

Nusantara Local Wisdom in the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the strategic position of Nusantara local wisdom in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and examine its relevance to contextual learning and students' character development. This research employed a qualitative approach using a library research method. Data were collected from scientific articles, books, and educational policy documents published over the last five years and analyzed through content analysis techniques. The findings indicate that local wisdom encompasses various universal values, including cooperation, tolerance, responsibility, and respect for diversity, which are aligned with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum and the dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile. The integration of local wisdom can be implemented through contextual learning, the development of culture-based teaching materials, and the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project. Although its implementation still faces several challenges, integrating local wisdom into the Merdeka Curriculum has significant potential to create meaningful learning experiences, strengthen students' character, and foster cultural identity and national awareness amid global transformations.

Keywords: *Contextual Learning, Cultural Identity, Local Wisdom, Merdeka Curriculum, Pancasila Student Profile.*

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1. | INTRODUCTION

The development of education in the 21st century is characterized by the rapid flow of globalization, information technology advancements, and social transformation that are taking place dynamically. This condition provides various opportunities for the world of education to develop more innovatively and adaptively, but at the same time it also poses challenges in the form of weakening students' recognition and appreciation of the nation's cultural values. Education is no longer only required to produce students who have academic competence and 21st-century skills, but also have character, cultural identity, and the ability to live harmoniously in a pluralistic society (Ainia, 2020; Arifin, 2022).

The change in the national education paradigm through the implementation of the Independent Curriculum provides a wider space for educational units to develop student-centered learning and adapted to the characteristics of their respective environments (Rahayu et al., 2022; Angga et al., 2022). The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the importance of contextual, flexible, and meaningful learning so that students not only gain theoretical knowledge, but are also able to relate learning to the reality of life around them (Marlina, 2022; Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022a). In this context, local wisdom is one of the potential learning resources to be integrated into the learning process.

Local wisdom is a set of values, norms, knowledge, and social practices that develop and are inherited from generation to generation in society as a guideline in living life. Values such as mutual cooperation, tolerance, deliberation, responsibility, social concern, and respect for diversity are important parts of local wisdom that have high relevance to the goals of national education and strengthening the character of students (Siregar, 2020; Azizatul'Uula et al., 2022). Therefore, local wisdom is not only understood as cultural heritage, but also as a source of value that can support the formation of students with character and national identity.

Various studies show that the integration of local wisdom in education is able to create more contextual and meaningful learning for students. The use of local wisdom as a learning resource can increase student involvement because learning materials are associated with experiences and environments that are close to their lives (Annisha, 2024; Azizah et al, 2022). In addition, the use of local wisdom in teaching materials and learning activities also contributes to strengthening social, cultural, and character values needed in facing the challenges of globalization (Alfi et al., 2024).

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) basically provides a great opportunity for the integration of local wisdom into learning. The Pancasila Student Profile emphasizes six main dimensions, namely faith and noble character, global diversity, mutual cooperation, independence, critical reasoning, and creativity (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022b; Ulandari & Rapita, 2023). These values are closely related to various universal values contained in the local wisdom of the archipelago. Therefore,

integrating local wisdom in the Independent Curriculum can be an effective strategy to strengthen character while fostering students' awareness of their cultural identity (Suryaningsih & Noventari, 2021; Arifin, 2022).

Nevertheless, the implementation of local wisdom in learning still faces various challenges. Some educational units still view local wisdom as complementary material that has not been optimally integrated into the learning process (Verrysaputro & Fitriana, 2024). In addition, globalization and the development of digital technology also have the potential to shift the orientation of students from local culture to a global culture that tends to be homogeneous (Siregar, 2020). This condition shows that efforts to strengthen local wisdom in education require policy support, teacher competence, and the development of teaching materials that are relevant to the principles of the Independent Curriculum (Illahi et al., 2024; Ministry of Education and Culture, 2024).

Philosophically, the concept of Freedom of Learning, which is rooted in the thought of Ki Hadjar Dewantara, places education as a process of forming human beings who are independent, have character, and are not uprooted from their cultural roots (Ainia, 2020). This principle is in line with the goal of developing contextual learning that allows students to learn through experiences that are close to the reality of their lives (Ahdhianto et al., 2020). Therefore, the local wisdom of the archipelago has a strategic position in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum because it is able to be a source of contextual learning as well as a means of strengthening the cultural identity and character of students.

Based on this description, the study of the local wisdom of the archipelago in the Independent Curriculum is important to be carried out. This research aims to analyze the essence of local wisdom in the archipelago, examine its relevance to the principles of the Independent Curriculum, and formulate a strategy for integrating local wisdom as an effort to realize contextual, meaningful, and oriented learning to strengthen the character of students in the global era.

2. | RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with the library research method. Literature study is a research method that utilizes various literature sources as the main source in obtaining data and information relevant to the focus of research. This method was chosen because the research aims to examine in depth the concept of local wisdom of the archipelago in the Independent Curriculum through the review of various theories, research results, and published education policy documents. The qualitative approach allows researchers to comprehensively understand phenomena through the process of interpretation of various textual data obtained from scientific sources.

The data sources in this study consist of primary data and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from scientific articles that discussed local wisdom, the Independent Curriculum, contextual learning, multicultural education, character education, and the Pancasila Student Profile published in the last five years. In addition, education policy

documents, such as the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology regarding the curriculum and various guidelines for the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, are also used as primary data sources because they have direct relevance to the focus of research. The secondary data is obtained from books, proceedings, research reports, and various other literature sources that support the analysis and interpretation of research data.

The data collection process is carried out through documentation techniques by identifying, searching, and collecting various relevant literature through scientific databases, especially Google Scholar, national journal portals, and official documents published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. The selected literature was selected based on several criteria, namely suitability with the research theme, relevance to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum and local wisdom of the archipelago, and the year of publication in the range of 2020–2024. The selection process is carried out to ensure that the sources used have sufficient relevance, novelty, and validity in supporting the research objectives.

Data analysis was carried out using content analysis techniques. The analysis begins by reading and comprehensively understanding all the documents that have been collected, then reducing the data through the process of identifying the main themes related to the essence of local wisdom, the characteristics of the Independent Curriculum, the relevance of local wisdom in learning, and the strategy of integrating local wisdom in the educational process. The next stage is to organize the data into certain categories so that a systematic pattern of relationships between concepts is obtained. Furthermore, the data are interpreted descriptively and critically to produce a comprehensive understanding of the strategic position of local wisdom of the archipelago in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. The results of the analysis are then presented in the form of narrative descriptions that emphasize the relationship between theoretical concepts, the results of previous research, and their implications for the development of learning that is contextual, meaningful, and oriented towards strengthening students' character and cultural identity.

3. | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The development of education in the 21st century requires a balance between mastering global competencies and strengthening the nation's cultural identity. Education not only functions as a means of knowledge transfer, but also as a process of character formation, internalization of values, and cultural inheritance to the younger generation. In this context, the local wisdom of the archipelago has a strategic position because it contains various universal values that are relevant to the goals of national education, such as mutual cooperation, tolerance, responsibility, deliberation, social concern, and respect for diversity. These values are important capital in forming students who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also socially and morally mature (Siregar, 2020; Azizatul'Uula et al., 2022).

Local wisdom is essentially the result of the construction of community knowledge formed through the process of experience and social interaction over a long period of time. The values contained in it are not static, but dynamic and able to adapt to the times. Therefore, local wisdom can be positioned as a relevant learning resource to bridge the needs of modern education with efforts to preserve the nation's cultural identity. The integration of local values into learning allows learners to understand social realities in a more concrete way because learning is associated with experiences that are close to their daily lives (Annisha, 2024; Azizah et al., 2022).

The urgency of integrating local wisdom is getting stronger in the midst of the rapid flow of globalization and digitalization. The development of information technology has expanded students' access to various global cultures which on the one hand provides opportunities to enrich their insights, but on the other hand also has the potential to shift attention to local culture. This condition can result in a weakening of cultural identity and a decrease in the appreciation of the younger generation for the values that develop in their environment. Therefore, education needs to take a strategic role in maintaining the continuity of cultural values through a learning process that is able to connect global competencies with the social and cultural context of students (Siregar, 2020; Ainia, 2020).

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum basically provides a great opportunity for the integration of local wisdom into the learning process. The Independent Curriculum is designed with more flexible characteristics and gives wider authority to educational units to develop learning according to the needs and characteristics of students. This curriculum emphasizes the importance of student-centered learning, differentiation of learning, and contextual learning so that students gain meaningful learning experiences that are relevant to their lives (Rahayu et al., 2022; Angga et al., 2022).

The learning characteristics in the Independent Curriculum show a strong alignment with the principles of learning development based on local wisdom. Contextual learning encourages learners to build understanding through experiences that are close to their social and cultural environment. In this perspective, local wisdom is not only positioned as additional material, but also as a learning resource that can be integrated into various subjects and learning activities. The use of the social and cultural environment as a learning resource allows students to develop critical thinking skills, solve problems, and connect academic concepts with the real situations they face (Marlina, 2022; Ahdhianto et al., 2020).

The presence of the Independent Curriculum also brings a change in the learning paradigm from a uniform approach to more flexible learning and pays attention to the diversity of student characteristics. Learning differentiation, which is one of the main principles of the Independent Curriculum, provides space for teachers to develop various learning resources that are in accordance with the context of the students' environment. In these conditions, local wisdom can be an alternative learning resource

that is able to make the learning process more contextual, participatory, and meaningful (Marlina, 2022; Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022a).

The relevance of local wisdom to the Independent Curriculum is also seen in efforts to strengthen character education. The concept of Freedom of Learning, which is rooted in the thought of Ki Hadjar Dewantara, places education as a process of humanizing human beings through the development of their full potential without releasing students from their cultural and environmental roots. Quality education is not only oriented to academic achievement, but also aims to form human beings who are independent, have character, and have an awareness of national identity (Ainia, 2020; Faiz & Purwati, 2021).

The relationship between local wisdom and character formation is further strengthened through the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile. The Pancasila Student Profile is designed as an ideal description of Indonesian students who have global competence and behave in accordance with Pancasila values. The six dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile, namely faith and noble character, global diversity, mutual cooperation, independence, critical reasoning, and creativity, have a close relationship with various values contained in the local wisdom of the archipelago (Arifin, 2022; Suryaningsih & Noventari, 2021).

The dimension of mutual cooperation, for example, reflects the importance of cooperation, social solidarity, and concern for others that have long been part of the life of the Indonesian people. Similarly, the dimension of global diversity is related to the values of tolerance, respect for differences, and the ability to live in harmony in a pluralistic society. Meanwhile, the dimensions of independence, critical reasoning, and creativity can be developed through various learning practices that raise real problems that develop in the social and cultural environment of students (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022b; Ulandari & Rapita, 2023).

Integrating local wisdom in learning can also be done through the use of teaching materials that contain various cultural values that are relevant to students' lives. Various studies have shown that textbooks and learning resources that promote local values are able to increase interest in learning and strengthen the relationship between learning materials and the reality of students' lives. The presence of local wisdom content in teaching materials provides opportunities for students to recognize, understand, and internalize various cultural values as part of the character formation process (Alfi et al., 2024; Azizah et al., 2022).

In addition to teaching materials, the integration of local wisdom can be implemented through project-based learning. The Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project provides a wide space for educational units to develop learning activities oriented to the exploration of the social and cultural environment. Through project-based learning, students not only gain conceptual knowledge, but also have the opportunity to interact directly with the surrounding environment, observe, discuss,

collaborate, and produce various works that reflect their understanding of cultural values (Kemendikbudristek, 2022a; Ulandari & Rapita, 2023).

Nevertheless, the implementation of local wisdom in the Independent Curriculum still faces various challenges. One of the challenges that is often found is that there is still a limited understanding of teachers' understanding of the strategy of integrating local wisdom in learning. Some teachers still view local wisdom as an additional content that stands alone and has not been positioned as a learning resource that can be integrated across subjects. This condition causes the use of local wisdom in learning to be carried out optimally and sustainably (Verrysaputro & Fitriana, 2024; Illahi et al., 2024).

Another challenge is related to the availability of learning resources and teaching materials that are relevant to the principles of the Independent Curriculum. The development of teaching materials based on local wisdom requires creativity, pedagogical competence, and the ability of teachers to identify various environmental potentials that can be used as learning resources. Therefore, policy support, strengthening teacher competence, and collaboration between schools and the community are needed in developing a learning ecosystem that is culturally based and in accordance with the characteristics of students (Illahi et al., 2024; Ministry of Education and Culture, 2024).

Normatively, various regulations governing the implementation of the Independent Curriculum have provided a strong foundation for the development of learning that is contextual and relevant to the student environment. Provisions regarding learning outcomes, flexibility in learning organization, and strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile provide a great opportunity for educational units to integrate various local potentials into the learning process (Kemendikbudristek, 2022a; Ministry of Education and Culture, 2024). Thus, the integration of local wisdom of the archipelago in the Independent Curriculum is not only an effort to preserve culture, but also a relevant educational strategy to produce students who have 21st century competence, strong character, and a strong national identity in the midst of the dynamics of global change.

4. | CONCLUSION

The local wisdom of the archipelago is a source of value that has high relevance to the goals of national education and the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Values such as mutual cooperation, tolerance, deliberation, responsibility, social concern, and respect for diversity contain educational dimensions that can support character formation, strengthening cultural identity, and developing students' competencies as a whole. In the context of 21st century education, the existence of local wisdom not only functions as a cultural heritage that needs to be preserved, but also as a learning resource that is able to make the learning process more contextual, meaningful, and close to the reality of students' lives.

The characteristics of the Independent Curriculum that are flexible, student-centered, and emphasize contextual learning provide ample opportunities for the integration of local wisdom in various learning activities. This integration can be realized through learning planning that considers environmental potential, the use of culture-based teaching materials, the implementation of project-based learning, and the strengthening of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project. Through this approach, students not only gain academic knowledge, but also develop critical thinking skills, creativity, collaboration, and concern for the surrounding social and cultural environment.

Although the implementation of local wisdom in the Independent Curriculum still faces various challenges, especially related to teacher competence, the availability of learning resources, and the influence of cultural globalization, the integration of local wisdom still has a strategic position in realizing education with character and rooted in national identity. Therefore, a joint commitment is needed between the government, education units, teachers, and the community to develop a learning ecosystem that is able to optimize the potential of local wisdom as an integral part of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Thus, education not only produces students who are academically competent and ready to face global changes, but also have strong character, cultural awareness, and a strong national identity.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval and Originality Statement

Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

Data Disclosure Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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