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Cultivating the Value of Identity in Early Childhood through the Introduction of Yogyakarta's Local Culture

Tumbularani^{*}, Winarti, Siti Risda Sakila

Departement of Education, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta Correspondence: E-mail: <u>23204031011@student.uin-suka.ac.id</u>

ABSTRACT

This research discusses the cultivation of the value of identity in early childhood through the introduction of local culture of Yogyakarta at TK Batik PPBI Yogyakarta. Using a qualitative method with a field study approach, data was collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results showed that the integration of local culture in learning through daily, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities succeeded in instilling identity values, both regional, national, and individual identities. Children involved in local wisdom-based activities show greater selfconfidence, appreciation for culture, and pride in their regional cultural heritage. The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum also supports this approach by providing flexibility for schools in developing culture-based learning. This study revealed that the introduction of Yogyakarta local culture through daily, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities at TK Batik PPBI Yogyakarta successfully instilled identity values regional, national, and individual in early childhood. The impact of this research shows that early introduction to local culture not only strengthens children's identity, but also contributes to cultural preservation in the midst of globalization.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as a country with extraordinary cultural diversity, covering various aspects such as language, customs, arts, and local wisdom. One of the regions that has a rich cultural heritage is Yogyakarta. As the center of Javanese culture, Yogyakarta has various traditions that are still preserved, ranging from the art of batik, Javanese language, to the value system that is passed down from generation to generation. This local culture has an important role in shaping the identity of the people of Yogyakarta, both in social, moral, and national aspects. However, in the midst of increasingly strong globalization, this cultural heritage faces great challenges. The development of technology and the rapid influence of foreign cultures have changed the mindset and lifestyle of the younger generation, including children from an early age. Children today tend to be more familiar with global culture than with their own local culture, thus risking losing the cultural identity that should be part of their identity (Wahyuningsih & Surbakti, 2018).

In the context of education, early childhood is a group that is very vulnerable to environmental and cultural influences that they have absorbed since childhood. Early childhood education (PAUD) plays an important role in shaping children's character and identity (Herdiana et al., 2021). In this phase, children experience very rapid cognitive, social, and emotional development, so that cultural values instilled early on can be the foundation in shaping their personality in the future (Bakken et al., 2017). Local culture-based education in ECD can be an effective strategy for instilling children's regional, national and individual identities. Through the introduction of local cultures, such as regional languages, traditional arts, folk games and traditional rituals, children can understand and appreciate the cultural heritage that is part of their lives.

In line with the vision of national education that emphasizes the importance of character and culture, Merdeka Curriculum provides flexibility for education units to develop learning programs that are appropriate to the local context. This curriculum focuses on strengthening the Pancasila Student profile, one element of which is strengthening Indonesian cultural identity (Nurasiah et al., 2022). With the freedom to design local culture-based learning, schools have the opportunity to integrate cultural values into various educational activities. However, although this policy provides space for schools to be more adaptive, the implementation of culture-based education in PAUD still faces various challenges, both in terms of curriculum, educator readiness, and family and community involvement.

Various studies have examined character education and culture, but there are still some gaps in this study that need to be clarified. First, previous studies have focused more on character education in general or strengthening cultural identity at primary and secondary school levels, while studies on the implementation of local culture in early childhood education are limited (Wahyuningsih & Surbakti, 2018). Studies that discuss how local culture can be systematically integrated in early childhood learning are still very few, even though this age is a critical period in the formation of individual identity. Second, although Merdeka Curriculum has provided greater opportunities for schools to adopt local culture-based education, not many studies have specifically examined the effectiveness of this approach in the formation of early childhood cultural identity (Shalehah, 2023). The extent to which this curriculum is able to provide significant results in instilling cultural values is still a question that needs to be answered through empirical studies.

Third, this research was conducted in one educational institution, TK Batik PPBI Yogyakarta, which has unique characteristics as a batik culture-based school. This school has a strong background in maintaining local cultural values, but there has been no comparison

with other schools that have different approaches in teaching local culture. Whether the methods applied at TK Batik PPBI Yogyakarta can also be adopted in other schools that do not have a strong cultural background still needs to be studied further. Therefore, a comparative study is needed to understand whether the effectiveness of this method can be applied in different educational environments.

Fourthly, this research is still exploratory and only looks at the short-term impact of implementing local culture-based learning on early childhood. The long-term impact of this approach on children's cultural identity formation has not been studied. Longitudinal studies are needed to understand whether children who learn with a culture-based approach from an early age retain their cultural identity into adolescence or adulthood. If local culture-based education does have a sustained positive impact, then this approach could be made a national policy in ECD curricula across Indonesia.

Fifth, parental involvement in supporting culturally based education has not been a major focus in many previous studies. However, families play an important role in strengthening children's cultural identity outside of school. Parents have significant influence over their children's worldview and habits, including cultural appreciation. This study seeks to examine the extent to which parental support enhances culturally based learning in schools and how collaboration between educators and families can be strengthened for optimal results (Apriliyanti et al., 2021).

Given these research gaps, this study aims to explore cultivating the value of identity in early childhood through the introduction of Yogyakarta's local culture at TK Batik PPBI Yogyakarta. Using a qualitative approach, this research will analyze how incorporating cultural elements into daily activities, co-curricular, and extracurricular programs can shape young children's sense of identity. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of more effective teaching methods for instilling cultural identity from an early age. Additionally, this study aspires to serve as a model for other educational institutions seeking to implement culturally based education in an era of increasing globalization.

2. METHODS

This research was conducted using descriptive qualitative research methods with a case study approach. Qualitative research is used when observing paradigms about reality, phenomena, and changes in a symptom (Mekarisce, 2020). The data collection techniques used were observation, interviews and documentation. Observations were made to directly observe the children's process during local culture-based activities. Interviews were conducted to explore deeper information from principals, teachers, and students. And documentation is carried out to assist in the research process, the documents in question are documents from the foundation relating to the profile of the institution, curriculum and other supporting documents in obtaining data. While the data analysis techniques used are data reduction, display or presentation of data and verification or conclusion. In its implementation, the research stages used are depicted in the diagram in **Figure 1**.

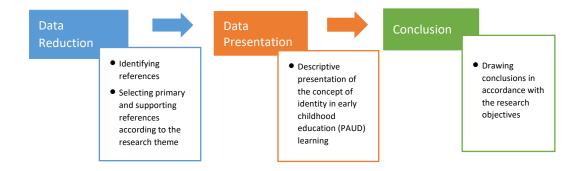


Figure 1. Data Analysis Stages

This research was conducted at TK Batik PPBI Yogyakarta. This institution was chosen because; first, it is one of the oldest kindergartens in Yogyakarta established in 1957 which was inaugurated directly by Mr. Dr. Moh. Hatta and his wife. Second, this institution was founded by batik entrepreneurs called Persatuan Pengusaha Batik Indonesia (PPBI). Third, this kindergarten still maintains local culture, especially the local culture of Yogyakarta. The object of this research is all students in class B-1 with an age range of 4-5 years.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Local Culture as the National Identity

Due to the extraordinary cultural diversity in Indonesia, each culture has unique characteristics that are important to its society. Ki Hajar Dewantara said that culture is the result of human thought and hard work in facing two main influences: time and nature. Culture is evidence of human success in overcoming various challenges and life difficulties with the aim of achieving safety and happiness manifested in order and peace (Susilo, 2018). Meanwhile, according to Koentjoroningrat in his book published in (1985:5), there are three ways in which culture can be described: (1) as a collection of concepts, ideas, values, norms, and rules; (2) as patterns of human activities and behaviors in society; (3) as products of material works created by humans (Faiz et al., 2020).

Yogyakarta is a place with a strong culture and language (Wahyuningsih & Surbakti, 2018). Art and culture are an important part of the lives of the people of Yogyakarta. According to Hasim, (2009) the significant cultural influence of the sultan's power, along with myths about his supernatural abilities, has made Javanese culture a respected tradition. Therefore, the Javanese culture of Yogyakarta has become a local identity.

Javanese customs, along with Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic traditions, have a significant influence on the society and culture of Yogyakarta. Art and culture have become an integral part of the daily lives of the people of Yogyakarta. The power of the sultan, often associated with myths of supernatural strength, further reinforces his status as a highly revered tradition in Javanese culture. The Sultan is regarded by the Javanese people as a representation of absolute power that must be followed. The Sultan of Yogyakarta possesses extraordinary political, military, and religious authority (Hasim, 2009).

According to Rachmawati and Komariah (2016), the concept of "Identity" consists of three main components: "Regional Identity," "National Identity," and "Individual Identity." When teaching early childhood children, regional identity is very important to teach them about the local community, culture, and social aspects. In this way, children will learn how important it is to be part of the community. Conversely, identity can also help children feel belonging,

valued, and maintain their local identity (Aghnaita et al., 2022). Thus, the development of a positive identity in early childhood not only includes the introduction to the environment and local identity but also involves the development of character and attitudes that support healthy and empowered personal growth.

The free curriculum has an activity structure consisting of three main elements to achieve learning objectives. The three components are: 1) religious values and character; 2) identity; and 3) basic knowledge, such as mathematics, science, technology, engineering, and arts. Learning from the component of identity can lead to the formation of a positive identity in early childhood, which has significant impacts, including: 1) fostering a sense of worth and self-confidence in children; and 2) helping children become positive, cheerful, and accomplished individuals in school (Shalehah, 2023).

It must be instilled from an early age so that Indonesian society, especially the younger generation, has a sense of pride and love for its cultural values and local wisdom. A love for local wisdom encompasses affection, loyalty, care, and high appreciation for aspects such as language, culture, economy, politics, and others. Therefore, it is not easy to accept offers from other countries that could endanger one's own country (Faiz et al., 2020).

3.2. Instilling Local Wisdom Values from an Early Age at Batik PPBI Kindergarten Yogyakarta

Local wisdom is a strategy that departs from the real social phenomena of life. Has a meaningful content in the context of internalizing values in learning with the hope of realizing meaningful learning that provides flexibility, synergy, and trust to learners, to search for and work together to find and reveal answers to any problems that exist, both in the process of learning and work together to find and reveal answers to any problems that exist, both in the learning process in the classroom, as well as problems that exist in the classroom. Learning process in the classroom, as well as problems in the surrounding environment (Ahdad et al., 2023).

Education and cultural values cannot be separated because education is a part of culture. Cultural preservation will be more effective if carried out through the educational process. One way to preserve culture in schools is by introducing local or regional culture to students, involving all parties in the school. To realize a school capable of introducing that culture, good management in its administration is required, including coordinating and integrating activities specifically aimed at the development of local culture (Fahira et al., 2023). One of the schools that has contributed to the planting and development of local culture is TK Batik PPBI Yogyakarta.

TK Batik PPBI Yogyakarta continues to implement cultural values in the daily learning process to preserve the identity of the Yogyakarta community and instill the children's identity in accordance with local culture. This is evident when the children arrive at school in the morning and some teachers are already ready to greet them at the gate. Then the children shake hands with their teachers. The use of greetings is very important in education. In addition to using greetings as part of education to help children develop better cultural values and preserve their surrounding culture, teachers can also build children's character such as tolerance, honesty, and religiosity (Nabilla et al., 2024).

The Javanese community, especially the elders, have taught their children as early as possible about the standards and expectations of their cultural behavior. For example, by teaching children manners, such as greeting, shaking hands, and bowing when meeting adults as a sign of respect, it is hoped that they will ultimately maintain a strong cultural bond (Diananda, 2021).

Then, before entering the classroom, the children are asked to line up in the yard with activities such as exercising, clapping, and singing. During the lining up, the local cultural atmosphere was also evident, as the children were asked to sing songs in the Javanese language. the introduction of Javanese songs can help children understand and appreciate the culture as well as increase awareness of their living environment. This can be achieved through the introduction of local culture, customs, clothing, dances, and traditional songs of the region (Raharja, 2021).

In the Menteri dan Kebudayaan Regulation number 62 of 2014, it is stated that learning activities are divided into two, namely co-curricular and extracurricular activities (Shilviana & Hamami, 2020). In co-curricular learning, TK Batik PPBI Yogyakarta highly emphasizes local cultural potentials, as seen during the researchers' observation close to the Eid al-Adha holiday, where the teacher taught the children about the local cultural wisdom of Yogyakarta in the form of "Grebek Gunungan." Grebeg is a traditional procession symbolizing a donation from the Yogyakarta Palace to the community in the form of a gunungan. The Yogyakarta Palace donates gunungan to the community through the grebeg procession. Every year, the Kraton of Yogyakarta and Surakarta hold Grebeg three times during Islamic holidays: Grebeg Syawal on Eid al-Fitr, Grebeg Besar on Eid al-Adha, and Grebeg Maulud, more commonly known as Grebeg Sekaten, on the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (Dutayana & Irawan, 2021).

The initial learning activity after the opening activity is to take the children to the computer lab to watch on the smart TV about "grebek gunungan." After that, the teacher asks the children several questions about what they have seen, such as, what is grebek gunungan, what are the activities involved, what is inside the gunungan that was brought, and when these activities are conducted. After that, the teacher asks again about the activities the children want to do based on their interests and desires. This reflects the learning implemented in the independent curriculum where children have the right to choose and teachers are given the freedom to carry out learning activities. **Figure 2** shows the teacher's efforts in preparing several learning areas for children.



Figure 2. Several play areas prepared by the teacher to create a miniature of the "Grebeg Gunungan"

According to Permendikbudristek Number 16 of 2022 on the Standards for the Independent Curriculum Process for Early Childhood Education, the first is that lesson planning must be made in the form of flexible lesson planning documents, which are not bound to a specific format and can be adjusted to the learning context. Secondly, the learning

103 | Cakrawala Dini: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Volume 16 Issue 1, May 2025 Page 97-106

planning document should be simple and clear. Finally, simple, covering basic and important topics as a foundation for conducting learning (Tazkia et al., 2023).

Furthermore, when discussing the curriculum, it is essential to understand the basic framework and structure of the curriculum. There is a direction for curriculum changes that must be understood in relation to: (1) a more flexible curriculum structure, with lesson hours targeted to be completed within one year, (2) a focus on essential materials (3) Providing flexibility for teachers to use various teaching tools according to the needs and characteristics of the students, (4) applications that offer various references for teachers to continuously develop their teaching practices independently and share best practices (Daulay & Fauziddin, 2023).

In the element of self-identity development, the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) has established learning achievements, including; (1) Children can recognize, manage, express their emotions, and build healthy social relationships, (2) Children show pride in their family identity, cultural background, and their identity as Indonesian children based on Pancasila. (3) Children have a positive attitude and actively participate in maintaining cleanliness, health, and personal safety (Retnaningsih & Khairiyah, 2022).

Teachers with merdeka curriculum are expected not only to focus on academic learning but also to give adequate attention to the social and emotional development of their students. Thus, it is expected that students will have a pleasant learning experience and a strong desire to learn more. The concept of learning itself can be defined as a way to apply the curriculum into an enjoyable learning process. One of the success factors is also the teacher's effort to think creatively, which can foster a positive attitude in students about how they respond to lessons (Nafisa & Fitri, 2023).

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In addition to co-curricular activities, TK Batik PPBI Yogyakarta also has extracurricular activities that still instill local culture, one of which is the extracurricular activity of batikmaking. Batik is one type of applied art (creation) that has developed and evolved in almost all regions of Indonesia since ancient times. Batik has distinctive motifs, ornaments, decorative patterns, styles, techniques, and materials in each era and region. Batik art has different histories and cultures in each region of Indonesia (Hidayah & Khadijah, 2023).

By incorporating batik into direct learning activities, students can learn that batik is part of Indonesia's cultural wealth that must be preserved to foster pride in their culture and cultivate global courage. Sari & Muthmainnah, (2023) and specifically instilling a sense of identity where children learn about the local culture in their area. Another benefit of batik activities for early childhood is honing the coordination between body parts, especially the eyes and hands, with optimal hand muscle movements and eye focus performance (Rochmah & Hasibuan, 2020).

4. CONCLUSION

This study revealed that the introduction of Yogyakarta local culture through daily, cocurricular, and extracurricular activities at TK Batik PPBI Yogyakarta successfully instilled identity values regional, national, and individual in early childhood. Children demonstrated greater confidence, cultural appreciation, and pride in their heritage, highlighting the importance of integrating local culture into early education. These findings underscore the role of culturally relevant approaches in preserving local traditions and strengthening children's identity amidst globalization. The study's significance lies in its contribution to early childhood education strategies that foster cultural awareness and identity formation, offering a model for other institutions to follow. However, the study is limited by its focus on a single kindergarten in Yogyakarta, which may not be generalizable to other regions, and its reliance on qualitative methods, which may introduce subjectivity. Future research could explore the long-term impact of local culture-based learning on children's identity development or compare similar programs across different cultural contexts in Indonesia.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research acknowledges that the development of local Yogyakarta culture among early childhood, although important, faces significant challenges related to globalization and foreign cultural influences. The success in preserving this culture depends on various factors, including teacher readiness, community support, and parental involvement in educating children. However, it should be noted that the teaching of local culture can have limitations in its implementation if it is not supported by adequate resources and consistent attention from the relevant parties.

Furthermore, although this research focuses on TK Batik PPBI Yogyakarta, further studies involving other educational institutions can provide a broader understanding of how local culture can be instilled in children throughout Indonesia. This research can also be developed by comparing various types of local cultures in Indonesia to see the influence and acceptance of local cultures on children in different regions.

6. AUTHORS' NOTE

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The author has no conflicts of interest related to this research. All data used in this research are the result of direct observation and interviews with relevant parties. The author hopes that the results of this research can contribute to the efforts of preserving local culture and developing the education curriculum in Indonesia.

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Tumbularani et al., Cultivating the Value of Identity in Early Childhood through the Introduction ... | 106

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