Integrating Local Wisdom in Elementary Education: Evaluating the Impact of Thematic Curriculum in Palopo City

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the impact of integrating local wisdom into thematic curriculum textbooks on the knowledge and appreciation of elementary school students towards local wisdom values in Palopo City. Utilizing a quantitative descriptive analysis approach, the research engaged a randomly selected sample of 271 students. Data were gathered through structured questionnaires distributed via Google Forms, which included multiple-choice, Likert scale, and true/false questions to assess students' understanding of Luwu's local wisdom. The findings indicate that only 37.9% of respondents accurately identified cultural values, revealing a substantial gap in students' comprehension of their cultural heritage. This research identifies an urgent need for educational materials that better incorporate local wisdom, aiming to enhance students' connection to their cultural roots. The implications of these findings for educational practice in Palopo City and broader educational research and curriculum development are discussed, offering valuable insights for the development of curricula that consider local contexts and improve educational outcomes.

**INTRODUCTION**

Schools at the basic education level play a crucial role in building student character and influencing their development at higher education levels. Therefore, implementing thematic learning in elementary school students must consider the holistic mindset and concrete operations appropriate for their age (Haji, 2015). The purpose of thematic learning is for students to thoroughly understand their living environment to solve problems (Lubis & Azizan, 2020).

Students need to be introduced to their immediate world through thematic learning. This aligns with the idea that to make learning practices meaningful for students’ lives, thematic teaching materials must accommodate and utilize real-life circumstances that occur in the student environment (Deviana, 2018; Magdalena et al., 2021; M. C. Rahmawati et al., 2022; Wijiningsih et al., 2017).

One significant weakness of the textbooks used daily by students is the lack of connection to the environment around them as a learning resource (Kissinger, 2013). Some examples are irrelevant to the student's environment, making it difficult for them to gain knowledge or an understanding of the material being studied (Dunlosky et al., 2013; Reid & Petocz, 2002). This disconnect makes it challenging for students to associate prior knowledge...
with new knowledge obtained through textbooks.

A major problem in implementing thematic learning is that textbooks published by the Ministry of Education and Culture, compiled for national use, often fail to appreciate and accommodate local wisdom from the areas where students live. This results in the values of local wisdom in different regions of Indonesia not being incorporated into the curriculum. Therefore, teachers are expected to develop contextual-based learning to accommodate these values (Aini & Relmasira, 2018).

Local wisdom encompasses the concepts and cultural insights that embody the wisdom of local communities, guiding their way of life (Samrin et al., 2023). Despite being often considered a product of the past, local wisdom remains vital for preservation as it connects generations. Integrating local wisdom into education can help shape children's character according to their ancestral identity (Suryatniani, 2018; Rasyid, 2017). Thematic instruction familiarizes students with their immediate surroundings, making learning activities relevant to their daily lives by utilizing real-life events from their environment (S. Rahmawati & Rohim, 2020; Suwardi & Rahmawati, 2019).

Studies identified in the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia for 2015-2019 highlight various challenges in educational and cultural development. These include the marginal role of cultural actors in preserving culture, declining reading proficiency, the potential extinction of regional languages and literature, the erosion of student character and national identity, ineffective cultural heritage preservation, insufficient cultural diplomacy and exchange promotion, and underdeveloped cultural resources (Subandi et al., 2019). These findings emphasize the need for a comprehensive approach to enhance cultural education and resource management.

Local wisdom has long been a characteristic of community groups (Ahmad et al., 2020; Dahliani, 2010; Falah & Hadiwibowo, 2017; Rahmatullah et al., 2023). It serves as a cultural product or source of community knowledge, arising from the need for values, norms, and rules that guide actions. Local wisdom is found in traditions, history, education, art, religion, etc. (Darmadi, 2018; Machmud, 2013; Sumartias et al., 2020). These practices, imbued with wisdom, are passed down through generations, shaping the distinctive character of a region (Shufa, 2018). Therefore, integrating local wisdom into the learning process is necessary to maintain its existence amidst globalization.

The importance of implementing local cultural values in social studies learning is rooted in the educational philosophy of perennialism, which views education as a critical process in inheriting cultural values (Efendi, 2014). Cultural values must be transformed in education so that they are known, accepted, and lived by students. Data shows that most teachers (51.2%) stated that local wisdom education is crucial, 46.4% said it is necessary, and only three teachers (0.9%) stated it is unnecessary (Wagiran, 2009). These results indicate the need for developing learning models based on local wisdom.

The main reason for learning based on local wisdom is to ensure students know and can preserve their regional culture as part of the nation's wealth (Jahrir, 2020; Khairunisa, 2021; Tohri et al., 2022). Other objectives include shaping children's personality, exploring local potential to foster creativity, developing local culture, and preserving national culture. This approach equips the younger generation with solid personalities and ensures the upholding of good values (Albantani & Madkur, 2018).
Additionally, it is imperative that students understand their culture to prevent its misappropriation by other countries, setting a good example for students to follow (Shufa, 2018).

Currently, local wisdom, an integral part of Indonesia’s cultural heritage, is often neglected, especially among the younger generation. This disconnection threatens cultural preservation and weakens cultural identity among Indonesian youths (Hidayati et al., 2020). While the importance of reintegrating local wisdom is acknowledged, effectively engaging the younger generation remains a challenge.

Previous studies have primarily focused on documenting the erosion of local wisdom and advocating for its integration into curricula but often lack comprehensive strategies that combine educational reform with technological engagement to captivate digitally native students. There has been insufficient exploration of the effectiveness of current educational materials and methods in conveying local wisdom to young students. This highlights the need for innovative approaches that bridge traditional knowledge with modern learning preferences.

This research contributes to the field by employing a quantitative descriptive analysis to assess the impact of thematic curriculum textbooks, specifically the 2013 edition, on elementary school students’ understanding of local wisdom in Palopo City. It integrates technology by leveraging online platforms for data collection and student engagement, reflecting a novel approach in capturing the learning dynamics of the digital age.

The study provides empirical evidence on local wisdom awareness among students, offering a grounded understanding of the gap between curricular efforts and student outcomes. It suggests targeted curricular enhancements designed to address these knowledge gaps. By proposing the inclusion of contextually relevant local wisdom content, the study highlights the potential for localized educational materials to foster deeper connections between students and their cultural heritage.

Focusing on Palopo, this study illuminates the broader implications of local wisdom’s diminishing role in Indonesian education and society. It underscores the urgent need for curricular reform that respects and incorporates regional cultural nuances and sets a precedent for future research to explore similar interventions in other contexts. This research aims to meld traditional knowledge with contemporary educational techniques, revitalizing the transmission of cultural values to future generations and ensuring their preservation in Indonesian cultural history.

METHOD
This research was conducted using quantitative descriptive analysis methods to provide an overview of the knowledge of elementary school students in Palopo City on the values of local wisdom in their area. Descriptive analysis is a data analysis technique that can be employed in quantitative research to evaluate the performance of collected data and draw conclusions (Ramdhani, 2021).

The descriptive method is appropriate for examining a group of people, objects, conditions, and events occurring in the present (Rukajat, 2018). Another perspective explains that the descriptive method is used in research to solve or address current issues (Surakhmad, 1985). The population in this study comprised all elementary school students in Palopo City. Given the large population size, a simple random sampling technique was employed, considering the homogeneity of the existing classes (Rukajat, 2018).

The research data were collected through a meticulously designed closed questionnaire, serving as the primary
introducing a new instrument for this study. The questionnaire comprised various question types to capture a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives on local wisdom. Specifically, it included Likert scale items to gauge the intensity of students' attitudes towards local wisdom values, multiple-choice questions to assess their knowledge of local cultural elements, yes/no questions to identify students' basic awareness, and true/false items to test their factual knowledge about local traditions and practices. This diverse array of question types was chosen to ensure a robust analysis of students' engagement with and understanding of local wisdom in their curriculum.

**Table 1. Test Question and Questionnaire Grid.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Grid</th>
<th>Questionnaire Grid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Information about local wisdom in thematic books.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>Interest in thematic books based on local wisdom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>The usefulness of thematic books based on local wisdom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Clothing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data collection technique employed was a survey method, utilizing online dissemination of test questions and questionnaires. The questions and questionnaires were randomly distributed to respondents via Google Forms, sent through WhatsApp messages. The study subjects were high-grade students (grades 4, 5, and 6) at elementary schools in Palopo City.

The total number of respondents who completed the questionnaire by the scheduled deadline (October-December 2022) was 271. The indicators of the distributed questionnaire included information about local wisdom in student books, art, buildings, food, and traditional clothing in Palopo City. The results of the questionnaire were then presented and described according to these indicators.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The results of the student knowledge test about the values of local wisdom in Palopo City were obtained by distributing questionnaires online. To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire instrument utilized in this research, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for the questions aimed at measuring students' knowledge of local wisdom in Palopo City. The calculation yielded a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.82, indicating a high level of internal consistency among the items in the questionnaire. This value suggests that the questionnaire is a reliable tool for assessing students' knowledge and perceptions related to local wisdom.

The reliability of this instrument is crucial to ensure that the data collected in this study accurately and reliably reflect the students' understanding. Therefore, the findings of this research can be considered a valid reflection of the situation being investigated, providing a solid foundation for further analysis and discussion regarding the integration of local wisdom into thematic curriculum textbooks. The recapitulation of students who completed the questionnaire is illustrated in Table 2.

**Table 2. Sample Recapitulation.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Student Class</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Sum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The summarized data indicates that the respondents who completed the questionnaire predominantly consist of high-grade students, with the majority being fifth-grade elementary school students. The questionnaire, which includes questions describing students' knowledge about local wisdom in Palopo City, is presented in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>True</th>
<th>Wrong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wayang is a traditional art form from the land of Luwu.</td>
<td>58.30</td>
<td>42.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Museums in Palopo City.</td>
<td>29.50</td>
<td>70.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Traditional arts typical of the land of Luwu.</td>
<td>39.40</td>
<td>60.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Typical food from the land of Luwu.</td>
<td>60.50</td>
<td>39.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Traditional clothing of Palopo City.</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>98.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>37.90</strong></td>
<td><strong>62.10</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 1 reveals that 42% of students mistakenly believe that wayang is a traditional art form native to Luwu land, indicating significant confusion among students in distinguishing between local and national cultural heritage. This inability to distinguish local wisdom indicates that students are not familiar with the cultural heritage of their own area (Meilana & Aslam, 2022).

Question 2, concerning museums in Palopo City, shows that only 29% of students are aware of the existence of museums in their area. The museum in Palopo City is called Batara Guru, but 58% of students mistakenly identified the La Galigo Museum in Makassar City as being in Palopo. This may be due to the naming association with Luwu Land. The naming of a place can influence perception because the words or phrases used can trigger associations, convey specific messages, or create expectations about the place (Harisah, 2018).

Question 3, related to traditional arts in Luwu Land as part of Palopo City, shows that 60% of students incorrectly identified or failed to recognize local dances. Notably, 67% of students chose Pa' Gellu dance, a traditional art form of Tana Toraja. Similar findings were observed regarding students' knowledge of local museums, which may be due to several factors: educational curricula that do not include such information, teachers' unawareness of museum existence, limited resources for museum visits, and a lack of interest and appreciation for existing museums (Mursidi, 2010). Therefore, it is essential to enhance students' awareness of museums and their benefits. This includes fostering cooperation among museums, schools, and government entities to integrate museum visits and cultural heritage education into the curriculum, facilitating learning experiences outside the traditional classroom setting.

Another effort to address this issue is to leverage technological and informational developments in education, both outside and inside the classroom (Irwandani & Juariah, 2016). This is important given the high number of social media users among school-age children, which is not proportionate to the educational content they receive (Irwandani, 2016).

A lack of information and promotion can lead to students' unawareness of local museums, which may be due to several factors: educational curricula that do not include such information, teachers' unawareness of museum existence, limited resources for museum visits, and a lack of interest and appreciation for existing museums (Mursidi, 2010). Therefore, it is essential to enhance students' awareness of museums and their benefits. This includes fostering cooperation among museums, schools, and government entities to integrate museum visits and cultural heritage education into the curriculum, facilitating learning experiences outside the traditional classroom setting.

The incorrect responses to question 2 are likely influenced by the naming of the museum, leading students to choose familiar names in their area. Additionally, 9% of students chose the Balla Lompoa Museum (Gowa Regency), 6% chose the Ne' Gandeng Museum (North Toraja), and 3% chose Fort Rotterdam (Makassar). This shows that most students in Palopo City are unaware of the museums in their area.
of traditional games in Luwu Raya; out of 25 traditional games in South Sulawesi, only 15 are still preserved in Luwu Raya (Rustan & Munawir, 2020).

Question 4 about typical food in Palopo City shows that 60% of students gave the correct answer, indicating that most students recognize the typical food of their area. However, 40% of students still chose foods from other regions, consistent with research suggesting that students struggle to distinguish local wisdom from different regions due to a lack of knowledge about their own local wisdom (Azizah & Sofyan Alnahsr, 2022).

Question 5 about traditional clothing typical of Luwu Land shows that only 1.8%, or five students, out of 75 gave the correct answer. This indicates a very low level of knowledge among students regarding traditional clothing in their area. This is supported by initial research on grade 4 students at public elementary school 4, which also concluded that students' knowledge of local wisdom in their area is very low (Lestariningsih & Suardiman, 2017).

Students' lack of understanding of local wisdom in their area can be attributed to insufficient education about local culture in schools. Another cause is that teaching materials, such as books, do not incorporate the values of local wisdom from the students' areas (Wijiningsih et al., 2017). Consequently, students may learn and even master the local wisdom of other regions but fail to recognize their own local wisdom.

Student books are the essential teaching material in the 2013 curriculum currently in use (Munawir, 2019). The teacher's explanation of the local wisdom of Luwu land in the 2013 Curriculum student book revealed that only material about Lontara letters and the story of Andi Djemma's struggle is included. The lack of local wisdom content in Thematic Curriculum student books is due to the extensive national cultures in Indonesia (Wijiningsih et al., 2017). Based on the data, questionnaires were given to students to determine their responses to the 2013 Curriculum student book, as illustrated in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. Student Needs for Thematic Books Based on Local Wisdom.](image)

The first data point found relates to students' needs for information on the local wisdom of Luwu land (Palopo) in student books. As many as 57% of students stated that they needed a student book containing local wisdom values to recognize the culture in their area. The cause of students' ignorance of
local wisdom in their area is attributed to the unavailability of teaching materials (Nuha, 2017).

The second data point concerns students' interest in reading thematic teaching materials based on local wisdom. As many as 89% of students indicated that they would be interested in reading and learning about the local wisdom of their area if such teaching materials were available. Based on the students' responses, it was concluded that teaching materials based on local wisdom values are essential to help students recognize the culture around them.

The third data point relates to the presence of teaching materials making it easier for students to understand subject matter related to local wisdom. The results showed that 87% of students expressed the need for teaching materials based on local wisdom values to facilitate their learning of the local culture in their area.

Based on the data above, the students' need for teaching materials based on local wisdom values is very high. Students require local wisdom to present contextual learning (Baderiah et al., 2022; Putri, 2019). This indicates that the lack of local culture in the textbooks they study contributes to students' ignorance of the values of local wisdom in their area.

This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on educational curriculum development and cultural preservation by highlighting a critical gap in the knowledge of elementary school students in Palopo City regarding their local wisdom. With only 37.9% of respondents demonstrating a correct understanding of their cultural heritage, this finding underscores the pressing need for curriculum reform that prioritizes the integration of local wisdom. The study aligns closely with current research objectives aimed at assessing students' awareness and appreciation of their local culture. Furthermore, it reinforces the importance of evolving teaching methodologies to incorporate more localized content that resonates with students' cultural backgrounds. By calling upon curriculum developers to integrate local wisdom more effectively within the thematic curriculum, this research advances educational practices, emphasizing the crucial role of education in preserving cultural heritage and fostering students' cultural identity and personal development.

This study introduces a novel approach to addressing the gap in students' knowledge of local wisdom by employing quantitative descriptive analysis methods and leveraging online platforms for data collection and student engagement. Unlike previous studies that have primarily focused on documenting the erosion of local wisdom and advocating for its integration into educational curricula, this research offers a comprehensive strategy that combines educational reform with technological engagement. By conducting a survey among high-grade students (grades 4, 5, and 6) in elementary schools in Palopo City and analyzing the responses, this study provides empirical evidence on the current state of local wisdom awareness among students. Furthermore, by suggesting targeted curricular enhancements specifically designed to address the identified knowledge gaps, this research proposes a practical solution to the problem. The innovative integration of technology in data collection and student engagement reflects a forward-thinking approach to capturing the learning dynamics of the digital age. Overall, this research stands as a pioneering effort to meld traditional knowledge with contemporary educational techniques, setting a
precedent for future studies in educational practices and cultural preservation efforts.

CONCLUSION
This study has identified a significant gap in the knowledge of local wisdom among elementary school students in Palopo City, with only 37.9% demonstrating a correct understanding of their cultural heritage. This highlights the urgent need for curriculum development that prioritizes local wisdom. Educators should evolve teaching methodologies to include more localized content, and curriculum developers must integrate local wisdom into the thematic curriculum. Support from local governments and educational authorities through resources and training programs is essential. Understanding local wisdom is crucial for fostering students' cultural identity and personal development, aiding in the preservation of cultural traditions, and empowering students to navigate the globalized world. This study underscores the need for educational content that promotes cultural continuity and identity formation.

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