

Local Wisdom-Based Multicultural Pedagogy: The Foundation of Character and Tolerance Building in Early Childhood Education

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Abstract

Early Childhood Education (ECE) plays a pivotal role in shaping children's character and foundational competence. However, integrating local wisdom into the curriculum is often uneven and risks fostering cultural bias if not systematically balanced with broader multicultural values. This study examines the conceptual frameworks, implementation strategies, and effectiveness of local culture integration while developing a comprehensive multicultural teaching model for ECE. Employing a systematic literature review design, this study analyzed peer-reviewed research articles published between 2017 and 2024. The data analysis process advanced through rigorous selection, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification, with trustworthiness established via theoretical triangulation. The synthesis of the literature revealed three core findings: (1) integrating cultural values, folklore, traditional rituals, and cooperative games significantly strengthens children's prosocial behaviors; (2) deploying flexible learning tools spanning digital, print, and physical modalities successfully accommodates diverse early childhood developmental needs; and (3) establishing a curriculum equilibrium fosters an optimal balance between local cultural pride and global tolerance. Grounded in Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory, this study presents a structured pedagogical framework designed to mitigate cultural bias. This is achieved by leveraging educators' cultural competencies, structural policy support, and collaborative community teamwork. Ultimately, this research provides vital theoretical background and practical guidance for curriculum developers and ECE practitioners to engineer culturally sensitive, equitable, and highly inclusive early learning environments.

Keywords: Early Childhood; Character; Local Wisdom; Multicultural Pedagogy; Tolerance.

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Musi, M.A., Yusran, R., Usman, U., Munawir, N.E.R., (2026). Local Wisdom-Based Multicultural Pedagogy: The Foundation of Character and Tolerance Building in Early Childhood Education. *Ihya Ulum: Early Childhood Education Journal*. Vol. 4(1), 697-709. <https://doi.org/10.59638/ihyaulum.v4i1.870>

Received 17 January 2026; Revised 30 February 2026; Accepted 26 March 2026; Available online 30 March 2026

INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is the most critical foundation phase in shaping children's character, self-identity, and social readiness to face increasingly complex and diverse environmental challenges. In the midst of globalization, which tends to homogenize life values, integrating local cultural values into the ECE curriculum has become urgent. Local culture is not just a legacy of the past, but a living pedagogical instrument that functions as a frame of reference for children to understand the norms, customs, language, and ways of thinking of their community (Ardiyanti & Hanip, 2022; Ermiwati & Mayar, 2023; Wahyuni et al., 2023). The instillation of these cultural values plays a central role in integrating religious, moral, politeness, and tolerance values holistically, including stimulating children's cognitive, affective, social-emotional, and motoric aspects (Anggreni et al., 2022; Anida & Eliza, 2020; Fadlillah, 2017). ECE thus assumes an essential responsibility as an agent of transformation and preserver of national culture from pre-school age (Ismail, 2022).

Responding to this urgency, recent research trends in early childhood education have shown a massive increase in the development of media and learning strategies grounded in local wisdom. Various studies based on systematic development models, such as ADDIE and 4D, have successfully designed valid, practical, and effective learning products. These products explore specific cultural riches, such as the Minangkabau, Sasak, and Riau Malay cultures, through instruments that are close to the child's world. For example, the use of audiovisual media, such as animated videos and regional songs, has proven effective in attracting children's attention and instilling moral messages (Ermiwati & Mayar, 2023; Hadiyanto et al., 2023; Suryana & Hijriani, 2021). On the other hand, print-based literature such as picture story books with local wisdom nuances and Minangkabau natural science books are recognized as having strong potential in building early literacy, understanding concepts, and maintaining children's cultural identity (Suryana et al., 2021; Wahyuni et al., 2023; ZR & Eliza, 2020).

Furthermore, optimizing cultural values is also manifested through kinesthetic and artistic approaches. The integration of traditional games such as the *sumbang kurenah* method, *sumbang duo baleh*, and *gobak sodor* has been empirically proven to be able to stimulate the ability of cooperation, discipline, empathy, and social cohesion among children (Akbar et al., 2023; Febyarum & Ichsan, 2023; Nadhifah & Pamungkas, 2023; Suryana et al., 2021). Performing arts and cultural appreciation activities, such as multicultural parties, which are supported by local government regulations, also serve as forums for the expression of creativity and appreciation of diversity (Fakhira & Pamungkas, 2023; Fauziah & Fitriyah, 2020; Wijaya et al., 2022). These practices confirm that culture can be represented in a variety of (Fakhira & Pamungkas, 2023; Fauziah & Fitriyah, 2020; Wijaya et al., 2022), media that stimulate the six aspects of children's development in an integrated manner.

Even though the existing literature has provided substantial evidence of the effectiveness of culture-based media development, there are crucial research gaps that have not been critically examined. First, the majority of previous research tends to be fragmented, focusing on media development in a single regional context without a comparative review of its holistic impact across the

main tri-domains: cognitive, affective, and social-emotional. Second, a point of controversy has emerged regarding the application of local culture, which risks fostering stereotypes, cultural simplification, and gender bias if it is not balanced with universal values of multiculturalism (Anggreni et al., 2022; Dianita, 2020). There is a disparity between the idealism of a culturally oriented curriculum and teachers' actual competence in implementing a multicultural pedagogy that is fair and sensitive to local differences (Anida & Eliza, 2020). Studies that attempt to formulate an equilibrium between the localization of regional culture and the internalization of cross-cultural tolerance values in a comprehensive framework at the ECE level are still very limited.

Therefore, this article aims to fill a gap in the literature. The uniqueness of this research lies in its effort to build a synthetic model of multicultural pedagogy based on local wisdom, which not only presents specific media or methods but also formulates a conceptual framework that balances strengthening local cultural identity with the universal value of tolerance. Therefore, this study not only limits itself to certain cultural entities but also synthesizes philosophical values from other regions, such as the Bugis and Sasak cultures of Lombok. This expansion of the cultural locus aims to provide a more inclusive, comprehensive and representative picture of Indonesian multicultural pedagogy for early childhood. The main contribution of this article is to provide a theoretical foundation and practical guidance for curriculum developers, teachers, and policymakers in ECE institutions to design learning ecosystems that are culturally sensitive, inclusive, and free of stereotypes. Based on these reasons, this research aims to comprehensively examine the concept, implementation strategy, and effectiveness of integrating cultural values in childhood.

Based on this rationale, this research aims to comprehensively examine the concept, implementation strategy, and effectiveness of integrating cultural values in early childhood. Apart from that, this study also aims to formulate practical and strategic implications for increasing educators' competence and involving parents in creating sustainable culture-based learning from the classroom to the family environment.

METHOD

This research uses a literature study method (literature review or narrative literature study) with a content analysis approach to various relevant scientific literature relevant (Krippendorff, 2018; Snyder, 2019). In contrast to rigid systematic reviews, this method was chosen to provide a wider, flexible, yet still focused interpretive space for constructing a conceptual synthesis of local wisdom values, multicultural pedagogical principles, and early childhood development psychology (Baumeister & Leary, 1997). Through a content analysis approach, texts and findings from various primary sources are not merely summarized descriptively, but dissected critically to uncover patterns, relationships, and deep theoretical meaning (Krippendorff, 2018).

The literature collection process was conducted through online searches across reputable national and international databases, including Google Scholar, DOAJ, and Sinta. The keywords used in the search were analyzed flexibly yet purposefully, such as *Pedagogi Multikultural*, *Kearifan Lokal*, *Pendidikan Karakter*, *Toleransi*, and *Anak Usia Dini*. The study material focused on scientific

journal articles published from 2017 to 2024 that discussed the integration of culture in estimating children's development. The limitation of the literature time span from 2017 to 2024 methodologically relies on the momentum of the publication of Presidential Regulation Number 87 of 2017 concerning Strengthening Character Education (PPK), which fundamentally changes the paradigm of moral mainstreaming at the early childhood level. The 2024 deadline was chosen strategically because it marks the equilibrium phase of the national curriculum, with the massive official ratification of the Merdeka Curriculum, which formally legitimized autonomy based on local wisdom. Thus, this chronological delimitation is not taken at random, but rather is strictly designed to ensure that all theoretical syntheses produced are within a policy ecosystem that is equal, relevant to contemporary dynamics, and meets the standards of scientific novelty.

Data analysis in this literature review was carried out circularly and interactively, adapting Miles and Huberman's qualitative analysis model, which includes three main stages. Data Reduction (Data Reduction). This stage is a process of critical selection, focusing, and simplification of piles of raw data obtained from scientific databases (Sugiyono, 2019). In practice, data reduction is carried out by filtering the collected articles based on their substantial relevance to the Early Childhood Education (ECE) locus and to the focus on multicultural pedagogy. Articles that only discussed culture in general without touching on estimates of children's development or character formation were immediately excluded. Essential information from the selected primary articles was then extracted, including the authors' names, publication years, local wisdom variables/concepts used, and key findings related to tolerance and character.

Categorization and Presentation of Data (Data Display). Data presentation is designed to organize information, reducing it to a systematic structure so that patterns are easy to understand (Miles et al., 2014). At this stage, the data is classified into two main axes. The first axis is the clustering of the media ecosystem, where teacher strategies are grouped into digital/audiovisual media, print/visual media, and kinesthetic media (traditional games). The second axis is theoretical mapping, in which empirical findings are analyzed through the lens of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (cultural tools) and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (microsystem-to-macrosystem synergy). This data is then presented in the form of comparative tables and a coherent analytical narrative.

Conclusion Drawing and Verification (Conclusion Drawing/Verification). This final stage is the process of drawing meaning from the data presented by searching for patterns, relationships, similarities, and theoretical differences (Miles et al., 2014). Researchers do not simply summarize what the previous literature says, but rather conduct a high-level critical synthesis. From this process, a new conceptual equilibrium was formulated, a synthetic model that explains how ECE institutions can strengthen children's local cultural identity (local pride) without being trapped in chauvinism, while simultaneously internalizing the universal value of global tolerance. This conclusion is then verified for validity through theoretical triangulation, namely by testing the consistency of the findings with the primary literature and established theories of child social development before being formulated as the article's conclusion.

RESULTS

A search of the scientific literature published from 2017 to 2024 identified and mapped essential data on the implementation of multicultural pedagogy grounded in local wisdom in Early Childhood Education (ECE). Based on a content analysis approach, the results of this research are grouped into three main findings: (1) Typology of local cultural values and their impact on character; (2) Clustering of contextual learning media ecosystems; and (3) Equilibrium pillars supporting program success.

Typology of Local Cultural Values in Forming AUD Character

Synthesis of the primary literature shows that local cultural values integrated into ECE institutions are not adopted randomly but have specific moral-religious and social-emotional value content. Local culture in this conceptualization functions as a cognitive and affective reference that facilitates children's recognition of their identity and ways of interacting within their community (Ardiyanti & Hanip, 2022; Ermiwati & Mayar, 2023; Wahyuni et al., 2023).

Objectively, literature data indicate that the variety of local wisdom in Indonesia inherently stimulates children's holistic development, thereby strengthening pro-social character (Fauziah & Fitriyah, 2020; Febyarum & Ichsan, 2023). The distribution of the focus of local cultural values and targets for early childhood character formation found in the literature is summarized in the following table:

Table 1. Focus on Local Cultural Values and Character Targets for Early Childhood

<i>Various Values / Local Wisdom</i>	<i>Character Target ECE Development</i>	<i>Literary Sources Primary</i>
Relational Sociocultural Values (Sipakatau, Sipakaraja, Sipakalebbi):	Empathy, mutual respect, humanity, social responsibility, and tolerance.	(Musi et al., 2022; Sakti et al., 2024a, 2024b)
Oral Tradition and Literature (Waran, Fairy Tales, Folklore)	Moral-religious understanding, logical reasoning, cultural vocabulary, and appreciation of plurality.	(Anggreni et al., 2022; Quranita et al., 2024)
Cultural Rites and Regional Songs (Dama Nyili-Nyili, Dolanan Song)	Values of religiosity, strengthening morals, togetherness, and national identity.	(Manaf et al., 2023)
Traditional Games (Gobak Sodor, etc.)	Physical-motor activity, discipline, honesty, group cooperation, and self-confidence.	(A'ini et al., 2022; Nadlifah et al., 2024)

The data above confirm that a culture-based approach can stimulate the six aspects of children's development in an integrated manner, with moral-religious and social-emotional values serving as the main foundation (Devina et al., 2023; Erviana & Faisal, 2022).

Contextual Learning Media Ecosystem Clustering

To bridge the abstract concept of cultural values into the pre-operational thinking phase of early childhood, the literature shows educators extensively using the media ecosystem. Based on the analysis of the development model used (dominated by the ADDIE and 4D models), this local wisdom-based learning media can be classified into three main media clusters as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Clustering of Learning Media Ecosystems Based on Local Culture

<i>Media Cluster</i>	<i>Types of Learning Instruments</i>	<i>Implementation Patterns in ECE Classes</i>	<i>Pedagogical Impact Noted</i>
Digital & Audiovisual Media	Culturally animated videos, digital storybooks, and audio based on folklore (waran).	Shown as an initial stimulus for contextual learning to attract children's attention.	Increase learning motivation, expand visual imagination, and introduce cultural diversity at a macro level.
Print & Visual Media	Picture story books (big books) based on local content, ethnic character cards.	Used in interactive and dialogical storytelling methods between teachers and children.	Enriching vocabulary (early literacy), concretely internalizing moral values, and strengthening children's focus.
Kinesthetic Media (Games)	Traditional group games, educational game tools (APE) based on local natural materials..	Integrated into structured free play sessions through teamwork mechanisms..	Stimulates gross/fine motor skills, reduces children's egocentrism, and trains emotional regulation and tolerance.

The use of these three media clusters proves that curriculum transformation, especially in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, is effective in providing an autonomous space for ECE institutions to revive regional songs, local fairy tales, and the use of mother tongue in the classroom in a meaningful way (Anggreni et al., 2022; Anida & Eliza, 2020; Nadhifah & Pamungkas, 2023)

Equilibrium Pillars of Successful Multicultural Pedagogy

The third objective finding from the literature underscores that instilling the values of tolerance and diversity does not occur automatically by simply presenting culture in the classroom. There is a risk of distortion, including cultural bias, stereotypes, oversimplification of other cultures, and even gender bias, if teaching materials are not managed inclusively (Anggreni et al., 2022; Dianita, 2020). Based on data extraction, three main pillars were found that maintain balance so that strengthening local identity continues to run in harmony with the spirit of universal tolerance: (a) Educator Cultural Competency: Teachers have the main control in eliminating material bias. Teachers with high multicultural sensitivity can act as facilitators, ensuring fairness in teaching for all students without racial, ethnic, or religious discrimination (Anggreni et al., 2022; Musi et al., 2022). (b) Public Policy Legitimacy: Macro support in the form of formal operational regulations, such as Regional Regulations regarding local content, provides a strong and accountable legal structure for ECE institutions to allocate resources in arts and culture-based learning (Fadlillah, 2017; Fakhira & Pamungkas, 2023). (c) Synergy of the Tri-center of Education: Data shows that

character internalization will not persist if it stops at the school gate. It is necessary to integrate cultural values into a democratic family parenting pattern at home (first pillar), which is validated by positive social control from the community, traditional leaders, and village officials (Erviana & Faisal, 2022; Ismail, 2022; Nadhifah & Pamungkas, 2023).

DISCUSSION

The Essence of Multicultural Pedagogy and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Perspective in Forming Early Childhood Identity

Multicultural education at the Early Childhood Education (ECE) level goes beyond simply introducing regional physical attributes such as traditional clothing, traditional food, or regional dances. More than that, this approach is a critical pedagogical strategy that places the principles of justice, equality, and inclusivity at the core of the entire learning process. Introduction to local cultural values in early childhood is not just a transfer of historical knowledge or preservation of customs, but rather an essential instrument in forming children's identity, moral framework, and cognitive and affective references to understand how to interact within their community *komunitasnya* (Ardiyanti & Hanip, 2022; Ermiwati & Mayar, 2023; Wahyuni et al., 2023). Early introduction to diversity helps children construct their personal identity while expanding their thinking schemes towards plural social realities in the golden age phase (Desmila & Suryana, 2023).

Theoretically, this internalization aligns with Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes that children's cognitive and character development is actively constructed through social interactions within a specific cultural context (Musi et al., 2022; Nurani et al., 2024). In this landscape, local wisdom values function as cultural tools that help children understand social reality. As an empirical example, the internalization of local wisdom values of the Bugis community, such as *sipakatau* (mutual humanization), *sipakaraja* (mutual respect), and *sipakalebbi* (mutual respect), provides a concrete anchor for children to understand abstract universal concepts such as tolerance and social responsibility (Musi et al., 2022; Sakti et al., 2024b, 2024a).

To ensure these values are internalized optimally, educators can transform these moral values through four adaptive methods: (1) contributive methods in selecting multicultural themes; (2) additive methods as a complement to learning; (3) methods of social transformation through direct interaction practices; and (4) social action methods that involve children in real activities in their environment (Kasmiati, 2023). Through this structured sociocultural approach, young children are guided to cross the threshold of understanding from mere local pride to psychological readiness in accepting global pluralism (Suradi et al., 2022).

Internalization of Bronfenbrenner's Characters of Tolerance, Moderation, and Ecological Analysis

Instilling local wisdom values has been proven to align with stimulating children's holistic development, especially in strengthening pro-social qualities such as cooperation, empathy, responsibility, and tolerance (Fauziah & Fitriyah, 2020; Febyarum & Ichsan, 2023). Local culture acts as a filter and a stimulator of moral and spiritual development, effectively preventing potential extremism and fostering national commitment from an early age (Mauharir et al., 2022; Mimin,

2023). However, instilling socio-religious values of tolerance and moderation cannot occur in a partial vacuum at school alone. Failure to instill a positive personality at an early age risks the development of a problematic personality in adulthood (Suradi et al., 2022).

The weight of success in cultivating this character can be dissected sharply through Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory, which emphasizes that children's character development is influenced by the dynamics of various interacting environmental systems (Nurani et al., 2024). At the microsystem level, the family plays the central and first role in modeling attitudes of tolerance at home (Saugi et al., 2022). Choosing a democratic parenting style has been proven to significantly increase children's openness to differences (Nadlifah et al., 2024).

At the mesosystem level, synergy and continuity of values between the home environment and ECE institutions are absolute prerequisites. Schools must function as a strategic medium that implements character education without racial, ethnic, or religious discrimination through consistent practice and example (Intisari et al., 2023; Musi et al., 2022). Furthermore, in the realms of the ecosystem and the macrosystem, involvement of the wider community and the macro-cultural environment through an ethno pedagogical approach also validates children's adaptive character (Sakti et al., 2024b, 2024a). Through this ecological attachment, the process of forming children's character is strengthened harmoniously and sustainably, from the domestic space to social interactions.

Curriculum Transformation and Optimization of the Contextual Learning Media Ecosystem

The biggest challenge in early childhood education practice is how to translate the abstract idea of multiculturalism into concrete action for children who are cognitively still at the pre-operational stage. Accommodating local wisdom into learning implementation plans is seen as a progressive step to produce students with adaptive and superior personalities (Erviana & Faisal, 2022). In the current educational landscape in Indonesia, this integration of local content finds strong momentum and relevance in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, which provides broad autonomy for ECE institutions to explore local values (Devina et al., 2023). This integrated stimulation model demonstrates that embedding local values does not merely address single developmental domains but rather fosters holistic growth across all six developmental aspects, primarily anchoring on the child's moral-religious and social-emotional foundations (Anggreni et al., 2022; Anida & Eliza, 2020; Nadhifah & Pamungkas, 2023).

To bridge this need, educators and researchers have developed a culture-based learning media ecosystem (most of which use the ADDIE or 4D development model). This media ecosystem is classified into three main approaches: digital/audiovisual media, print media, and kinesthetic media/traditional games. Contextual learning using media that is close to the child's world, such as the use of folklore (waran) in North Lombok (Quranita et al., 2024) and the Dama Nyili-Nyili tradition (Manaf et al., 2023), has been proven to produce a much more meaningful understanding of values than conventional methods.

Besides visual media, traditional games occupy a position as a very effective pedagogical instrument. Rather than just stimulating physical-motor activity, group play activities in traditional games transmit noble moral messages, train discipline, honesty, self-confidence, and the habit of respecting the opinions of peers (A'ini et al., 2022; Nadlifah et al., 2024). Therefore, teachers are required to think creatively and innovatively in reviving regional songs, local fairy tales, and the use of mother tongue in ECE classrooms.

Equilibrium of Pedagogical Challenges, Educator Competence, and Public Regulation

Although local cultural integration offers many pedagogical advantages, crucial findings from the literature highlight the existence of major challenges in maintaining a balance (equilibrium) between strengthening local cultural identity and instilling universal, multicultural values. Studies Dianita (2020) highlight that without adequate pedagogical and cultural competence among educators, the implementation of local culture in ECE classes risks fostering cultural bias, stereotypes, the simplification of other ethnic groups, and even gender bias in teaching materials. Therefore, the effectiveness of multicultural pedagogy must be firmly supported by three pillars of equilibrium: (a) Teacher Cultural Competence: Educators must not simply be passive agents of knowledge transfer, but must proactively involve themselves as learners from their students' cultural communities. Teachers need specialized training to translate local values into an inclusive framework so that children have both local pride and global tolerance (Anggreni et al., 2022). (b) Public Policy Support: Internalization of values requires formal legitimacy. Macro operational foundations such as Regional Regulations have been proven to provide a strong structure and legal umbrella for schools to organize learning based on local arts and culture in an accountable and sustainable manner (Fadlillah, 2017; Fakhira & Pamungkas, 2023). (c) Active Involvement of Parents: The instillation of moral values must not be interrupted at the school gate. Collaborative school-family programs, such as multicultural parties and the integration of cultural values in daily parenting, are the main prerequisites for these character values to be clearly manifested in children's daily behavior (Ismail, 2022; Nadhifah & Pamungkas, 2023). This cross-sectoral synergy among village officials, community leaders, families, and schools has become a common defense against the negative excesses of modernization (Erviana & Faisal, 2022).

This literature review, even though it has been prepared comprehensively, has several academic limitations that need to be taken into account, a) searching for study materials is limited to national and regional databases such as Google Scholar, DOAJ, and Sinta, thus potentially excluding relevant publications from international databases with global reputation (such as Scopus and Web of Science) and gray literature, b) the majority of articles analyzed show demographic bias because they are dominated by research loci in large cultural groups in Indonesia (such as Minangkabau, Javanese, and Sasak). This limits the generalizability of the findings when applied to minority indigenous communities, remote communities, or outermost regions. c) The available literature is dominated by Research and Development (R&D) of learning media products and short-term observational studies. As a result, the longitudinal effectiveness of multicultural pedagogy on the persistence of children's tolerant

character into adulthood cannot yet be empirically measured. These limitations open strategic opportunities for future research to expand the scope of global literature searches, explore marginalized cultural entities, and initiate more comprehensive longitudinal research.

CONCLUSION

This narrative literature study confirms that multicultural pedagogy based on local wisdom is not just an instrument for preserving traditions, but an essential sociocultural foundation for stimulating the holistic development of character, pro-social behavior, and tolerance in early childhood. Based on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory, this integration succeeded in formulating three pillars of conceptual equilibrium, namely a typology of adaptive cultural values, clustering of the learning media ecosystem (digital, print, kinesthetic) in the pre-operational phase, as well as a balance between local cultural pride and universal tolerance. Even though it has been proven effective, the success of its implementation in the field depends heavily on eliminating the risk of cultural bias, stereotypes, and oversimplification of material. Therefore, it is recommended that ECE educators internalize the substantial philosophical values of culture through concrete media free of gender bias, and that policymakers formulate curriculum guidelines with local content standardized at the ecosystem level. Considering that this study is limited to a literature review of secondary literature from the period 2017–2024, future researchers are advised to conduct field-based empirical research either through experimental quantitative approaches or in-depth case studies in order to test the effectiveness of this equilibrium conceptual framework in real terms on various characteristics of ECE institutions in Indonesia...

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