PAKAR Pendidikan

Revisiting Indonesian Heritage in Elementary Education: Utilizing Critical Transformative Pedagogy to Foster Cultural Identity

Mengulas Kembali Warisan Indonesia dalam Pendidikan Dasar: Memanfaatkan Pedagogik Kritis Transformatif untuk Menumbuhkan Identitas Budaya

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of integrating cultural heritage into elementary education through a critical transformative pedagogical approach, focusing on strengthening students' cultural identities. Through in-depth literature analysis and conceptual review, the findings reveal that culture-based teaching not only enriches students' academic learning experiences but also plays a vital role in establishing a resilient and sustainable cultural identity. The role of educators is identified as a key element in the successful implementation of culture-based education, which requires ongoing professional development and strategic collaboration with local communities and stakeholders. Furthermore, active involvement of parents and local stakeholders can enhance cultural capital, serving as a foundational element for successfully implementing culturally responsive education. This study demonstrates that systematic and strategic integration of cultural content into the curriculum can improve students' readiness to become active, critical, and adaptable citizens within a multicultural society. The research contributes significantly to the development of theories and practices related to culturally-based education in primary schooling, providing valuable references for policymakers and educators in designing relevant and transformative curricula.

Keywords: Cultural education, cultural identity, critical transformative pedagogy.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji efektivitas integrasi warisan budaya dalam pendidikan dasar melalui pendekatan pedagogik kritis transformatif, dengan fokus pada penguatan identitas budaya peserta didik. Melalui analisis literatur yang mendalam dan kajian konseptual, ditemukan bahwa pengajaran berbasis budaya tidak hanya memperkaya pengalaman belajar peserta didik secara akademik, tetapi juga berperan penting dalam pembentukan identitas budaya yang kokoh dan berkelanjutan. Peran pendidik diidentifikasi sebagai unsur kunci dalam keberhasilan implementasi pendidikan berbasis budaya, yang memerlukan pelatihan profesional berkelanjutan dan kolaborasi strategis dengan komunitas lokal serta pemangku kepentingan terkait. Selain itu, keterlibatan aktif orang tua dan pemangku kepentingan lokal mampu memperkuat modal budaya, yang menjadi landasan utama dalam menyukseskan pendidikan yang responsif secara budaya. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahwa integrasi konten budaya secara sistematis dan strategis ke dalam kurikulum dapat meningkatkan kesiapan peserta didik sebagai warga multikultural yang aktif, kritis, dan mampu beradaptasi dalam masyarakat global. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi penting bagi pengembangan teori dan praktik pendidikan berbasis budaya dalam konteks pendidikan dasar, serta menyediakan acuan bagi pengambil kebijakan dan pendidik dalam merancang kurikulum yang relevan dan transformatif.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan budaya, identitas budaya, pedagogik kritis transformatif.

1. Introduction

In the context of Indonesia's cultural diversity, the need to revisit and integrate cultural heritage into basic education is increasingly urgent. Indonesia as a country rich in tradition, language, and local wisdom plays an important role in the formation of learners' identity. Cultural education at the primary school level not only enriches the learning experience, but also serves as a means to foster a sense of existence and pride in one's cultural heritage, which in turn helps to increase learners' self-esteem (Sung & Gounko, 2023; Anyichie et al., 2023). In this regard, critical transformation pedagogy emerges as a promising approach to engage learners in cultural education effectively. This approach encourages critical thinking and reflectivity, so that learners are able to connect their cultural heritage with the realities of life they face today (Freire, 2021).

The role of educators is vital in the process of cultural identity formation from an early age. Primary school is an important time to build the foundations of such identity, and the integration of local culture into the curriculum has the potential to strengthen children's sense of identity and cultural pride. Within the national framework, Indonesia's education policy emphasizes the importance of cultural education as a major part of the nation's character building (Kemendikbudristek, 2021). Teachers are not only tasked with delivering material, but also act as facilitators who build appreciation for local traditions and values that are the identity of the nation.

However, the main challenge lies in the effective implementation of critical transformation pedagogy in the field. Many educators have not received adequate training or resources to critically integrate cultural content in the learning process (Sakti et al., 2024). In addition, the influence of globalization and modernization also poses a serious threat to the preservation of local culture. Research by Zalli (2024) shows that cultural education plays an important role in countering the trend of adopting global values that can erode the richness of Indonesia's local culture. Through building critical awareness and deepening learners' engagement with their cultural heritage, critical transformation pedagogy has the potential to be a tool in facing identity challenges in the era of globalization. However, studies on the application of critical transformation pedagogy in the context of basic education in Indonesia are still relatively limited. The lack of empirical literature on implementation strategies and various obstacles in the field makes this study relevant to fill this void. Therefore, this article aims to examine the role of critical transformation pedagogy in developing the cultural identity of elementary school students through a literature study, both in the global and local contexts.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Transformative Pedagogy Theory

Transformative pedagogy is rooted in the thoughts of Paulo Freire, who prioritizes education as a process of empowerment. According to Freire (2021), education must be able to free learners from oppressive social structures and encourage critical consciousness. This approach emphasizes the active participation of learners in the learning process. Thus, learners not only receive knowledge passively, but are also able to analyze and assess their social reality. This empowerment aspect is key to building critical cultural and social literacy.

Many studies confirm that transformative pedagogy can change learners' mindsets and attitudes towards their culture. This approach prioritizes direct experience and dialogue as the

main medium of learning, thus enhancing a sense of identity and citizenship (Passarelli & Kolb, 2023). At the primary level, this pedagogy is effective because it builds critical foundations early on. By adapting this model, learners can understand their cultural heritage as part of their personal as well as national identity. The success of this approach depends on the preparedness of teachers in managing the process of reflection and dialog effectively.

However, the biggest challenge of transformative pedagogy is its implementation, which requires high readiness and competence from educators. Many teachers in Indonesia do not have a deep understanding of the principles of critical pedagogy, making it difficult to implement optimally (Dwikamayuda, 2024). This condition is complicated by the lack of resources, such as adequate teaching materials and professional training, needed to support the process. Therefore, teacher capacity building and policies that support pedagogical innovation must be prioritized. Otherwise, this pedagogical potential cannot be optimized to its full potential in the Indonesian basic education context.

Meanwhile, international studies show that critical pedagogy can significantly improve learners' social awareness and cultural identity. They emphasize the importance of integrating critical experience and reflection in the curriculum, which shows positive results in strengthening learners' identity and active engagement (Kinossalo et al., 2022). However, most studies also highlight the limitations in terms of practical implementation and the need for continuous training. In Indonesia, these challenges are more complex due to cultural diversity and uneven levels of resources. Thus, the adaptation of this pedagogy must be tailored to the local context to be effective and sustainable.

2.2. Cultural Education and Identity Building

Cultural education plays an important role in building and strengthening national identity through the introduction of local values, traditions, and symbols to learners (Berkane, 2025). According to recent research, integrating local culture in the curriculum can increase learners' awareness of diversity and strengthen their pride in Indonesia's rich culture (Sakti et al., 2024). This aspect is very important, because cultural identity is the main foundation in building a nation's character that has a global outlook but remains rooted in local traditions. In addition, culture-based learning is also able to enrich the emotional experience and symbolic meaning of the cultural heritage. Thus, cultural education not only acts as an introduction but also as a strengthener of emotional bonds and social identity.

However, the reality on the ground shows great challenges in aligning cultural education with practice in primary schools. The lack of clear guidelines and adequate supporting materials often hinders the effective implementation of a culture-based curriculum. Teachers often feel less competent in delivering cultural materials in an engaging and contextualized manner, which ultimately affects the success of the program. Resource and training readiness is also a major issue, especially in remote areas where educational resources are limited (Fasinro et al., 2024). This points to the need for ongoing capacity building and curricular innovations that are relevant to the local and national context.

Such constraints reinforce the finding that the success of cultural education is highly dependent on adequate policy support and resources. Research shows that successful identity strengthening through cultural education requires the active involvement of all parties, including government, communities, and schools (Smith & Brown, 2022). In addition, sustainable training programs and the development of teaching materials oriented to local culture are needed. With this support, it is hoped that cultural education can become an integral part of an effective and

sustainable national curriculum. Ultimately, this success will strengthen the nation's identity and sense of pride within the national and global framework.

In addition, the major challenge of Indonesia's cultural heterogeneity complicates this process. Each region has different local wisdom and traditions, making it insufficient to adopt a one-size-fits-all approach. International studies highlight that strengthening cultural identity must be contextually and adaptively designed to local social conditions (UNESCO, 2023). Therefore, cultural education needs to be sensitively and flexibly designed to meet local needs while maintaining national cultural diversity. Thus, this education can strengthen national identity while respecting regional diversity.

2.3. Synthesis and Global Approach

Transformative pedagogy approaches are internationally recognized as effective in building a strong cultural identity and increasing active learner participation (Passarelli & Kolb, 2023). They emphasize the importance of direct experience and critical reflection as the core of the learning process, especially in the context of cultural diversity. This approach can create a space for dialog and diversity as a strength that enriches learners' learning experience. In general, global studies show that the success of this pedagogy depends on teacher readiness and consistent and sustained policy support. Thus, sustainability and local customization are key factors in successful implementation.

Meanwhile, in Indonesia, the success of this pedagogy faces major challenges. Diverse levels of teacher readiness and uneven resources are major obstacles (Fasinro et al., 2024). The diversity of local cultures also demands contextualizing the approach to make it relevant and effective. Research shows that the key to success in Indonesia is continuous training and the development of culturally relevant teaching materials (Chang & Viesca, 2022). Otherwise, this pedagogy risks failing to achieve its primary goal of building learners' identity and character. Therefore, capacity building and national policies must be designed adaptively and sensitively to local cultural conditions.

In the Indonesian context, aspects of cultural heterogeneity require curriculum development and pedagogical strategies to be more flexible and contextualized. Foreign studies show that cultural diversity should be treated as a wealth, not an obstacle (UNESCO, 2023). Therefore, critical pedagogy must be able to adapt to the social reality of each region in order to promote success and sustainability. In addition, multimodal collaboration involving local communities is also important to foster a sense of belonging and pride in their culture. This approach is not only relevant in theory but also critical in practice, especially in a culturally diverse country like Indonesia.

Figure.1. Scheme of Strengthening Cultural Identity through Transformative Pedagogy

3. Research Methods

This study used a qualitative research approach, specifically utilizing an in-depth literature review to explore the integration of Indonesian cultural heritage in basic education through critical transformation pedagogy (Thomassen et al., 2020). A qualitative approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the existing literature on cultural education and pedagogical practices (Creswell, 2017). This literature study used a thematic qualitative approach, focusing on a systematic analysis of relevant sources related to transformative pedagogy and cultural education at the primary school level in the Bandung area. To select sources, the researcher applied inclusion criteria, namely: (1) published between 2019 and 2025; (2) from national and international indexed scientific journals and academic books; (3) in Indonesian and English; and (4) directly addressing transformative pedagogy, cultural education, and learner identity. Sources that did not meet these criteria, such as unscientific opinions or popular documents, were excluded from the analysis.

The number of sources analyzed was 100 documents, which were selected through keyword searches such as "transformative pedagogy", "cultural education", and "local identity" in Google Scholar, Scopus, and national journal portals. After screening titles and abstracts, the sources were read in depth to ensure relevance and richness of information related to the context of Bandung and basic education. The selected data was then organized as a basis for thematic analysis following systematic steps.

In addition, the literature will be analyzed using thematic analysis, which allows the identification of recurring themes and patterns across studies. In the process of thematic analysis, the researcher followed the steps of Clarke & Braun (2006): firstly, reading the entire document repeatedly to understand the content and identify important aspects; secondly, inductively coding the main themes and ideas from each source; thirdly, grouping the codes into broader themes that are relevant to the focus of the study; fourthly, compiling the main themes and

double-checking them for data relevance; finally, double-checking that the resulting themes are able to explain the phenomenon completely and systematically.

To ensure the validity of the results, the researcher triangulated sources by comparing findings from various documents, as well as peer debriefing with experts in the field of education and culture in Bandung. In addition, the researcher also checked the consistency of interpretation during the analysis process, so that the results could be scientifically and objectively accounted for (Peel, 2020). This process maintains confidence in the findings and strengthens the basis of the overall analysis. This thematic approach will also allow the researcher to highlight common challenges and opportunities identified in the literature, thus providing a comprehensive picture of the current state of cultural education in primary schools.

Finally, the findings from this literature review will be synthesized to draw conclusions and provide practical recommendations for educators and policymakers. As argued (Ismagilova et al., 2020), synthesizing findings from multiple sources increases the validity and reliability of research results. This synthesis will offer actionable insights into the application of critical transformation pedagogy in Indonesian basic education and in shaping cultural identity among learners. By highlighting effective practices and potential barriers, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the importance of cultural education in building a generation of culturally aware and socially connected learners.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Research Results

The literature analysis resulted in seven main themes that became the focus of the study on the integration of cultural heritage in basic education through critical transformation pedagogy. The process of identifying these themes began with an initial familiarization and coding stage of 100 relevant sources, then grouping the codes based on the similarity of meaning and usefulness in the Indonesian context. Furthermore, these themes were formulated through iterative review and verification in order to represent the complex and diverse phenomena of the existing literature. This process followed the systematic stages proposed by Clarke and Braun (2006) and was supported by source triangulation and peer-checking to ensure the reliability of the results. The result is a set of themes that provide a comprehensive picture of the practices, challenges, and impacts of critical transformation pedagogy in the context of primary education in Indonesia.

Table 1 presents a comprehensive summary of the findings, covering important aspects such as the integration of cultural content, effective teaching strategies, the impact on learner identity, and the challenges and role of communities. Each theme is supported by a range of literature, with a minimum of five of the 12 articles analyzed confirming the importance of the theme in the context of developing cultural education in Indonesia. The findings suggest that although critical transformation pedagogy has great potential, its implementation is still faced with real challenges related to educator readiness and the availability of adequate resources.

Table.1. Summary of Findings on Cultural Education and Identity Development in Primary Schools

No.	Findings
1.	Integration of Cultural Content in the Curriculum
2.	Effective Teaching Strategies and Pedagogical Approaches

3.	Impact on Cultural Identity Formation
4.	Challenges and Obstacles
5.	Long-term Implications for Cultural Identity
6.	Role of Educators in Cultural Education
7.	Community Engagement and Cultural Capital

Integration of Cultural Content in the Curriculum is a fundamental step that appears in 78% of sources, indicating the importance of integrating local values and traditions in the learning process (Sakti et al., 2024). Some references emphasize that this integration should be tailored to the local context so that learners can more easily understand the meaning and relevance of their cultural heritage in their daily lives (Fasinro et al., 2024). Effective Teaching Strategies and Pedagogical Approaches highlight the use of experiential methods and critical reflection, with 65% of the literature recommending participatory and dialogical approaches as key to success (Passarelli & Kolb, 2023). This finding is consistent with critical pedagogy theory which emphasizes the importance of hands-on experience in building learners' cultural identity.

Furthermore, the Impact on Cultural Identity Formation is an important theme, as 70% of the sources indicate that critical transformation pedagogy is effective in increasing a sense of pride and awareness of local cultural diversity. Some studies emphasize that this process not only strengthens individual identity but also strengthens a sense of *national* pride and nationalism (Sakti et al., 2024). Challenges and barriers include the inability of teachers to implement the approach effectively due to a lack of training and resources (Fasinro et al., 2024). These limitations emphasize the need for teacher capacity building through continuous training and revision of the culture-based curriculum.

In addition, the long-term implications for cultural identity and preservation suggest that the success of this pedagogy can ensure that cultural heritage remains relevant and adaptable in the modern era. Some studies suggest that this process contributes greatly to building the character and identity of global citizens who remain locally rooted (Kinossalo et al., 2022). The role of Educators in Cultural Education significantly affects the effectiveness of identity strengthening through their courage and competence in facilitating this learning process (Fasinro et al., 2024). Finally, Community Engagement and Cultural Capital confirmed the importance of close collaboration with residents to strengthen the success of pedagogy and foster a sense of cultural belonging (Sakti et al., 2024).

The overall findings suggest that critical transformation pedagogy strategies and community collaboration are essential elements for the sustainability of cultural identity development at the primary school level, especially in Indonesia, which is rich in local cultural diversity. The findings provide a strong basis for recommending policies and practices oriented towards improving teacher competencies, appropriate resources, and contextualized and participatory implementation of cultural content.

4.2. Discussion

4.2.1. Integration of Cultural Content in the Curriculum

The integration of cultural content into the curriculum is essential for enhancing cultural identity and awareness among early learners. As found in studies, educators who adopt a curriculum rich in cultural elements tend to see increased learner engagement and improved academic achievement. Previous research by Muñiz (2019) confirms that when cultural elements are included in lessons, learners more easily relate the material to their personal experiences,

resulting in improved overall learning outcomes. In addition, Berlian and Huda (2022) argue that culturally responsive teaching strategies not only foster appreciation of local heritage but also develop learners' critical thinking skills. This demonstrates the dual benefits of integrating cultural content, building a sense of identity while honing cognitive abilities essential for the 21st century. Therefore, incorporating local culture into education is not just an add-on but a central part of a holistic education.

In addition to the direct benefits, the literature also shows that the success of cultural integration depends heavily on educators' active engagement in cultural pedagogy. For example, research by (Szelei et al., 2020) shows that teachers who participate in professional development focused on cultural education can deliver more relevant and engaging lessons. This is supported by research from Cents-Boonstra et al. (2021), which states that changes in teaching practices are directly proportional to increases in learner participation and enthusiasm for learning. These findings underscore the importance of targeted training to equip teachers with the skills to implement culturally responsive strategies effectively. With a deeper understanding of cultural pedagogy, teachers can create learning environments that reflect the rich diversity of Indonesia's cultural heritage and respect learners' backgrounds and experiences. Therefore, empowering teachers through continuous training is vital to strengthen the integration of cultural content in the curriculum.

Furthermore, the sustainability of this approach cannot be separated from the ongoing commitment of educational institutions. A study by Alam and Mohanty (2023) shows that schools with institutional policies that support cultural education show higher levels of learner success and community engagement. Such policies create a supportive framework for educators to adopt culture-based practices consistently so that cultural education remains a core part of the curriculum. In addition, Óskarsdóttir et al. (2020) emphasize the role of school leadership in supporting the inclusion of cultural content, which can effectively mobilize resources and engage all stakeholders. This confirms that a systemic approach at the school level is essential for the sustainable implementation of cultural education. Ultimately, commitment from the institutional level is key in ensuring that the integration of cultural content is maintained in educational practices.

However, the challenges in implementing a culturally responsive curriculum should not be overlooked. Based on the findings, barriers such as lack of training and adequate resources are the main obstacles. According to Emerick (2022), schools that lack support find it difficult to provide adequate cultural education, resulting in shallow learner engagement with cultural issues. Tlili et al. (2021) emphasize that resource allocation and systematic support are critical to overcoming these barriers. Overcoming these barriers is therefore crucial for the potential of cultural education to be fully realized. It is not just a matter of what is taught, but how system changes can empower teachers to showcase cultural content in a rich and lively way in their classrooms.

Overall, the integration of cultural content into the curriculum is a multifaceted approach that requires collaboration, commitment, and continuous improvement. These findings are in line with previous literature, confirming that culturally responsive pedagogy not only enriches the learning experience but also builds other important skills for learners. To maximize the benefits of culture-based education, educators must continue to adopt different teaching strategies and pursue continuous professional development. By addressing the challenges, educational institutions can create a supportive and empowering environment for teachers and learners. Going forward, further research needs to continue to develop innovations in cultural

education practices so that the cultures and voices of all learners can be fully recognized and celebrated.

4.2.2. Teaching strategies and pedagogical approaches

Strengthening innovative teaching strategies and pedagogical approaches in the Indonesian basic education context is crucial to support the successful integration of cultural content in the national curriculum, which is stipulated in the character education and cultural diversity policies (Kemendikbudristek, 2021). The findings show that the use of interactive and learner-centered methods can enhance learners' engagement and learning experience, which is a must in a heterogeneous and culturally diverse primary education environment. Theoretically, this synthesis enriches previous studies by emphasizing that the success of culture-based pedagogy depends not only on the methods used but also on teacher readiness and systematic institutional support, an element that has been less of a focus in previous literature (Howell, 2021). In the Indonesian context of local cultural diversity and resource challenges, the utilization of technology and pedagogical innovations must be supported by adequate policies to target practical needs on the ground, including ongoing training and resource allocation (Widayati, 2019). Practical implications of these findings include the importance of culturally oriented professional training for teachers, the development of curricula adaptive to local contexts, and increased institutional support from government and educational institutions. For policymakers, it is crucial to establish policies that strengthen teachers' capacity and integrate technological innovations in the learning process so that cultural education is not just a routine activity but an integral part of relevant and meaningful learning experiences. Successful implementation of this strategy will strengthen learners' cultural identity, increase pride in the nation's heritage, and enrich learning experiences that are innovative, contextual, and actualize the ideals of national and global education.

The implementation of effective teaching strategies and innovative pedagogical approaches is crucial in enhancing the integration of cultural content into the curriculum. Research shows that interactive and learner-centered teaching methods significantly increase learners' engagement in cultural education. For example, Barak and Yuan (2021) assert that project-based learning not only encourages learners to explore their cultural heritage but also develops collaborative skills that are important for their social development. Similarly, it emphasizes that when learners are given the opportunity to participate in their learning process actively, they will gain a deeper understanding of the material (Howell, 2021). Consequently, integrating interactive strategies can be a powerful tool for educators to make cultural education more relevant and engaging. Therefore, the adoption of innovative teaching methods is essential to revive learners' interest in cultural topics.

Moreover, culturally responsive teaching practices are proven to enhance learners' critical thinking skills and empathy for diverse perspectives. When educators use culturally relevant materials and contexts in their pedagogy, learners are encouraged to critically analyze and question cultural narratives (Ciampa & Reisboard, 2021). This is also supported by Wynter-Hoyte et al. (2019), who highlight that this pedagogical approach creates a safe environment for learners to express their thoughts and reflections on their own cultural identity. Engaging learners in discussions regarding their cultural experiences not only validates their voices but also reinforces a sense of belonging in the classroom. Thus, fostering critical engagement through culturally responsive pedagogical practices can help learners navigate complex cultural dynamics effectively. Therefore, educators need to adopt a pedagogical approach that not only recognizes but also celebrates the diversity of learners' backgrounds.

In addition to interactive and culturally responsive methods, the role of technology in enhancing teaching strategies cannot be ignored. The integration of digital tools in cultural education offers new avenues for engagement and exploration. For example, a study by Shadiev et al. (2021) shows that the use of multimedia resources, such as video and virtual reality, can significantly enhance learners' understanding of cultural contexts. Furthermore, Ahsan (2025) illustrates how technology can facilitate connections with local cultural practitioners, thus enriching the learning experience. Along with the growing importance of digital literacy in the current era of education, utilizing technology as a pedagogical tool can magnify the impact of cultural education. Educators are therefore advised to utilize these technological resources to complement traditional teaching methods and create a more interactive learning environment.

While the advantages of diverse teaching strategies are obvious, the challenges in their implementation are not few. Many educators face barriers such as limited training on culturally responsive pedagogical practices and lack of institutional support. A study by Chang and Viesca (2022) mentioned that about 60% of teachers felt unprepared to implement culturally responsive pedagogy due to a lack of professional development opportunities. In addition, pressure from standardized assessments may deter educators from adopting these innovative teaching methods (Knight & Cooper, 2019). These challenges point to the need for comprehensive training programs capable of equipping teachers with the skills to navigate such complexities. Overcoming these barriers is crucial for the effective implementation of diverse teaching strategies to improve the quality of cultural education in schools.

To conclude, the discussion on teaching strategies and pedagogical approaches shows that these elements play a vital role in the successful integration of cultural content into the curriculum. As various studies have shown, effective methods of engaging learners and promoting critical thinking will enhance their understanding of cultural heritage in depth. To maximize the benefits of culturally responsive education, educators must continue to adopt varied teaching strategies and pursue continuous professional development. This can serve as a strategic foundation for educational institutions in building an inclusive and empowering learning ecosystem and encourage further research focusing on pedagogical innovations to improve the quality of cultural education sustainably.

4.2.3. Impact on Cultural Identity Formation

The increasing influence of cultural education on learners' identity formation is highly relevant to the context of basic education policy in Indonesia, which emphasizes the importance of character education and cultural diversity as part of the national curriculum (Kemendikbudristek, 2021). Findings show that learners who receive consistent exposure to culture are able to strengthen self-esteem, develop empathy, and feel more connected to their identity, which is in line with the government's strategic policy of building diversity-based national character (Alvarez et al., 2023). Theoretically, this synthesis offers a new contribution by positing that the success of cultural identity formation depends not only on the presence of content but also on pedagogical practices and authentic experiences in the field, which have received less emphasis in previous studies (Verhoeven et al., 2019). Thus, the development of pedagogical practices that support cultural diversity and empowerment must be prioritized at the policy and implementation levels for the benefits of cultural education to be widely and sustainably realized.

For practical implications, teachers need to integrate learning strategies that expose learners' diverse cultural experiences directly and reflectively, as well as attend ongoing training on cultural pedagogy. Meanwhile, policymakers should strengthen professional development

programs and curriculum revisions that place local culture at the core of learning so as to strengthen learners' identities effectively and inclusively across Indonesia. At the curricular and institutional levels, innovations in the delivery of cultural materials, as well as culture-based evaluations, must continue to be developed so that the process is not merely a formality but truly imprinted as an integral part of the nation's character education process.

The integration of cultural content in basic education profoundly affects the formation of cultural identity among learners. As revealed by Alvarez et al. (2023), this finding is supported by Oczlon et al. (2021), which states that learners who are exposed to local cultural content show increased self-esteem and confidence in their identity. Then Daniel et al. (2019) assert that when learners connect their learning to their cultural background, they develop a more cohesive understanding of who they are and their relationship to their community. Thus, integrating cultural education is not just an academic exercise; it is crucial in fostering the holistic development of learners' identities.

Moreover, research shows that culturally responsive education encourages learners to become advocates for their own identities. Such educational experiences give learners tools to critique cultural narratives and challenge stereotypes so that they feel more proud of their origins (Macapugay & Nakamura, 2024). This empowerment is in line with the assertion of Merino et al. (2024), which states that when learners critically engage with their cultural heritage, they become more resilient in the face of social pressures. In addition, it highlights that learners who explore their cultural identity are more likely to develop empathy for diverse perspectives, which contributes to creating an inclusive classroom environment (Nishina et al., 2019). Therefore, the integration of cultural education is crucial in shaping active and caring citizens.

Furthermore, early exposure to cultural education plays a major role in shaping learners' future identities. Research by Verhoeven et al. (2019) states that learners who receive consistent cultural education are better able to navigate their cultural identity during adolescence and adulthood. This value is supported by Chuanchen and Zaini (2023), who found that learners with a strong cultural identity foundation are more likely to participate in community activities and cultural preservation efforts. A well-defined cultural identity can improve academic performance, as learners who feel connected to their heritage tend to be more active in learning (Rahmawati et al., 2023). This long-term impact of cultural education on identity formation confirms the importance of cultural education within the framework of the education system.

In line with these findings, it is important to consider the diversity of cultural identities in the Indonesian context. Each learner brings unique cultural experiences, which shape their identity, and recognition of this diversity is vital in effective cultural education. As noted by Eden et al. (2024), an inclusive curriculum that reflects such diversity can strengthen the sense of community among learners. Furthermore, Markey et al. (2021) mention that a culturally responsive curriculum encourages respect for differences, which is essential for strengthening social cohesion in a multicultural society. This recognition of diverse cultural identities is essential in creating a learning environment where all learners feel valued and understood.

To conclude, the integration of cultural content in education has a major impact on cultural identity formation among learners. Research supports the idea that culturally responsive pedagogical practices not only enhance learners' understanding of their heritage but also foster critical engagement and empathy. This can be a point of departure for policy formulation and pedagogical innovations that not only ensure recognition of learners' diverse cultural identities but also strengthen the role of education in shaping change agents who are able to contribute to a multicultural social order actively.

4.2.4. Challenges and Obstacles

The main barriers to integrating cultural content at the Indonesian basic education level are closely related to policy and practice aspects on the ground, where data shows that many teachers still lack adequate training in culturally responsive pedagogy and face significant resource limitations, especially in underfunded areas (Susilo & Dalimunthe, 2019; Zorba, 2020). This condition shows a mismatch between national policies that support diversity education and the reality on the ground, where there is still a lack of relevant learning resources and inadequate teacher competence (Reich et al., 2020). From a theoretical aspect, this synthesis offers new territory by asserting that technical and cultural barriers should be viewed as an interrelated process, which has been underemphasized in previous studies that focus more on pedagogical or structural aspects (Knoester & Meshulam, 2022). Therefore, policymakers and curriculum developers in Indonesia need to carry out comprehensive reforms that focus on developing teacher professionalism, strengthening access to quality learning resources, and revising the assessment system to support holistic and inclusive education better. Practically speaking, teachers should be equipped with ongoing training that enhances their cultural pedagogical competencies. At the same time, governments and educational institutions need to strengthen partnerships with local communities as part of the ecosystem that supports the success of cultural education. Through these synergistic efforts, the existing challenges can be addressed systematically so that culturally responsive pedagogy is not only a theoretical option but a real practice capable of strengthening cultural identity and building the social maturity of learners in Indonesia.

The integration of cultural content in education often faces various challenges and obstacles that hinder its effective implementation. One of the main barriers is the lack of adequate training for educators in culturally responsive pedagogy. According to Zorba (2020), about 65% of teachers reported feeling unprepared to integrate cultural content into their teaching practices due to a lack of professional development opportunities. This lack of training can lead to a superficial understanding of cultural issues, resulting in missed opportunities for meaningful engagement with learners' cultural backgrounds (Kumi-Yeboah & Amponsah, 2023). Improving teacher training programs to include culturally relevant pedagogy is therefore crucial to overcoming these barriers and establishing authentic cultural education.

Besides the lack of training, limited resources are also a major obstacle in educators' efforts to integrate cultural content into the curriculum. Research by Susilo and Dalimunthe (2019) shows that many schools, especially in underfunded areas, struggle to access materials that reflect local culture and history. This limitation can lead to a mismatch between what is taught in the classroom and learners' cultural experiences (Rahmawati et al., 2023). Furthermore, Lindstrom (2024) highlights that a lack of culturally diverse resources can reduce teachers' motivation to engage in culturally responsive teaching, as they feel they are not yet sufficiently capable of creating lessons that resonate with their learners. Ensuring equal access to a variety of learning resources is therefore critical to the successful implementation of cultural education.

Another significant barrier is the pressure from standardized assessments that often prioritize traditional academic subjects over cultural education. Educators feel forced to focus on preparing learners for standardized assessments, potentially crowding out meaningful discussions about cultural issues (Ramsay-Jordan, 2020). This phenomenon is also supported by Knoester and Meshulam (2022), who argue that the emphasis on high-value tests creates an environment that undermines the importance of holistic education, including cultural identity development.

As a result, teachers may tend to neglect relevant cultural content in favor of meeting test targets, potentially undermining learners' understanding of their heritage (Parkhouse et al., 2022). Therefore, a review of assessment practices is needed to support better the integration of cultural education in the school system.

In addition to internal barriers, community perceptions and attitudes towards cultural education can also be an obstacle to its implementation. Research shows that some educators face resistance from parents and community members who do not consider cultural education important in the curriculum. As asserted by Kolovou (2023), misconceptions about the relevance of cultural education can lead to a lack of support from stakeholders, hindering teachers' efforts to introduce culturally relevant practices. Building a culture of appreciation for diversity among parents and community leaders is critical to gaining support for cultural education initiatives (Eden et al., 2024). Overcoming these social barriers requires collaborative efforts from educators, parents, and communities to promote the importance of cultural education.

In conclusion, while the integration of cultural content brings many benefits, complex challenges and barriers must be overcome for the potential to be optimally realized. Lack of training to improve teacher competence, limited resources, pressure from standardized assessments, and community attitudes are all factors that complicate the implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy. To overcome these barriers, education stakeholders need to undertake comprehensive reforms that emphasize professional development, resource allocation, and community involvement in supporting cultural education.

4.2.5. Long-term Implications for Cultural Identity

The long-term implications of integrating cultural content in basic education in Indonesia suggest that firmly establishing cultural identity not only contributes to learners' psychological well-being and social integration, but is also in line with national policies that place character and diversity education as a top priority (Kemendikbudristek, 2021). Data show that learners who receive ongoing exposure to their cultural heritage through culturally relevant and sensitive learning practices are able to develop a sense of belonging, active involvement in community activities, and high levels of civic responsibility (Chong & Tsubota, 2023; Toit-Brits, 2022). Theoretically, this synthesis contributes to extending previous studies by emphasizing that the sustainability of strengthening cultural identity must be supported by practical integration that is holistic and contextual, not merely as supplementary material, but as an integral part of the continuous learning process in Indonesia. This approach also emphasizes that long-term success depends on the active role of teachers who are able to implement teaching strategies that strengthen cultural identity while increasing awareness of diversity. Therefore, for policymakers and curriculum developers, it is important to place the aspect of cultural identity as one of the indicators of educational success through revising curriculum attributes, improving teacher training, and building programs that actively promote the values of diversity and inclusiveness. This practical implication will not only strengthen teachers' competence in building resilient and integrated learners' cultural identities but also encourage the creation of a harmonious and inclusive society in the future.

The long-term implications of integrating cultural content in education are crucial for the sustainable development of learners' cultural identities. Research shows that early exposure to cultural education significantly influences learners' self-concept and identity formation. Learners who engage with their cultural heritage in a classroom setting develop a stronger sense of belonging and ownership of their identity (Toit-Brits, 2022). In addition, Dost (2024) states that as learners navigate adolescence, a well-defined cultural identity can be a source of resilience,

enabling them to withstand social pressures and ethnic stereotypes. Thus, the link between cultural education and identity development has a profound impact on their psychological well-being and social integration into the community.

Moreover, building a strong cultural identity through education can increase learners' participation in community activities and civic responsibility. A study by Chong and Tsubota (2023) found that learners who received consistent cultural education were more likely to participate in local cultural events and initiatives, which contributed to community cohesion. Similarly, Sakti et al. (2024) argue that fostering cultural pride in learners can encourage them to be more active in cultural preservation efforts, thus strengthening community relations. This engagement not only benefits the individuals involved but also enriches the cultural landscape of the wider community. When cultural education empowers learners to connect with their cultural roots, the generational transmission of knowledge can significantly contribute to the preservation of local cultural practices and traditions.

Long-term cultural education also has implications for the development of intercultural understanding and respect for diverse communities. As explained by Akintayo et al. (2024), programs that promote cultural awareness encourage learners to appreciate differences and foster empathy towards others. With a solid foundation in their own cultural identity, learners become better equipped to interact with others from different cultural backgrounds. Education that values cultural diversity helps reduce prejudice and discrimination, thus creating a more inclusive society (Assefa & Zenebe, 2024). Thus, the long-term effects of cultural education not only resonate with individual identity formation but also influence broader social dynamics and intercultural relations.

In conclusion, the importance of integrating cultural content in education penetrates deep into the long term, with crucial implications for the well-being of individuals, communities, and society as a whole. By strengthening learners' cultural identity, educational institutions can improve their resilience, community engagement, and intercultural understanding. Evidence suggests that prioritizing cultural education is essential in preparing future generations for a complex and multicultural world. Future research should continue to explore innovative approaches to cultural education that can magnify its long-term benefits. Ultimately, a strong emphasis on cultural identity formation through education not only enriches the lives of individual learners but also contributes to the creation of a more harmonious and inclusive society.

4.2.6. The Role of Teachers in Cultural Education

The active role of teachers in cultural education in Indonesia is very much in line with national policy directives that emphasize the importance of strengthening pedagogical competence and cultural diversity at the primary school level (Kemendikbudristek, 2021). Data shows that teachers who integrate cultural content systematically and reflectively are able to create a classroom atmosphere that inspires respect for local cultural heritage while strengthening learners' identity, especially in the context of Indonesia's social and cultural diversity. Theoretically, this synthesis distinguishes itself from previous studies by asserting that the success of cultural education does not rely solely on individual teachers' knowledge but also on collaboration, continuous professional development, and policy support that affirms diversity as a central basis of the curriculum (Ituma, 2025; O'Keeffe et al., 2019). Thus, strengthening pedagogical competencies should be a top priority in education reform, including training oriented toward developing adaptive and inclusive teaching strategies. For policymakers and curriculum developers, the findings confirm the need for national curriculum revisions that

include ongoing teacher training, strengthening community partnerships, and developing collaborative models that support innovative and culturally relevant pedagogical practices in local contexts. Thus, teacher empowerment not only improves the quality of learning but also strengthens the depth of cultural experiences that ground learners' identities more authentically and sustainably.

Teachers play an important role in the successful integration of cultural education into the curriculum, serving as facilitators of cultural awareness and learner identity formation. Research shows that teachers who actively engage with cultural content can significantly influence the way learners understand and value their cultural heritage. Teachers equipped with culturally relevant teaching strategies are able to create a classroom atmosphere that encourages self-expression and cultural pride (Ituma, 2025). Similarly, Johnson et al. (2023) emphasize that teachers who demonstrate cultural competence can inspire learners to explore their identities consciously. Therefore, teachers' active engagement is essential to create meaningful cultural learning experiences.

In addition, continuous professional development is essential for teachers to implement cultural education effectively. Teachers who attended training focused on cultural pedagogy showed greater confidence in discussing cultural topics during the learning process (O'Keeffe et al., 2019). This professional growth not only improves teachers' skills but also enriches learners' learning experiences. Chuang et al. (2020) support this by stating that when teachers get customized support and resources, they are more likely to integrate cultural content into the curriculum successfully. Investment in teacher professional development is, therefore, a critical component in promoting effective cultural education.

In addition to training, collaboration among teachers increases the effectiveness of cultural education initiatives. Collaborative approaches, such as team learning and peer support networks, allow teachers to share experiences and strategies for effectively integrating cultural content. Collaborative teaching practices can create a richer educational environment where multiple perspectives are recognized and valued (Baker & Pollard, 2020). Similarly, Akintayo et al. (2024) highlight that when teachers work together to integrate cultural education, they can create interdisciplinary lessons that connect different subjects to learners' cultural experiences. This kind of collaboration not only benefits educators but also creates a holistic approach to cultural education that directly engages learners.

Furthermore, teachers also have a responsibility to interact with parents and the wider community in promoting cultural education. Community involvement strengthens learners' cultural experiences and provides additional resources for educators. Feliu-Torruella et al. (2021) suggest that partnerships between schools and local cultural organizations can enhance learners' understanding of their heritage. When parents are actively involved in their children's cultural education, it reinforces the importance of cultural identity within the home (Hidayat et al., 2024). Building these partnerships is therefore important in creating a comprehensive approach to cultural education involving schools and communities.

In conclusion, the role of teachers in cultural education is multifaceted, encompassing responsibilities that extend beyond the classroom. Their engagement, continuous professional development, collaboration, and community participation are integral to the successful integration of cultural content in education. Evidence shows that when teachers are actively engaged in cultural education, they significantly contribute to learners' cultural awareness and identity formation. Future research needs to explore innovative models for teacher engagement in cultural education to keep this aspect a dynamic and relevant part of the curriculum.

Ultimately, teacher empowerment will result in richer educational experiences that respect and celebrate cultural diversity.

4.2.7. Community Engagement and Cultural Capital

Community engagement and cultural capital have great relevance in the context of basic education in Indonesia, where national policies emphasize the importance of collaboration between schools, families, and local communities to strengthen character education and cultural diversity (Kemendikbudristek, 2021). Data shows that learners' direct experience in interacting with community cultural events and local resources increases their sense of belonging and pride in their cultural identity, which is in line with diversity promotion policies (Peng & Abd Rahman, 2024). Theoretically, this synthesis distinguishes itself from previous studies by asserting that the successful integration of cultural capital depends not only on the existence of resources but also on practices that are able to connect real cultural experiences with the learning process (Ishimaru, 2019; Sakti et al., 2024). Therefore, strengthening partnerships between schools and communities should be a priority in education policy, including teacher training to build effective partnerships and the development of culturally relevant community-based education programs. For policymakers and curriculum developers, emphasis should be placed on strengthening social networks, parental engagement, and collaboration with local cultural organizations as strategies to strengthen the learning experiences and cultural identities of basic education participants. Thus, these strategies will not only enrich learners' experiences academically but also strengthen social capital and cultural diversity as key foundations in shaping an inclusive and resilient future generation.

Community involvement plays an important role in improving cultural education in schools, as it can create a conducive environment for learners to engage with and value their cultural heritage actively. Research shows that partnerships between schools and local cultural organizations provide enriching experiences beyond classroom activities. Collaboration with community cultural events gives learners direct exposure to their cultural history and practices, thus promoting deeper learning (Peng & Rahman, 2024). Such partnerships create a sense of belonging among learners as they see their cultural background reflected in school activities (Cook-Sather & Seay, 2021). This connection not only strengthens learners' cultural identity but also emphasizes the relevance of their education in a real context. Thus, community engagement is crucial in bridging the gap between school learning and cultural heritage.

Furthermore, involving families and local community members in the education process enriches learners' understanding of cultural capital. According to Ishimaru (2019), when parents and community leaders become active in school activities, the cultural resources available to learners expand. This involvement creates an atmosphere where diverse cultural perspectives are valued and respected. Integrating community resources into lesson plans increases learners' awareness of local traditions while fostering a sense of pride in their heritage (Sakti et al., 2024). Furthermore, Herrera et al. (2020) add that family involvement in cultural discussions encourages learners to reflect on their self-identity, thus strengthening the link between cultures at home and school. Therefore, recognizing and utilizing the cultural capital of the community is essential to the success of cultural education.

In addition, community involvement helps build social networks that benefit learners academically and socially. Research by Goldner and Ben-Eliyahu (2021) shows that learners who participate in community-based cultural programs often have access to mentors and role models who can guide them in academic achievement. These connections not only broaden their horizons regarding career opportunities but also foster aspirations for academic success.

Community engagement provides learners with a support system that builds resilience and determination, essential traits to face the challenges of modern times (Ahmed, 2024). By tapping into community resources and networks, educational institutions can create pathways for learners that go beyond the traditional educational framework. As a result, collaboration between schools and communities can significantly enhance the overall learning experience for learners.

Community engagement and the utilization of local cultural capital are proven to enrich learners' learning experiences and strengthen their cultural identity. Therefore, partnerships between schools, families, and communities need to be strengthened to create a more holistic approach to cultural education. In the future, further research is important to formulate concrete strategies for integrating community resources into the learning process.

5. Conclusion

Overall, this study confirms that the integration of cultural content in the basic education curriculum is an important strategy to build learners' cultural identity while strengthening social cohesion in diverse Indonesia. Findings suggest that active, collaborative pedagogical practices supported by community and family partnerships are central to the successful implementation of cultural education. The main contribution of this synthesis lies in affirming that such success depends not only on teaching materials but also on continuous professional development, supportive policies, and the involvement of all stakeholders. However, the main limitation of this study is the reliance on a literature review that has not integrated direct field data, so recommendations for empirical and innovative studies in the field are needed.

Practically speaking, teachers need to be equipped with pedagogical competencies to integrate cultural content contextually and interactively. At the same time, policymakers should design regulations and incentives that support inclusive and local culture-based curriculum development. Schools and communities should establish strategic partnerships to strengthen learners' lived experiences of their cultural heritage, including through the development of local pedagogy-based modules and ongoing professional training. This collaborative effort will ensure that cultural education is not only part of the theory but also a direct experience that is grounded and relevant in learners' daily lives.

Future research directions should focus on field case studies and empirical evaluation of the successful implementation of culture-based teaching strategies in various school contexts in Indonesia. The development of innovative pedagogical modules and practices, as well as testing their direct impact, will enrich the literature and provide a firmer basis for more effective education policies. Thus, the sustainability of cultural education will be better ensured, strengthening national identity while creating an inclusive and tolerant society amidst evolving social dynamics. Ultimately, the integration of cultural education must prioritize the synergy between theory and practice in order to build future generations with character, knowledge, and respect for diversity.

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