

Cultural Preservation through Integrating Banyuwangi's Local Culture

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ABSTRACT – Cultural Preservation through Integrating Banyuwangi's Local Culture. This study examines the integration of Banyuwangi's traditional arts into primary education to enhance engagement, character development, and cultural preservation. Amid globalization's threats to local traditions, culturally relevant education bridges academic achievement with identity. Using a qualitative case study in three schools, data from observations, interviews, focus groups, and documents revealed improved participation, creativity, and moral traits like empathy and respect. However, resource gaps and inadequate teacher training hinder effectiveness. Findings emphasize embedding local culture to foster identity, proposing resource support, flexible curricula, and cultural collaboration for sustainable character education.

Keywords: Cultural Education. Banyuwangi Traditions. Character Development. Academic Engagement. Cultural Preservation.

RESUMO – Preservação Cultural por meio da Integração da Cultura Local de Banyuwangi. Este estudo analisa a integração das artes tradicionais de Banyuwangi ao ensino fundamental para promover engajamento, caráter e preservação cultural. Frente às ameaças da globalização às tradições locais, a educação culturalmente relevante conecta desempenho acadêmico à identidade. Um estudo qualitativo em três escolas revelou maior criatividade, participação e valores como empatia e respeito. No entanto, desafios como falta de recursos e formação docente comprometem a eficácia. O estudo reforça a importância de integrar a cultura local e propõe recursos, currículos flexíveis e colaboração para a educação sustentável.

Palavras-chave: Educação Cultural. Tradições de Banyuwangi. Desenvolvimento do Caráter. Engajamento Acadêmico. Preservação Cultural.

Introduction

Art education has historically been pivotal in shaping students' intellectual, emotional, social, and moral development (Boehm, 2022; Ou Yang et al., 2024). Integrating local culture into curricula has become a critical and urgent in modern education systems, particularly in culturally diverse nations like Indonesia. Indonesia's rich cultural heritage, consisting of over 1,340 recognized ethnic groups, each with its own traditions and artistic expressions, makes this integration necessary for fostering a sense of identity and moral character in students (Kubontubuh; Martokusumo, 2020). For Indonesia, where globalization threatens to erode these rich traditions, integrating local culture, primarily through arts education, becomes vital for character development and cultural preservation.

In Banyuwangi, a region in Indonesia renowned for its unique cultural traditions, the need to integrate local culture into the education system is exceptionally pressing (Lewis, 2022; Suharti; Sari, 2023). The region boasts traditional arts like the Gandrung dance, Osing music, and intricate Batik patterns – each imbued with moral and educational values (Relin, 2017). These art forms are more than aesthetic expressions; they are deeply connected to lessons of patience, perseverance, respect for nature, and social cooperation (Hadzantonis, 2019; Relin, 2017; Wessing, 2019). However, like in many parts of Indonesia, the youth in Banyuwangi are becoming increasingly disconnected from these traditions, mainly due to the overwhelming influence of globalization and Western popular culture. Recent trends indicate that students across Indonesia, including Banyuwangi, are growing distant from their cultural roots, opting instead to engage with global media and pop culture (Abbott, 2017; Jones, 2018). In 2019, an Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture study revealed that 72% of students from various provinces felt alienated from their local traditions (Dwiyanti; Suherman, 2019; Fachrurrofi, 2019). This disconnection is a symptom of a broader issue – cultural erosion driven by globalization, which threatens to displace local cultures with more dominant external influences (Lin et al., 2021). For a nation as culturally diverse as Indonesia, this trend poses a significant risk to national unity and the preservation of cultural identity.

However, despite the ambition of holistically developing academically knowledgeable, creative, morally upright, and culturally aware students, the country's education system has struggled to adequately address the cultural construction and appreciation aspects of its mandate. The focus remains heavily on academic achievement, often at the expense of integrating local culture into the curriculum, contributing to the widening gap between education and cultural identity. Art education inherently involves cultural expressions and offers a powerful platform for addressing these challenges (Hadley; McDonald, 2019). It enables students to connect with their heritage while fostering critical life skills such as empathy, cooperation, and respect. Banyuwangi's traditional arts, such as the Gandrung dance and Osing music,

provide rich opportunities for students to engage with local values and traditions in meaningful and relevant ways to their personal development (Suharti; Sari., 2023). The theory of cognitive development supports this approach, arguing that children, especially in the early stages of education, benefit most from concrete learning experiences that connect with their immediate environment (Chin et al., 2022; Richards et al., 2020). Introducing Banyuwangi's cultural elements into the education system, students can develop a stronger sense of identity and moral grounding.

Despite the potential of art education to promote cultural preservation and character development, Indonesia's current curriculum, particularly the 2013 Curriculum (K-13), has faced criticism for its centralized and standardized approach. While K-13 promotes thematic and integrated learning, it often overlooks regional cultural differences, creating a "one-size-fits-all" model that fails to resonate with students in diverse cultural settings like Banyuwangi. Nationally produced textbooks and learning materials are largely disconnected from the cultural realities of regions like Banyuwangi, Jakarta, or Bali. This disconnect limits the curriculum's effectiveness in fostering academic and moral development, as it neglects local traditions' unique cultural and philosophical lessons. Then, in 2020, an Indonesian Ministry of Education survey revealed that only 18% of primary school teachers felt the current curriculum adequately addressed their students' cultural needs (Maryani et al., 2022; Susanto et al., 2021). This mismatch between the curriculum and the students' lived cultural experiences undermines the education system's ability to foster a well-rounded development that includes a strong sense of cultural identity.

The influence of globalization further exacerbates the urgency to reform Indonesia's education system. This trend is deeply concerning in the context of cultural preservation, as the loss of cultural engagement threatens the long-term survival of these traditions. According to UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report (2021), countries that fail to integrate local culture into their education systems risk eroding their cultural heritage, leading to a loss of identity among younger generations. In Indonesia, where the nation's unity is built on the harmonious coexistence of diverse cultures, such an erosion could have far-reaching consequences. Therefore, Indonesia's educational reforms must prioritize the inclusion of local cultural elements in the curriculum, primarily through art education, which serves as a natural medium for cultural expression and identity formation.

The rationale for focusing on art education in this model stems from the understanding that art is a natural medium for character development (Djatiprambudi; Sampurno, 2023). Preliminary results from pilot programs in several primary schools in Banyuwangi have been highly encouraging. Students taught using the integrated thematic learning model demonstrated significant improvements in academic performance and character development. Teachers reported higher levels of student engagement, with 85% noting increased creativity and

discussion participation. More importantly, students exhibited a new-found respect for their cultural heritage, with 90% expressing a strong interest in learning more about local traditions. These findings align with other research, which found that culturally relevant teaching materials increase student engagement and improve learning outcomes by as much as 40% (Hsu; Chao, 2019; Jeon et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2020; Walyoto, 2017).

This research investigates how integrating Banyuwangi's local cultural elements into the educational system can enhance character development and cultural preservation by embedding traditional arts such as the Gandrung dance, Osing music, and Batik patterns into the curriculum. It aims to demonstrate that culturally relevant art education improves academic engagement and fosters critical life skills like empathy, cooperation, and respect, which are essential for holistic moral development. The study seeks to establish how this approach bridges the gap between academic achievement and cultural identity, providing a practical, sustainable model for character education while ensuring the preservation of cultural heritage in the face of globalization.

Method

The methods used in this study follow a detailed qualitative research design focused on case studies of primary schools in Banyuwangi, Indonesia. This approach was selected to provide an in-depth understanding of how integrating local Banyuwangi culture into education enhances character development and preserves cultural heritage. The qualitative case study methodology allows for a comprehensive exploration of real-life educational contexts, enabling the research to capture complex social and educational phenomena, such as blending local culture into the curriculum.

The research was conducted in primary schools in Banyuwangi through purposive sampling to ensure a diverse representation of both urban and rural settings and different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds (Leavy, 2017). These schools were chosen based on their proximity to cultural hubs like traditional dance schools and community centres focused on local arts, as well as their active participation in pilot programs that incorporated elements of Banyuwangi culture, such as the Gandrung dance, Osing music, and Batik patterns. The selected schools were also willing to engage in innovative curriculum designs that promote cultural preservation. The study sought to explore how integrating these cultural elements impacts students' academic engagement and character development in these diverse settings.

Participants included teachers, students, parents, and local cultural practitioners. A stratified sampling method ensured a comprehensive representation across these groups. Twelve teachers involved in delivering culturally integrated curricula were selected based on their experience and interest in curriculum innovation. A group of 45 students from grades 4-6 was chosen, as this age group is particularly

receptive to concrete learning experiences, a concept supported by Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development. Thirty parents were also included to provide insights into their perceptions of the cultural education their children received. In contrast, ten local cultural practitioners, including dance instructors and Batik artisans, participated to share their expertise on how these traditions could be preserved through education. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring their confidentiality and rights were respected throughout the study.

Table 1 – Overview of Data Collection Methods

Data Collection Method	Purpose	Instruments/Tools Used	Key Data Collected	Data Analysis Approach	Triangulation
Classroom Observations	To understand how cultural elements (Gandrung dance, Osing music, Batik) are integrated into lessons and their impact on character development.	Structured observation guide: Teacher-student interactions, student engagement, cultural content introduction, connections to character development.	Teaching methods, student engagement, interaction quality, participation in cultural activities, student enthusiasm, moral development.	Thematic analysis of teacher-student interactions, engagement patterns, and character development themes.	Cross-reference observations with interview data on student engagement and teacher perceptions.
Semi-Structured Interviews	To gather perceptions from teachers, students, and parents on the integration of local culture and its effects on learning and moral development.	Interview guide: Teachers (challenges, curriculum experience), Students (interest, moral understanding), Parents (observed behavioral changes).	Teachers' experience, students' engagement, students' cultural interest, parents' feedback on behavior, challenges in integrating culture.	Coding and categorization of interview transcripts based on themes such as cultural engagement, moral development, and curriculum challenges.	Compare interview data with classroom observations and document analysis for consistency on cultural engagement.
Focus Groups	To explore local cultural practitioners' perspectives on the relevance of traditional art in education and the preservation of culture.	Focus group discussion guide: Themes on relevance of art in education, collaboration opportunities, globalization challenges.	Cultural practitioners' views on art in education, preserving cultural traditions, and collaboration between schools and cultural centers.	Thematic coding and analysis of focus group data to extract views on cultural preservation, globalization, and collaboration opportunities.	Validate focus group themes with interview responses from teachers and students to ensure accuracy of cultural integration effectiveness.
Document Analysis	To assess how local culture is formally incorporated into the curriculum through teaching materials, lesson plans, and policy documents.	Document analysis template: Analyzing alignment of cultural content with academic objectives and integration across subjects.	Content alignment with curriculum goals, cultural lesson integration in subjects, consistency between practices and guidelines.	Document coding for cultural content alignment, thematic analysis on cultural integration, and curriculum effectiveness.	Cross-validate findings from document analysis with actual teaching practices observed in classrooms.

Source: Author's Elaborated.

Data collection spanned six months and employed multiple methods to ensure a rich and nuanced understanding of the research questions. Classroom observations were conducted over 12 weeks to examine how local cultural elements were integrated into lessons. These observations focused on teacher-student interactions, teaching strategies, and student engagement levels. The observation data helped identify how cultural content such as the Gandrung dance and Batik art was incorporated into various subjects and how these activities contributed to students' moral and character development. Semi-

structured interviews were conducted with teachers, students, and parents, exploring their perspectives on integrating local culture in education. These interviews were designed to capture insights into the challenges and successes of the curriculum, the student's interest in cultural activities, and the parent's observations of changes in their children's attitudes towards their heritage.

In addition to interviews, focus group discussions were held with local cultural practitioners to understand their views on the role of cultural education in preserving traditions. These discussions were invaluable for exploring how schools and local cultural centres could collaborate more effectively. Document analysis was also conducted on teaching materials, lesson plans, and school policy documents to assess how cultural elements were formally integrated into the curriculum and aligned with academic objectives.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data, following a systematic process of coding, categorizing, and interpreting findings. Interview transcripts, focus group notes, and observation records were coded using both inductive and deductive approaches, allowing themes such as "cultural engagement," "character development," and "challenges of globalization" to emerge naturally from the data. Triangulation of these data sources ensured the reliability and validity of the findings, as data from interviews, observations, and documents were cross-referenced to verify consistency.

Result and Discussion

The integration of local cultural elements into the school curriculum has demonstrated significant potential in enhancing student engagement, fostering character development, and strengthening community collaboration (Jumriani et al., 2024; Purwanto et al., 2021; Sari et al., 2023; Wibowo et al., 2021). Activities such as the Gandrung dance, Osing music, and Batik-making workshops have provided students with valuable cultural knowledge while increasing their emotional and Intellectual Investment In the learning process. This approach to education aligns with the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy, which is recognized for effectively connecting students' learning to their cultural backgrounds (Lee et al., 2022; Radclyffe-Thomas, 2015). The following table presents insights from interviews and focus groups with teachers, students, and parents, alongside teacher observations, regarding the impact of cultural education and provide deep insights into how the integration of Banyuwangi's local culture into primary school education influences character development, academic engagement, and cultural preservation, present in Table 2.

Table 2 – Nvivo Coding and Thematic Analysis of Interview and Observation Data

Data Source	Code/Theme	Quote	Interpretation
Teacher Interview	Cooperation and Teamwork	"The Gandrung dance projects have helped students become more cooperative."	Cultural activities like the Gandrung dance promote teamwork among students.
Student Interview	Cultural Pride	"I didn't know much about the Batik patterns before, but now I feel proud."	Students are developing pride in their heritage through exposure to local culture.
Parent Interview	Family Involvement	"We've been discussing the meaning behind the dances and the Batik patterns."	Cultural education encourages family discussions, fostering cultural awareness.
Teacher Observation	Respect and Empathy	"Students now encourage each other more during the Batik workshops."	Increased empathy and respect are observed during collaborative cultural activities.
Student Focus Group	Cultural Connection	"Learning about our traditions made me feel more connected to my family."	Cultural education fosters a deeper personal connection to family and heritage.
Parent Interview	Identity and Heritage	"My child takes pride in learning about traditions they can share with the family."	Students feel a stronger sense of identity, and families support this learning.
Teacher Observation	Increased Participation	"Quieter students became more vocal during the Batik and dance lessons."	Students showed higher engagement during culturally integrated lessons.
Teacher Focus Group	Need for Resources	"We don't have enough materials that properly represent our culture in the curriculum."	Teachers face challenges due to a lack of culturally relevant materials.
Parent Focus Group	Support for Cultural Learning	"I'm happy my child is learning about our culture in school, but they need more tools."	Parents support cultural education but acknowledge the need for more resources.

Source: Author's Elaborated.

In examining the integration of local culture into education in Banyuwangi, one prominent theme is the strengthening of cultural identity among students. This renewed connection to cultural heritage is not just an abstract idea but a lived experience that manifested in various ways throughout the study. Students' engagement with traditions such as the Gandrung dance and Osing music did not merely evoke a sense of pride in their heritage; it reignited a deep connection to their cultural roots. Interviews with 12 teachers revealed a marked increase in student interest in Banyuwangi's cultural history, which went beyond mere artistic curiosity. A teacher noted that students who had previously shown little engagement in class became enthusiastic participants when cultural topics were introduced.

I never realized how meaningful our traditional arts were until we studied them in school. Now, I want to learn more and share it with others (interview with S1).

The emotional and intellectual engagement fostered by culturally relevant education was evident in classroom dynamics as well. Teachers reported that discussions became livelier and student participation spiked, especially when lessons incorporated local traditions. This engagement aligns with Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, which emphasizes the importance of connecting learning material to the students' own experiences. In practical settings, such as a Batik-making workshop, students showed heightened enthusiasm, often taking leadership roles in group activities.

Students who were usually quiet became much more vocal during the Batik lessons, eager to share their work and ask questions (interview with T1).

Furthermore, the integration of local culture also contributed significantly to the students' moral and character development. Activities like the Gandrung dance rehearsals and Batik-making projects fostered teamwork and cooperation, with students learning to synchronize their movements and support each other. Teachers observed that these projects nurtured interpersonal skills, such as communication and patience.

During the dance rehearsals, students had to work closely together, which helped them become more considerate and supportive of one another (interview with T2).

In addition to fostering teamwork, the cultural integration also cultivated empathy and cultural sensitivity among students. Many students expressed a newfound respect for the efforts of their ancestors to preserve these traditions, like interview with S2. Teachers noticed that this growing cultural sensitivity led to more respectful behavior, not only in cultural contexts but also in their interactions with peers in other subjects.

Learning about our traditions made me appreciate how much effort went into keeping them alive. It made me feel more connected to my community and family (interview with S2).

However, the implementation of these cultural programs was not without challenges. A recurring issue highlighted by 9 out of 12 teachers was the lack of resources to effectively integrate local cultural elements into their lessons. Teachers often had to rely on their own creativity or seek assistance from local experts. This challenge was especially pronounced in rural schools, where access to cultural practitioners and materials was even more limited, like in interview with T3.

We lack materials that properly represent our culture in the curriculum. Although community experts help, it's not a sustainable solution. Then, it's not just about including culture in the curriculum; it's about knowing how to teach it in a way that makes sense for our students (interview with T3).

In addition to the need for resources, teachers also called for more professional development opportunities. Seven out of 12 teachers felt underprepared to design and implement culturally relevant curricula and expressed a need for targeted workshops and training (interview with T3). Despite these challenges, one of the most successful aspects of the program was the collaboration with local cultural practitioners. These experts, including Batik artisans, Gandrung dance instructors, and Osing musicians, provided students with authentic cultural learning experiences. Parents also noticed the positive impact of these collaborations, with one parent commenting, "My child came home excited after a Batik workshop with a local artisan. They were not just learning in theory but seeing how these traditions are kept alive by real people in our community. These partnerships enriched the students' learning experiences and strengthened the bond between the school as so on the local community, making it more relevant and connected to the students' daily lives. The integration of Banyuwangi's culture into the curriculum proved to be a powerful tool in both educational and moral development. Students get their cultural heritage,

cooperation, empathy, and confidence. It because, this approach demonstrated how culturally relevant education can transform the learning experience.

Discussion

As explored in this research, integrating Banyuwangi's local cultural elements into the educational curriculum reveals a complex interplay between culture, education, and identity formation. The findings provide a profound discourse on how traditional arts such as the Gandrung dance, Osing music, and Batik patterns can become instrumental in shaping students' academic success and their moral and ethical character. This study underscores the importance of cultural education, particularly in regions where globalized media threatens to overshadow local traditions. However, beyond its surface implications, the integration of culture into education invites more profound reflection on the nature of character development, identity formation, and the role of education in cultural preservation in an era of rapid globalization.

The results challenge the prevailing notion of education as a neutral or purely academic endeavor. Showing that students who engage with culturally relevant content experience improved academic outcomes and a heightened sense of identity, the study disrupts traditional views of education that often prioritize abstract, standardized knowledge over the culturally embedded experiences of students. Education is never culturally neutral and that students learn best when their culture is reflected in the curriculum (Ohta, 2019). Here, Banyuwangi's traditional arts are not just aesthetic objects but carriers of deep cultural values, historical knowledge, and social practices integral to the student's sense of self and belonging.

At a more critical level, this study invites us to reconsider the relationship between education and identity formation. Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory supports the idea that learning is most effective when it is concrete and connected to real-life experiences (Inhelder; Piaget, 1958; Johnson, 2014; Singer et al., 2006). In this context, local culture provides a rich source of such experiences. However, the implications of this are broader. When students engage with their cultural heritage, they are not just learning skills or facts – they are actively participating in constructing their identity. The Gandrung dance, for instance, is not simply a set of movements to be memorized; it is a performance of cultural memory, a reflection of communal values, and a medium through which students can explore their place within that tradition. This process of identity formation through cultural engagement highlights education's more profound role in shaping who students become, not just what they know.

From a critical perspective, this challenges the dominant education model that often prioritizes universal, standardized knowledge over localized, contextually embedded learning. In Indonesia, as in many other postcolonial nations, the push for modernization has often

come at the cost of cultural specificity. The national curriculum, exemplified by Kurikulum in 2013, attempts to create a cohesive national identity through standardized content, yet in doing so, it risks alienating students from their local traditions and histories. The findings of this study reveal the limitations of such an approach, particularly in culturally rich regions like Banyuwangi, where students' academic and moral development is closely tied to their cultural identity. The disconnection from a standardized, culturally neutral curriculum leaves students estranged from the heritage that could serve as a foundation for their personal and academic growth.

This research's central concern is the erosion of cultural identity due to globalization. Societies risk losing their cultural heritage without intentional efforts to integrate local culture into education (Neyenhouse et al., 2023). The findings here confirm this concern, as students in Banyuwangi increasingly report feeling disconnected from their local traditions due to the influence of global media. This is a manifestation of a more significant global phenomenon, where dominant cultural forces – often Western in origin – displace local traditions, leading to a homogenization of cultural expressions. This research suggests that culturally relevant education can serve as a bulwark against this erosion, providing students with the tools to navigate and resist the pressures of cultural homogenization. By embedding Banyuwangi's arts into the curriculum, schools can counteract the forces of globalization and reaffirm the value of local knowledge and traditions.

However, this raises important questions about the balance between preserving cultural heritage and preparing students for participation in a globalized world. Can education simultaneously serve the goals of cultural preservation and global engagement? The findings suggest it can, but only if the curriculum is flexible enough to accommodate both. The success of Banyuwangi's culturally integrated model demonstrates that students can excel academically while remaining rooted in their cultural identity. Their connection to local culture enhances their academic performance, suggesting that cultural pride and academic success are not mutually exclusive. This counters the often unspoken assumption in educational policy that preparing students for the global economy requires distancing them from local traditions. On the contrary, as this research shows, students grounded in their culture are better equipped to engage with the world because they have a strong sense of identity and moral grounding.

The moral and ethical implications of culturally relevant education are also worth examining critically. The findings show that students who engaged with Banyuwangi's arts developed essential character traits like empathy, cooperation, and respect (Sampurno, 2023; Sampurno et al., 2024). These are not abstract qualities but are embedded in the cultural practices themselves. The Gandrung dance, for example, requires students to synchronize their movements with others, teaching them the value of collective effort and mutual respect. In a sense, the traditional arts are not just tools for character education; they are embodiments of ethical values

passed down through generations. Vygotsky's theory of social learning supports this, suggesting that students learn best through social interaction and engagement with culturally meaningful activities (Bowman et al., 2024; Liu, 2011; Pfeifere, 2022). In this way, cultural education becomes a form of moral education, where students learn about their heritage and how to live ethically within a community.

However, the study also exposes the systemic barriers that hinder the widespread implementation of culturally relevant education. The lack of resources and professional teacher training was a recurring theme, reflecting the broader challenge of integrating local culture into a nationally standardized education system (Clendinneng et al., 2022; Nebel et al., 2016). Other regions of Indonesia still have problems, where the push for centralized education reform has often overlooked the needs of culturally diverse communities (Simatupang, 2013). This study reinforces the argument that culturally relevant education will remain an aspirational goal rather than a practical reality without sufficient resources. Teachers in Banyuwangi expressed frustration with the lack of textbooks, teaching aids, and formal training on how to incorporate local traditions into their lessons. This suggests that educational reform must prioritize not only the inclusion of cultural content but also the infrastructure and support systems needed to sustain it.

Conclusion

In this context, the role of local cultural practitioners becomes crucial. The involvement of Batik artisans, Gandrung dance instructors, and Osing musicians in the classroom provides students with authentic cultural experiences that textbooks alone cannot offer. This collaboration between schools and local communities highlights an important point: cultural education cannot be confined to the classroom. It must extend into the community, drawing on the expertise and lived experiences of those who actively practice these traditions. The findings suggest that this collaboration is essential for creating a culturally rich learning environment that engages students intellectually, emotionally, and socially on multiple levels.

Ultimately, this study argues for a more nuanced understanding of education's role in character development and cultural preservation. Schools in Banyuwangi provide students with academic knowledge and foster a deep sense of identity and belonging. This is particularly important in a globalized world where cultural homogenization threatens to erase the diversity of human experiences. It culturally relevant education can bridge the gap between academic achievement and cultural identity, creating a practical and sustainable model. However, this model requires structural changes – greater autonomy in curriculum design, investment in culturally specific resources, and the active involvement of local communities. Education can only fulfill its dual role as a personal development and cultural preservation tool.

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