

# Local Culture in Improving Student Character Building

Herlina<sup>1</sup>, Hadriana<sup>2</sup>, Shakila Che Dahalan<sup>3</sup>

Faculty Of Education, Universitas Riau, Indonesia<sup>1,2</sup>, Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia<sup>3</sup>

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v13-i3/22842> DOI:10.6007/IJARPED/v13-i3/22842

*Published Online:* 30 September 2024

## Abstract

Student character building is an important aspect in education that aims to form a generation that has morals, ethics, and integrity. One effective approach in forming student character is through the use of culture. Culture includes local educational values, traditions, and norms, can be used as a means of character education that is relevant to the student's environment. Culture greatly influences student behavior and is used as a basis for character formation for all students. In addition, these issues are also discussed. Furthermore, models related to culture and character are detailed. Literature reviews are also discussed and used as a reserve in this discussion. This discussion aims to explore the role of local culture in improving student character education. Through the integration of culture into the curriculum and extracurricular activities, students are expected to be able to better understand and apply the values adopted by the surrounding education. That the introduction of culture in education can increase a sense of responsibility, social concern, and respect for others. In addition, culture also helps students recognize their identity and foster a sense of pride in their cultural heritage. Thus, local culture has great potential in enriching the character education process in schools.

**Keywords:** Local Culture, Character Building, Students, Education, Local Values.

## Introduction

Education does not only focus on cognitive aspects, but also has an important role in character formation. Building student character is an integral part of the education system that aims to produce individuals who are not only academically intelligent, but also have good morals, ethics, and integrity. Amidst the development of globalization and technological advances, the challenges in character formation are increasingly complex. Traditional values adopted by society are often eroded by the influence of foreign cultures that are not always in line with local norms. Therefore, strategic efforts are needed in building student character so that it remains in accordance with the identity and culture of the nation.

One approach that can be used to strengthen student character formation is to utilize local culture, (Anwar, 2017). Local culture includes values, traditions, customs, and norms that are passed down from generation to generation in a society. This culture not only reflects the identity of the local community, but also contains various noble values that can be used as

guidelines in everyday life. By integrating local culture into education, students can better understand and appreciate their cultural heritage, while also applying these values in their lives (Munif, 2017). Although the importance of character education is increasingly recognized, effective implementation remains a challenge. Curricula that focus on academic achievement often do not provide enough space for the development of character aspects. This is where the role of local culture becomes important. By utilizing local culture, character education will not only be socially and culturally relevant to students, but also become more contextual, so that moral values are easier to accept and practice in everyday life, (Fadilah, 2021)

In addition, integrating local culture into character education can also help overcome the identity crisis among the younger generation. The massive influence of globalization often makes students lose touch with their cultural roots, and this can erode their sense of pride in their national identity. By bringing local culture into the classroom, students can better understand the values of local wisdom, while strengthening their cultural identity as part of the diverse Indonesian nation.

In this context, schools, as formal educational institutions, play a central role in designing and implementing educational programs based on local culture. Not only through formal lessons, but also through extracurricular activities, traditional ceremonies, and collaboration with local cultural figures. Thus, the integration of local culture will not only improve the character building of students, but also enrich their learning experience by connecting theory and practice in real life. This paper aims to explore how local culture can play a role in improving the character building of students. Through an approach that links cultural values with learning in schools, it is hoped that students will be able to develop a more responsible, caring, and respectful attitude towards others. In addition, the integration of local culture in education is also expected to help students recognize their identity, increase their sense of pride in their cultural heritage, and maintain the sustainability of values that exist in society.

### **Concept and Definition of Local Culture**

Society is formed through a long history, a winding journey, step by step, trial and error. At certain points there are relics that exist or are recorded until now which then become cultural heritage. Cultural heritage, according to Davidson (1991), is defined as 'products or results of physical culture from different traditions and spiritual achievements in the form of values from the past that are the main elements in the identity of a group or nation'. So cultural heritage is the result of physical culture (tangible) and cultural values (intangible) from the past. The cultural values of the past (intangible heritage) are derived from local cultures in the archipelago, including: traditions, folklore and legends, mother tongue, oral history, creativity (dance, song, drama performances), adaptability and uniqueness of the local community (Galla, 2001). The word local here does not refer to a geographical area, especially a district/city, with clear administrative boundaries, but rather refers to a cultural area that often exceeds administrative areas and also does not have clear boundaries with other cultural areas. The word local culture can also refer to the culture of the indigenous population (inlander) which has been viewed as a cultural heritage. Since the actors of the government of the Republic of Indonesia are their own people, the existing cultural heritage belongs to everyone. This is different from the situation in Australia and America whose cultural heritage belongs exclusively to the indigenous population so that the indigenous

population has the right to prohibit any utilization activity that will have a negative impact on their cultural heritage (Frankel, 1984). The various forms of local cultural heritage give us the opportunity to learn local wisdom in overcoming problems faced in the past. The problem is that local wisdom is often ignored, considered irrelevant to the present, let alone the future. The impact is that many cultural heritages are eroded by age, neglected, ignored and even abused. In fact, many nations with less strong histories are actually looking for their identity from the remains of their history and cultural heritage which are few in number. We ourselves, the Indonesian nation, who are rich in cultural heritage, actually ignore these invaluable assets. What a contradictory condition. As a nation with a long historical journey that is rich in local cultural diversity, we should desperately preserve the cultural heritage that has come down to us. Preserving does not mean making something durable and impossible to become extinct. Preserving means preserving it for a very long time. So efforts to preserve local cultural heritage mean efforts to preserve local cultural heritage for a very long time.

### **Character Building**

Character education is a deliberate effort to help someone so that he can understand, pay attention to and carry out core ethical values (Lickona, 1991). Character education is emphasized on values that need to be understood, paid attention to and applied by students such as responsibility, honesty, caring, fairness, and so on. Character education according to Kesuma et al (2013), explains that character education is the development of students' abilities to behave well which is marked by improvements in various abilities that will make humans as godly beings, and carry out the mandate as leaders in the world. Aushop (2014), explains that the essence of character education is the process of guiding students so that there is a change in behavior, a change in attitude and a change in culture which will ultimately create a community that Character education can be interpreted as an education system by instilling values in accordance with the nation's culture with components of aspects of knowledge (cognitive), attitude, feelings (affection felling) and actions, both towards God Almighty, both for oneself, society, and one's nation (Afandi, 2011). It can be concluded that character is closely related to morals, behavior, perspectives, mindsets, and attitudes shown by a person. Character education is a system of instilling character values that include components of knowledge, awareness, willingness and action to implement values, both towards God Almighty, oneself, others and the environment so as to become a perfect human being (Ramdhani, 2014). In the learning process, the development of student potential must be carried out comprehensively and in an integrated manner. The development of student potential in an unbalanced manner in turn makes education tend to care more about the development of certain aspects of personality only, in a particular and partial manner. In fact, student growth and development are the goals that all schools and teachers want to achieve, and that means it is very wrong if teachers are only responsible for delivering lesson materials in their fields (Asmaun Sahlan & Teguh, 2012). As for lessons that develop national character such as Citizenship Education (Pkn), Religious Education and Social Sciences in the implementation of their learning, they emphasize more on the cognitive aspect than the affective and psychomotor aspects. In addition, Malay Culture Lessons are also a subject that also forms students' character in relation to value education, but it does not totally measure the complete character of the student's personality.

## Issues and Problems

Character building is one of the main goals in education, but there are various issues and problems that hinder its implementation. Some issues and problems that often arise in character building among students include:

### *1. The Influence of Globalization and Foreign Culture*

Globalization has a major impact on social life, including in the formation of student character. The influence of foreign culture through social media, the internet, and films often conflict with local values adopted by society. Students more easily adopt individualistic and materialistic values, which often conflict with the norms and ethics that exist in the local environment.

### *2. Lack of Role Models from the Surrounding Environment*

The formation of student character is greatly influenced by the role models of adults around them, be it parents, teachers, or community leaders. When students do not find good role models in their daily lives, they tend to have difficulty in applying the character values that are taught. For example, negative behavior from community leaders, such as corruption, dishonesty, or intolerance, can damage efforts to form students' character.

### *3. Lack of Implementation of Character Values in the Curriculum*

Although character education has been integrated into the curriculum, in practice its implementation is often less than optimal. Many schools focus more on academic achievement than character building, so that character values are only taught theoretically and are not internalized properly in daily activities. In addition, teaching methods that are still lecture-based are less effective in forming character in depth.

### *4. Unsupportive Social Environment*

The social environment where students live also plays an important role in character formation. In areas with high crime or poverty rates, students are often exposed to examples of negative behavior, such as violence, juvenile delinquency, or drug abuse. This uncondusive environment makes students more susceptible to adopting negative behavior, even though character education has been provided in schools.

### *5. Identity Crisis and Low Awareness of Local Culture*

Many students experience an identity crisis amidst the flow of modernization and globalization. They often feel confused in choosing which values to follow, especially when traditional values are considered old-fashioned or irrelevant. Low awareness of local culture is also one of the causes of students losing their identity, so that the noble values of local culture are difficult to apply in everyday life.

### *6. Development of Technology and Social Media*

Technology and social media have a major impact on students' lives. On the one hand, social media can be a means of learning, but on the other hand, there is a lot of content on social media that is not educational and even damages character, such as cyberbullying, the spread of hoax news, and exposure to consumer culture. Students who are too attached to technology often lose direct social interaction which is very important in character formation.

### *7. Imbalance between the Roles of Parents and Teachers*

Character formation should ideally be the result of collaboration between parents, teachers, and the community. However, in many cases, there is an imbalance in these roles. Many parents completely hand over the responsibility for character formation to the school, while teachers at school often focus more on academic achievement. As a result, the formation of student character does not run optimally due to the lack of comprehensive support.

### *8. High Academic Pressure*

In many education systems, the emphasis on academic achievement often overrides character education. Students are more motivated to achieve high test scores than to practice moral values such as honesty, responsibility, or cooperation. The pressure to excel academically often leads students to commit unethical acts, such as cheating or manipulating test results.

### *9. Economic Problems and Family Welfare*

Unstable economic conditions in the family can also affect the formation of students' character. Students who come from families with economic problems or family dysfunction often face great emotional stress, which can affect their behavior at school. Problems such as lack of parental attention, domestic violence, or urgent economic needs can cause students to engage in deviant behavior.

### *10. Lack of Evaluation and Monitoring of Character Education*

Character education requires continuous evaluation and monitoring. Unfortunately, many schools do not yet have an effective mechanism to evaluate the extent to which the character values taught have been internalized by students. Measurement of the success of character education is often limited to formal assessments, such as filling out questionnaires, which do not sufficiently reflect overall character development.

Various issues and problems in the formation of student character show that character education requires not only a formal approach in schools, but also support from various parties, including families, social environments, and the media. More comprehensive and synergistic efforts are needed to ensure that students are not only academically intelligent, but also have strong characters, in accordance with the moral and ethical values that apply in society.

## **Literature Review**

Student character building has become a major concern in the world of education in Indonesia, especially due to social and cultural changes influenced by globalization. Character education is one solution to overcome various moral challenges faced by the younger generation. In this context, local culture plays an important role in strengthening the process of student character building. The following is a literature review that examines the relationship between local culture and student character building. Character education is a conscious effort to develop moral values, ethics, and integrity in students. Lickona (1991), stated that character education involves three main components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. These three aspects are interrelated in forming individuals who have integrity. Character education is not only taught explicitly through subject matter, but also through real experiences involving social interaction and the surrounding environment (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

According to Tilaar (2002), education must be rooted in local culture to maintain the identity and character of the nation. Local culture reflects values, traditions, and wisdom that are passed down from generation to generation in society. In the context of education, the integration of local culture can strengthen the formation of students' character because local culture teaches noble values that are relevant to everyday life. Values such as mutual cooperation, mutual respect, social responsibility, and honesty are often contained in local cultural practices. The results of Suyanto's (2013), study show that introducing local culture in the education curriculum can help students internalize moral values more easily because local culture is contextual and closer to their lives. Through direct experience in traditional ceremonies, traditional games, and community activities, students learn to respect the social values that exist in their environment. Local culture is the basis for the formation of a person's character. Local culture is a rich source of character values, which if utilized properly, can improve the formation of students' character. Naim (2012), argues that values such as honesty, simplicity, mutual cooperation, and sincerity found in various local cultures in Indonesia can be used as moral guides in education. For example, the value of "gotong royong" in Javanese culture teaches cooperation and social awareness, while "adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah" in Minangkabau culture teaches the importance of living life by adhering to religious and customary values. This local culture-based approach is also supported by Rahmadi (2015), who found that students who were taught by integrating local cultural values found it easier to understand moral and ethical concepts compared to students who were only taught through a theoretical approach. Local culture provides a practical foundation that is relevant and real in students' daily lives, which in turn makes it easier for them. Suparno (2010), the role of schools is very important in integrating local culture into the curriculum and daily activities. Schools can develop character education programs based on local culture by involving students in various activities related to local culture, such as participation in traditional ceremonies, cultural festivals, and cooperation with the community to apply character values. In a study conducted by the local to introduce existing traditions. This will not only enrich students' learning experiences, but also foster a sense of love and pride in their local culture. Furthermore, research by Nurhadi (2016), states that collaboration between schools, families, and communities is a key factor in the success of local culture-based character education. Schools cannot work alone in character building efforts, so there needs to be synergy with the surrounding social and cultural environment to create a supportive learning environment. Although the importance of local culture in character building is widely recognized, there are several challenges in its implementation. According to Mulyasa (2011), one of the biggest challenges is the lack of understanding and appreciation of local culture among educators and students. Globalization and technological developments have shifted students' attention from local culture to more modern and global popular culture. In addition, the lack of support from education policies that emphasize academic achievement rather than character education is also an obstacle to the integration of local culture. A study by Widiastuti (2014), found that many schools still face difficulties in designing character education programs based on local culture, mainly due to limited resources and minimal training for teachers. To overcome this, stronger policies are needed from the government in supporting programs that encourage the preservation of local culture and character education. According to Haryanto (2015), local culture not only plays a role in the formation of individual student character, but also in the formation of collective identity as a nation. In the era of globalization, it is important for students to have a strong foundation of local values so as not to lose their identity as part of a nation that has a diverse cultural wealth.



Teaching local culture in character education helps students recognize and appreciate their cultural heritage, thereby strengthening their sense of nationalism and pride in their identity.

### **Suggestions**

i. Integration of Local Culture into the Education Curriculum:

ii. Schools are expected to integrate local culture into the learning curriculum more systematically and contextually. Relevant subjects, such as Civic Education, History, and Indonesian Language, can be used as media to teach local cultural values. This approach will help students recognize, understand, and apply the noble values contained in local culture.

iii. Training and Strengthening of Teacher Competence: Teachers play an important role in instilling local cultural values. Therefore, training is needed for teachers to improve their understanding of local wisdom and how to convey it effectively to students. In addition, teachers also need to be given resources and guidance on how to integrate local culture into each subject.

iv. Collaboration Between Schools, Families, and Communities: Local culture-based character education will be more effective if there is synergy between schools, families, and communities. Families and communities must be involved in various school activities that promote local culture, such as cultural festivals, traditional art exhibitions, or mutual cooperation events. This collaboration is important to create an environment that supports the formation of students' character as a whole.

v. Use of Experience-Based Active Learning Methods: Students should not only be taught local cultural values in theory, but also given the opportunity to experience and apply them directly. For example, through activities such as participating in traditional ceremonies, traditional games, or visits to local cultural sites. This method will make students more involved and understand the essence of these values more deeply.

vi. Government as a Supporter of Character Education Policy: The government needs to provide more support in the development of local culture-based character education through more comprehensive policies and regulations. This includes budget allocation, provision of educational resources, and the preparation of curricula that prioritize the preservation of local culture. In addition, the government must also encourage training programs for teachers and the development of teaching materials that focus on local culture.

vii. Increasing Cultural Awareness in the Digital Era: In an increasingly modern digital era, it is important to utilize technology as a medium to promote and preserve local culture among students. Schools can develop digital platforms that contain information about local culture, educational videos, or culture-based learning applications. In this way, students can be more interested and connected to their local culture in a digital world.

viii. Continuous Evaluation of Character Education Programs: Character education based on local culture needs to be evaluated periodically to ensure its effectiveness. Schools can use various assessment methods, such as observing student behavior, interviews, or surveys with teachers, students, and parents. The results of the evaluation can be used to improve and enhance existing character education programs.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the things that have been explained above, it can be concluded that the integration of local culture in character education has great potential to strengthen the formation of student character. Local culture provides moral values that are relevant and close to students' lives, so they are easier to internalize. However, challenges such as the lack

of appreciation for local culture and minimal support from education policies still need to be overcome. For this reason, collaboration between schools, families, communities, and the government is key to optimizing the role of local culture in improving the formation of student character.

This research provides significant theoretical contributions by expanding the understanding of how local culture plays a crucial role in shaping student character. It builds on existing theories of character education, integrating local wisdom as a key factor in moral and ethical development. By emphasizing the cultural context, this study enriches the existing body of knowledge on character building, offering a more holistic and culturally responsive approach. Contextually, the research is significant as it highlights the practical application of cultural values in the educational system, particularly in regions where local customs are still strongly adhered to. It demonstrates how integrating local traditions and values into educational curricula can not only strengthen students' moral development but also preserve and promote cultural heritage. Thus, this study bridges the gap between cultural preservation and modern educational practices, ensuring that character education remains relevant and context-sensitive.

## References

- Anwar, M. K. (2017). Pembelajaran mendalam untuk membentuk karakter siswa sebagai pembelajar. *Tadris: Jurnal Keguruan Dan Ilmu Tarbiyah*, 2(2), 97-104.
- Sahlan, & Angga. (2012). *Desain pembelajaran berbasis pendidikan karakter*. Jogjakarta: Ar-Ruzz Media.
- Berkowitz, M. W., & Bier, M. C. (2005). *What works in character education: A research-driven guide for educators*. Character Education Partnership.
- Davison, G., & McConville, C. (1991). *A heritage handbook*. St. Leonard, NSW: Allen & Unwin.
- Fadilah, M. P., Alim, W. S., Zumurudiana, A., Lestari, I. W., Baidawi, A., Elisanti, A. D., & KM, S. (2021). *Pendidikan karakter*. Agrapana Media.
- Frankel, D. (1984). Who owns the past? *Australian Society*, 3(9).
- Galla, A. (2001). *Guidebook for the participation of young people in heritage conservation*. Brisbane: Hall and Jones Advertising.
- Haryanto, A. (2015). Pendidikan karakter berbasis kearifan lokal sebagai upaya menghadapi globalisasi. *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, 6(2), 123-135.
- Lickona, T. (1991). *Educating for character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility*. Bantam Books.
- Mulyasa, E. (2011). *Manajemen pendidikan karakter*. Bumi Aksara.
- Munif, M. (2017). Strategi internalisasi nilai-nilai pai dalam membentuk karakter siswa. *EDURELIGIA: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 1(1), 1-12.
- Naim, N. (2012). *Karakter: Pendidikan karakter dalam perspektif Islam*. Pustaka Pelajar.
- Nurhadi. (2016). Pentingnya sinergi sekolah, keluarga, dan masyarakat dalam pendidikan karakter siswa. *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 19(3), 142-156.
- Rahmadi, D. (2015). Pengaruh pendidikan berbasis budaya lokal terhadap pembentukan karakter siswa di sekolah menengah. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan*, 10(2), 87-99.
- Suparno, D. (2010). *Peran sekolah dalam pendidikan karakter berbasis budaya lokal*. Jakarta: PT Grasindo.
- Suyanto, S. (2013). Budaya lokal sebagai sumber nilai karakter dalam pendidikan. *Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia*, 2(1), 45-58.



Tambak, S., Humairoh, S., Noer, M. A., & Ahmad, M. (2020). Internalization of Riau Malay culture in developing the morals of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students. *Al Ibtida: Jurnal Pendidikan Guru MI*, 7(1), 69.

Widiastuti, L. (2014). Tantangan dalam implementasi pendidikan karakter berbasis budaya lokal di sekolah. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan*, 15(1), 67-78.