

LOCAL WISDOM AS A PEDAGOGICAL FOUNDATION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER EDUCATION IN NORTH MALUKU: AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER COMPETENCIES

Sitihawa Idrus

Affiliation Elementary School Teacher Education Study Program (PGSD), Universitas Terbuka, Ternate, Indonesia.

Email : sithawa.idrus@gmail.com

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Abstract :

This study aims to analyze local wisdom as a pedagogical foundation in elementary school teacher education in North Maluku and its implications for the competencies and professional identity of prospective teachers. The research is motivated by the dominance of formal pedagogy that tends to neglect local socio-cultural contexts, resulting in learning processes that are less contextual and less relevant to the realities of students' lives. In fact, the people of North Maluku possess a rich body of local cultural values that have the potential to serve as epistemological sources in education and learning. This study employed a qualitative approach with an ethnopedagogical design. The research was conducted in teacher education institutions (LPTK) and elementary schools in North Maluku. The research subjects included PGSD lecturers, PGSD students, elementary school teachers, and community leaders selected purposively. Data collection techniques consisted of in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies. Data analysis used thematic analysis combined with a grounded theory approach through the stages of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The findings reveal that local wisdom in North Maluku embodies values of collectivity, morality, social solidarity, and contextual learning that are strongly relevant to modern pedagogical practices. The transformation of local wisdom into a pedagogical foundation occurs through processes of cultural value identification, pedagogical reinterpretation, and integration into learning design. Such integration positively contributes to strengthening pedagogical competence, reflective abilities, cultural sensitivity, and the formation of the professional identity of prospective teachers as cultural agents. However, the implementation of local wisdom-based pedagogy still faces challenges, including curriculum limitations and the limited academic capacity of lecturers to systematically integrate local cultural values. This study confirms that local wisdom can serve as an epistemological foundation for teacher education that is contextual, inclusive, and relevant to the needs of local communities.

Keywords: local wisdom, pedagogy, elementary school teacher education, ethnopedagogy, teacher competence, North Maluku.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of educational globalization has encouraged the standardization of curricula (Abdullah, 2026) and pedagogical practices that tend to be uniform, often neglecting local socio-cultural contexts (Lestari et al., 2025). In the context of elementary education in Indonesia, particularly in archipelagic regions such as North Maluku, this reality creates a paradox. On the one hand, education is directed toward meeting national and global standards; on the other hand, students live within a cultural landscape rich in local values that are inadequately accommodated within the learning process. As a consequence,



learning becomes less contextual, loses social relevance, and fails to establish meaningful connections between formal knowledge and the lived realities of students. This condition also affects elementary school teacher education (PGSD), where prospective teachers are predominantly trained within the framework of universal pedagogy without strong integration of local wisdom as a learning resource (Gani, 2024; Nurbaya, 2025; Tamhir, 2025; Zulaeha, 2025).

This phenomenological gap demonstrates a discrepancy between formal educational practices and the cultural realities of local communities. Teacher education, which should serve as a space for the reconstruction of knowledge, is often trapped within normative and technocratic approaches. Consequently, prospective teachers lack cultural responsiveness in designing learning processes. In multicultural and community-based societies such as those in North Maluku, the success of learning is greatly determined by teachers' ability to integrate local cultural values, practices, and symbols into pedagogical strategies. The absence of this dimension not only reduces the effectiveness of learning but also potentially erodes students' cultural identities in the long term.

Several previous studies have highlighted the importance of local wisdom in education. Studies by (Gani, 2024; Tamhir, 2025) indicate that the integration of local cultural values can enhance student engagement in learning. Another study by (Aljamaliah et al., 2024) confirms that culture-based approaches are capable of strengthening the character and identity of elementary school students. Furthermore, research by (Siagian, 2018) reveals that teacher education grounded in local contexts contributes significantly to the pedagogical readiness of prospective teachers. Nevertheless, most of these studies remain partial in nature, focusing primarily on implementation at the elementary school level, and have not comprehensively examined how local wisdom is systematically reconstructed as a pedagogical foundation in teacher education, particularly in Eastern Indonesian regions characterized by high cultural complexity.

Thus, there exists a significant research gap in the literature, namely the absence of a conceptual model explaining the transformation of local wisdom into an epistemological foundation for elementary school teacher education. This study seeks to fill this gap by integrating perspectives of local wisdom theory as a value system (Nongko, 2026), critical pedagogy developed by Paulo Freire (Utubira & Lakoruhut, 2025), which emphasizes the importance of social context in learning, and teacher education theory oriented toward the formation of competencies and professional identity (Junaidah et al., 2025; Nurhayati et al., 2025). Within this framework, local wisdom is positioned not merely as an additional element, but as an epistemological source that shapes ways of thinking, teaching, and interacting within educational processes.

The urgency of this study lies in the need to reconstruct teacher education so that it becomes more contextual, inclusive, and relevant to the socio-cultural realities of society. In the context of North Maluku, this becomes particularly important considering the region's cultural diversity and the strong presence of local values within community life. Therefore, this study aims to: (1) identify the forms and meanings of local wisdom within the context of elementary education,

(2) analyze how local wisdom is reconstructed into a pedagogical foundation in elementary school teacher education, and (3) explore its implications for the formation of competencies and professional identity among prospective teachers. Based on these objectives, the research questions proposed are: how is local wisdom in North Maluku constructed as a pedagogical foundation in elementary school teacher education? How does the process of transforming cultural values into pedagogical practices occur? And what are its implications for the quality and professional identity of prospective teachers?

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach with an ethnopedagogical design aimed at deeply exploring how local wisdom is reconstructed as a pedagogical foundation in elementary school teacher education in North Maluku. This approach was chosen because it enables researchers to understand the meanings, values, and cultural practices embedded within society, as well as how these values are internalized in educational practices. Ethnopedagogy, as an approach, not only positions culture as an object of study but also as an epistemological source in the learning process, making it highly relevant to the purpose of this research, which seeks to reconstruct local wisdom within a pedagogical framework (Anaktototy & Souisa, 2026; Lestari et al., 2025).

Research Site

The research was conducted in North Maluku, focusing on teacher education institutions (LPTK) that offer the Elementary School Teacher Education (PGSD) program, as well as several elementary schools serving as field practice locations for student teachers. The selection of these sites was based on the socio-cultural characteristics of North Maluku, which is rich in local wisdom values such as mutual cooperation, collectivism, and traditional knowledge systems that continue to exist within community life. This context provides a rich setting for exploring the relationship between local culture and pedagogical practices.

Research Participants

The research participants were selected purposively by considering their involvement and relevance to the focus of the study. The participants included: (1) PGSD lecturers involved in curriculum development and instructional processes, (2) PGSD students as prospective teachers, (3) elementary school teachers serving as mentors during field practice, and (4) community or traditional leaders who possess deep understanding of local wisdom values. This purposive approach enabled the researcher to obtain rich and contextual data aligned with the objectives of the study (Creswell, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted through three primary methods: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation study. In-depth interviews were carried out to explore participants' perspectives, experiences,

and interpretations regarding local wisdom and pedagogical practices. Participatory observation was conducted to directly observe how local values were integrated into the learning process, both in university settings and elementary schools. Meanwhile, the documentation study included analysis of curriculum documents, Semester Learning Plans (RPS), learning modules, and microteaching instruments used in teacher education programs.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted simultaneously and continuously throughout the data collection process using thematic analysis combined with a grounded theory approach. The stages of analysis included: (1) open coding, which involved identifying initial concepts emerging from the data related to the values, practices, and representations of local wisdom; (2) axial coding, which involved connecting these categories to identify relational patterns between local wisdom and pedagogical practices; and (3) selective coding, which involved constructing a theoretical narrative explaining how local wisdom is reconstructed as a pedagogical foundation in teacher education (Roulston & Halpin, 2022). This approach enabled the researcher not only to describe the phenomenon but also to develop a conceptual model with theoretical contributions.

Data Validity

To ensure the validity and credibility of the data, this study employed source and method triangulation techniques by comparing data obtained from various informants and different data collection methods. In addition, member checking was conducted to confirm the interpretation of findings with participants, while an audit trail was maintained to ensure transparency throughout the data analysis process. Through these procedures, the findings of this study are expected to achieve a high level of trustworthiness and academic accountability (Machmud, 2016).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Forms and Meanings of Local Wisdom in Elementary Education in North Maluku

The findings of this study indicate that local wisdom in North Maluku exists not merely as a symbolic cultural tradition, but also as a living value system that functions in shaping social interaction patterns, ways of thinking, and educational practices within society. This local wisdom is manifested in various forms, such as values of collectivism (mutual cooperation), respect for customary authority, community solidarity, and experience-based practices such as learning through folklore, traditional rituals, and everyday activities. These values have implicitly become mechanisms of informal education that shape children's character and identity from an early age.

In the context of elementary education, this local wisdom possesses profound pedagogical meaning. For instance, the practice of mutual cooperation is not merely a social activity but also reflects the principle of collaborative learning, which in modern pedagogical theory is recognized as collaborative

learning. Likewise, oral traditions such as folklore function as contextual learning media that simultaneously contain moral, ethical, and cognitive values. These findings align with the perspective that local culture constitutes an authentic and relevant learning resource capable of increasing student engagement and strengthening conceptual understanding (Madjid, 2025; Poli et al., 2025; Silvia & Oktor, 2025).

The results of interviews with community leaders and teachers reveal that local wisdom in North Maluku possesses both normative and epistemological dimensions. Normatively, local values function as behavioral guidelines regulating social and moral relationships within the community. Epistemologically, local wisdom represents the way communities understand the world, including knowledge, learning, and interaction with the environment. From this perspective, local wisdom is not only learning content but also shapes the learning process itself. This finding is consistent with the critical pedagogy approach advanced by Paulo Freire, who emphasized the importance of socio-cultural contexts in the construction of knowledge and viewed education as inseparable from social realities.

However, the findings also reveal a disjunction between the existence of local wisdom in community life and formal learning practices in elementary schools and teacher education programs. Local wisdom has not yet been systematically integrated into curricula or pedagogical practices within PGSD programs. This condition is caused by the dominance of educational paradigms oriented toward national standards and by the limited capacity of lecturers and prospective teachers to elaborate cultural values into learning strategies. This finding reinforces previous studies indicating that formal education tends to neglect local potential as a significant learning resource (Aljamaliah et al., 2024). Therefore, it can be concluded that local wisdom in North Maluku has substantial potential as a pedagogical foundation in elementary education, functioning as a source of values, methods, and learning approaches. Nevertheless, this potential has not been optimally utilized in teacher education, making systematic reconstruction efforts necessary to integrate local wisdom into formal pedagogical frameworks.

The Transformation of Local Wisdom into a Pedagogical Foundation in Elementary School Teacher Education

The findings demonstrate that the process of transforming local wisdom into a pedagogical foundation in elementary school teacher education in North Maluku does not occur automatically, but rather through a complex process of conceptual and practical reconstruction. This transformation involves three main stages: (1) identification of local wisdom values and practices, (2) pedagogical reinterpretation, and (3) integration into instructional design. In the first stage, PGSD lecturers and students identified local values such as collectivism, social responsibility, and harmony with nature as learning resources. These values were not positioned merely as cultural content but as fundamental principles in designing learning strategies.

The second stage, pedagogical reinterpretation, becomes the crucial point

in the transformation process. At this stage, local wisdom values are translated into modern pedagogical concepts. For example, the practice of mutual cooperation is reconstructed into a collaborative learning approach, while oral traditions are developed into contextual story-based learning strategies. This process demonstrates that local wisdom possesses epistemological compatibility with contemporary pedagogical theories, particularly within the framework of culturally responsive teaching, which emphasizes the importance of cultural relevance in learning (Azizan et al., 2024; Masihu & Augustyn, 2021). From this perspective, transformation is not merely adaptation but a dialectical process between local knowledge and modern educational theory.

At the integration stage, local wisdom began to be implemented in teacher education practices, particularly in microteaching activities and the preparation of learning instruments. PGSD students were encouraged to design Lesson Plans (RPP) integrating local contexts into learning strategies. Examples included the use of local folklore in literacy learning and the utilization of everyday community practices as contexts for mathematics instruction. These findings indicate that the integration of local wisdom enhances students' pedagogical creativity and strengthens their ability to design contextual and meaningful learning experiences (Siagian, 2018).

Nevertheless, this transformation process is not free from structural and cultural challenges. One major challenge is the limited understanding among lecturers and students regarding how to systematically elaborate local wisdom within pedagogical frameworks. In addition, teacher education curricula that remain heavily oriented toward national standards also limit opportunities for integrating local contexts. This condition suggests that transforming local wisdom into a pedagogical foundation requires institutional support as well as strengthening academic capacities within teacher education. Therefore, the transformation of local wisdom in elementary school teacher education is not merely a technical process, but also an epistemological process demanding a paradigm shift in understanding the relationship between culture and education.

Implications of Local Wisdom-Based Pedagogy for the Competencies and Professional Identity of Prospective Teachers

The findings reveal that integrating local wisdom as a pedagogical foundation in elementary school teacher education has significant implications for strengthening pedagogical competence and shaping the professional identity of prospective teachers. First, in terms of pedagogical competence, PGSD students involved in local wisdom-based learning demonstrated increased ability to design contextual, adaptive, and meaningful learning experiences. They were not only capable of mastering subject content but also able to connect it with the socio-cultural realities of students. This finding reinforces previous studies suggesting that learning rooted in local contexts can improve instructional design quality and learning effectiveness (Afdhal et al., 2024; Masihu & Augustyn, 2021; Mendrofa et al., 2024; Nongko, 2026; Poli et al., 2025; Sangadji, 2023).

Furthermore, this approach also encouraged the development of reflective and critical competencies among prospective teachers. Students no longer

viewed learning merely as a process of knowledge transfer, but rather as a dialogical process involving interaction between formal knowledge and students' lived experiences. Within the framework of critical pedagogy developed by Paulo Freire, this demonstrates a shift from the "banking system" model of education toward emancipatory and contextual education (Utubira & Lakoruhut, 2025). Thus, local wisdom not only enriches learning content but also transforms the pedagogical mindset of prospective teachers.

From the perspective of professional identity, the findings indicate that the integration of local wisdom contributes to the formation of a more contextual professional identity rooted in community cultural values. Prospective teachers began to perceive themselves not merely as instructors, but also as cultural agents responsible for preserving and transmitting local values to younger generations. This identity becomes especially important in educational contexts such as North Maluku, where cultural diversity constitutes an integral part of community life. Recent studies indicate that teacher professional identity grounded in cultural context positively correlates with commitment, social sensitivity, and pedagogical effectiveness (Madjid, 2025).

However, these implications cannot be fully optimized without systemic support. This study found a gap between the ideal of local wisdom-based pedagogy and the institutional realities of teacher education. Curricula that are not yet fully adaptive, along with limited lecturer training in developing culture-based approaches, remain major challenges. Therefore, strengthening policies and developing academic capacities are essential prerequisites for ensuring the sustainability of local wisdom integration in teacher education. These findings affirm that local wisdom-based pedagogy influences not only the technical dimensions of learning, but also the transformation of the professional identity and pedagogical paradigm of prospective elementary school teachers.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that local wisdom in North Maluku holds a strategic position not only as a cultural heritage but also as an epistemological source capable of shaping the pedagogical foundation of elementary school teacher education. The findings demonstrate that local wisdom embodies values of collectivism, morality, and contextuality that are highly relevant to the demands of twenty-first century learning. However, in practice, these values have not yet been systematically integrated into teacher education programs, resulting in the underutilization of their pedagogical potential.

The process of transforming local wisdom into a pedagogical foundation in teacher education occurs through stages of value identification, pedagogical reinterpretation, and integration into instructional practices. This transformation indicates that local wisdom is compatible with modern pedagogical theories, particularly within the framework of contextual and culturally responsive learning. Thus, local wisdom should not merely function as a complementary element, but rather as a foundational basis for designing learning processes that are relevant, adaptive, and meaningful.

Furthermore, the integration of local wisdom in teacher education has significant implications for strengthening pedagogical competence and shaping the professional identity of prospective teachers. Prospective teachers engaged in local wisdom-based pedagogy demonstrate stronger abilities in designing contextual learning and possess higher levels of cultural awareness. In addition, they develop a professional identity as cultural agents responsible for preserving and transmitting local values through educational processes. This finding indicates that local wisdom-based pedagogy contributes not only to the technical dimensions of learning but also to the philosophical and socio-cultural dimensions of education.

Nevertheless, this study also identifies several challenges that need to be addressed, including the limited capacity of lecturers to integrate local wisdom into learning processes, as well as teacher education curricula that remain heavily oriented toward national standards and provide insufficient space for local contexts. Therefore, systemic efforts are required to reconstruct teacher education into a more contextual and culturally grounded model.

Based on these findings, this study proposes several recommendations. First, teacher education institutions (LPTK) should develop curricula that explicitly integrate local wisdom as part of pedagogical design. Second, training programs and capacity-building initiatives are needed to strengthen lecturers' abilities in developing culture-based learning approaches. Third, further studies should be conducted to test local wisdom-based pedagogical models in broader contexts and through diverse methodological approaches, such as mixed methods research.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the reconstruction of the concept of local wisdom-based pedagogy as an integrative approach connecting culture and education. Practically, the findings provide implications for the development of teacher education programs that are more relevant to the socio-cultural contexts of society, particularly in regions such as North Maluku.

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