate local narratives will enrich insights and strengthen students' identities. For example, replacing narrative text examples with Toba Batak folklore will increase the sense of engagement. In addition, evaluations must also reflect cultural values and not just academic achievements. Cultural projects and portfolios can be an alternative to contextual and authentic assessments. A flexible curriculum allows teachers to adapt teaching strategies according to socio-cultural conditions. Therefore, curriculum development should not be uniform, but should be based on local needs. These findings emphasize that curriculum decentralization is a key requirement in culture-based education.

This research opens up space for the development of further research on the effectiveness of education based on local wisdom. Experimental studies can be conducted to measure their impact on students' character, motivation, and learning achievement. In addition, collaborative action research between schools and cultural communities can produce relevant learning innovations. Participatory research enables social transformation through local values-based education (Reddick et al., 2017). The development of digital media and technology based on local culture is also a great opportunity in the digital era. Applications, learning videos, and interactive modules can be adapted to Toba Batak values. Design research and development (R&D) is an appropriate strategy to produce contextual education products. The results of this research are expected to enrich the plural and dynamic practice of education in Indonesia. Innovative and culture-based education will create a generation that is intelligent, characterful, and proud of its identity. Therefore, synergy between research, policy, and educational practice is indispensable to drive sustainable transformation.

This research makes a real contribution to the understanding and practice of education in Indonesia, especially in building a learning model that is adaptive to the socio-cultural reality of students. By placing local culture as a source of learning, education becomes more contextual, dialogical, and meaningful. These findings encourage the development of a *Project-Based Learning* approach based on local culture, the involvement of indigenous peoples in teaching, and the development of digital media that represent local values. This is in line with the challenges of the 21st century where students must have a strong identity but remain open to global diversity. Therefore, the results of this study are expected to be a reference for teachers, curriculum developers, and policy makers in designing education that is not only academically intelligent, but also strong in character and culture. Thus, the integration of local wisdom is not only relevant, but also a necessity in answering the dynamics of plural and dynamic national education.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, the integration of local wisdom of Batak Toba in contextual learning in schools makes a significant contribution to improving the quality of relevant and meaningful education. Cultural values such as *daliha na tolu*, mutual cooperation, and respect for ancestors are able to strengthen students' character education and cultural identity. The contextual learning approach allows students to relate the subject matter to their daily life and cultural experiences. This strategy has proven effective in building engagement, cultural literacy, and internalization of moral values. In addition, the integration of local values is also in line with the vision of the Independent Curriculum and the strengthening of the Pancasila Student Profile. Implementation challenges such as limited resources and teacher competence need to be addressed through training, policy support, and collaboration with indigenous communities. Cross-sector collaboration is key in realizing education rooted in cultural values. Project-based learning and contextual curriculum are becoming innovative alternatives in the development of local education. Overall, the integration of local wisdom not only preserves culture, but also becomes the foundation for the formation of the nation's character. Thus, education based on local wisdom is a strategic need in building a generation that is cultured, characterful, and adaptive to global challenges.

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