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Implementation of Local Culture-Based Learning Using Reog Ponorogo Art to Instill Character in Early Childhood

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ABSTRACT
Early childhood is a critical period for character formation, yet local cultural arts are not always integrated systematically into learning activities. This study aims to analyze the planning of learning materials, the implementation of learning activities, and the supporting and inhibiting factors in local culture-based learning using Reog Ponorogo art to instill character in early childhood at TK Islam Arroohman Ponorogo. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with the principal and teachers, and documentation, and were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, with source and technique triangulation to ensure trustworthiness. The findings show that planning was carried out by developing Teaching Modules and a Project for Strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile (P5) module with a local wisdom approach, supported by child-friendly learning media. The learning activities integrated Reog Ponorogo through dance movements, simple gamelan music, and folktale narratives, which fostered mutual cooperation, courage, discipline, independence, and responsibility in the children. The main supporting factors were child-friendly learning media and strong parental support, whereas the inhibiting factors were teachers' limited technical art skills and children's short attention span.

ABSTRAK
Abstrak: Anak usia dini berada pada masa kritis pembentukan karakter, namun seni budaya lokal belum selalu diintegrasikan secara sistematis ke dalam kegiatan pembelajaran. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis perencanaan materi pembelajaran, pelaksanaan kegiatan pembelajaran, serta faktor pendukung dan penghambat pembelajaran berbasis budaya lokal dengan menggunakan seni Reog Ponorogo untuk menanamkan karakter pada anak usia dini di TK Islam Arroohman Ponorogo. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam dengan kepala sekolah dan guru, serta dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis dengan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña disertai triangulasi sumber dan teknik untuk menjamin keabsahan data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perencanaan dilakukan dengan menyusun Modul Ajar dan modul Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5) dengan pendekatan kearifan lokal, didukung media pembelajaran yang ramah anak. Kegiatan pembelajaran mengintegrasikan Reog Ponorogo melalui gerak tari, musik gamelan sederhana, dan narasi cerita rakyat yang menumbuhkan sikap gotong royong, keberanian, disiplin, kemandirian, dan tanggung jawab pada anak. Faktor pendukung utama adalah media pembelajaran yang ramah anak dan dukungan orang tua yang kuat, sedangkan faktor penghambatnya adalah keterbatasan keterampilan teknis seni pada guru dan rentang perhatian anak yang pendek.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is the foundation for shaping a child's personality, moral values, and character. During the golden age, roughly from birth to six years old, brain development and the capacity to absorb experience are at their most optimal (Hasbi, 2020; Li et al., 2024). At the same time, globalization and rapid modernization increasingly erode local cultural values among the younger generation. Children tend to be more familiar with foreign popular culture than with the arts and local wisdom of their own region. Integrating local wisdom

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into early childhood learning activities is therefore a strategic step to strengthen cultural identity, build pride in one's heritage, and instill noble character from an early age (Wulansari et al., 2025).

Ponorogo Regency possesses a rich cultural heritage in the form of Reog Ponorogo, an art form that carries moral messages of togetherness, courage, discipline, and leadership. Reog is more than a visual and auditory performance; it is a symbolic order that reflects resilience, work ethic, and the spirit of mutual cooperation in Javanese society (Fatimah & Hermanto, 2024; Sakti et al., 2024). TK Islam Arroohman Ponorogo has taken the initiative to implement local wisdom-based learning by integrating the values of Reog Ponorogo into learning activities, held twice a month. The learning does not merely introduce traditional dance and music cognitively; it aims to instill essential character values such as religiosity, mutual cooperation, independence, love for the homeland, and positive habits through contextual and enjoyable play-based methods (fun learning) (Hosokawa et al., 2024).

Previous studies indicate that traditional games and local culture in early childhood education can support children's cognitive development, gross motor skills, and social skills (Ntumi et al., 2026; Sopiah, 2022). However, less attention has been paid to how a local performing art such as Reog Ponorogo is planned as learning material, carried out as learning activities, and supported or hindered in practice within an Islamic kindergarten. The novelty of this study lies in describing the integration of Reog Ponorogo art with Islamic values in Teaching Modules and a Project for Strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile (P5), together with the factors that influence its implementation.

Three concepts underpin this study. First, local culture-based learning is a teaching and learning process that uses the potential, arts, wisdom, and values of the local culture as the main media, themes, and learning resources to bring children closer to their socio-cultural environment. Second, Reog Ponorogo is a traditional art of Ponorogo that combines dance, music, and performance, and contains ethical and aesthetic values, courage, leadership, and a spirit of togetherness. Third, early childhood character education is a planned and continuous effort to instill habits, moral understanding, and positive values (such as religiosity, cooperation, discipline, confidence, and care) in children aged 4–6 years through habituation and role modeling. According to Curren (2017), effective character education involves three components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Children's moral and social development is shaped by environmental interaction, daily habituation, and the example set by teachers and parents (Bass & Bonawitz, 2024; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2025) and character education through local arts provides space for expression that is in line with the play-oriented world of the child (Argiandini et al., 2023).

The performance structure of Reog contains main figures that reflect positive character, as summarized in Table 1. The introduction of these symbols is adapted to children's psychological developmental stage through storytelling, role playing, free movement exploration, and group singing.

Table 1 Reog Ponorogo Elements, Character Values, and Their Implementation in Early Childhood

Reog element	Embedded character values	Implementation in early childhood
Dhadhak Merak and Singo Barong	Leadership, grandeur, and steadfastness	Trains focus, physical strength, and pride
Warok	Role modeling, wisdom, and honesty	Instills honesty, noble character, and a protective attitude
Jatilan (horse soldiers)	Courage, agility, and discipline	Trains gross motor agility and fighting spirit
Pujangga Anom (Ganongan)	Agility, intelligence, and cheerfulness	Trains self-expression, creativity, and self-confidence
Accompanying music (gamelan)	Harmony, togetherness, and mutual cooperation	Trains auditory sensitivity, rhythm, and the ability to cooperate

Based on this background, the objectives of this study are (1) to describe in depth the planning of local culture-based learning using Reog Ponorogo art at TK Islam Arroohman Ponorogo; (2) to analyze the implementation of this learning in instilling character in early childhood; and (3) to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors in applying the local wisdom-based learning.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive qualitative design (Pahleviannur et al., 2022). The approach was chosen to describe, explain, and interpret comprehensively the actual phenomenon of Reog Ponorogo-based learning in the formation of early childhood character at TK Islam Arroohman Ponorogo. The researcher acted as the key instrument (human instrument), present directly in the field to make gradual observations, collect authentic data, and conduct in-depth interviews with relevant parties at the school.

Research Site and Time

The study was conducted at TK Islam Arroohman Ponorogo. The site was selected purposively because the school has an integrated local content curriculum program based on Reog Ponorogo. The research took place during the odd semester of the ongoing academic year.

Participants and Data Sources

The primary data were obtained from in-depth interviews with the principal, classroom teachers, and the arts extracurricular facilitator, as well as observations of the behavior and responses of children aged 4–6 years during the teaching and learning activities. The secondary data consisted of the school curriculum documents, Teaching Modules, Project for Strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile (P5) documents, photographs and videos of activities, and supporting administrative archives of the institution.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through three techniques. First, passive participatory observation was used to observe interactions, children's character-related behavior, and the learning steps carried out by teachers inside and outside the classroom. Second, semi-structured interviews with the principal and teachers were used to explore planning, the process of instilling values, and implementation barriers. Third, documentation involved collecting teaching modules, children's portfolios, photographs of activities, and learning evaluation results (Sharma, 2022).

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Huberman & Miles (2012), which consists of three main stages: (1) data reduction, namely organizing, sorting, and selecting raw data from interviews, field notes, and documents according to the research focus; (2) data display, namely presenting the organized data in descriptive narratives, tables, and charts so that they are easy to understand; and (3) conclusion drawing and verification, namely formulating final conclusions based on consistently validated data. Trustworthiness was established through triangulation. Source triangulation compared information from the principal, classroom teachers, and parents, while technique triangulation compared field observations, in-depth interviews, and written document analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings are presented in line with the research objectives, namely learning planning and learning material development, the implementation of learning activities and character internalization, and the supporting and inhibiting factors, followed by a discussion that interprets the findings in relation to relevant theories and previous studies.

Learning Planning and Learning Material Development

Learning planning in early childhood education is guided by the national early childhood education standards (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014). At TK Islam Arroohman Ponorogo, the school designed local wisdom-based learning that was set out in Daily Teaching Modules and a Project for Strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile (P5) module under the main theme "I Love Indonesia" and the sub-theme "Reog Ponorogo, My Pride". The planning involved formulating Learning Outcomes that integrate Islamic religious values with regional culture, such as introducing an attitude of gratitude for the cultural richness created by Allah SWT and the habit of praying before dance practice.

The school also provided child-friendly learning media, including lightweight miniature replicas of the dadak merak, ganongan masks made of foam, and miniature musical instruments (Figure 1). These materials turn the local art into concrete learning resources that children can see, touch, wear, and play with, which is consistent with the function of learning media in early childhood education (Ardiana et al., 2026; Rusdiani et al., 2025).



Figure 1 Introduction of Reog Ponorogo through storytelling and child-friendly media

Implementation of Learning Activities and Character Internalization

The learning activities were carried out in three stages. In the opening activity, children habitually sang Ponorogo regional songs, were introduced interactively to the origin story of Reog using picture books, and were given moral messages about the good traits of the Reog characters.

In the core activity, children were taught the basic movements of the Jatilan and Ganongan dances in pairs and in groups, and were invited to play simple musical instruments such as the mini ketipung and angklung. In this session, the characters of mutual cooperation, discipline, courage, and responsibility were instilled intensively. In the closing activity, teachers and children reflected together, discussed how the children felt while playing and practicing, and teachers gave appreciation (positive reinforcement) for the children's efforts.

The observed character values and the corresponding behavioral indicators are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2 Observed Character Values and Children's Behavioral Indicators

Character value	Observed behavioral indicators
Mutual cooperation	Children shared musical instruments, guided friends who could not yet dance, and tidied up learning media together.
Courage	Children dared to perform Ganongan movements in front of their friends and to express their opinions.
Discipline	Children followed game rules, lined up neatly during practice, and listened to the teacher's instructions.
Independence and responsibility	Children were able to put on their practice costumes by themselves and looked after the dance equipment they used.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

The supporting factors identified were the full support of parents and the school committee, the availability of adequate learning media and child-sized Reog costumes, and the children's very high enthusiasm and interest in Reog music and movement. The inhibiting factors were the limited technical expertise of some teachers in demonstrating the standard range of Reog dance movements, and the relatively short attention span of young children, which requires continuous variation of teaching methods. The first barrier points to a need for teacher professional development, while the second requires teachers to keep varying learning activities (Mahardhani et al., 2026; Sulton et al., 2025).

Discussion: Reog Ponorogo as Contextual Learning for Character Building

The integration of Reog Ponorogo art at TK Islam Arroohman Ponorogo proved to be a contextual, meaningful, and enjoyable medium of learning. From a child development perspective, physical-motor activities combined with traditional musical rhythms can stimulate sensory integration and body coordination, which is in line with studies showing that traditional games stimulate gross motor development (Iswi et al., 2024; Nurhayati et al., 2022).

Character was not instilled through rigid dogma but through role immersion, a process close to vicarious learning (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2025). Children absorbed the value of courage from the Jatilan and Warok figures and the value of togetherness when playing musical instruments jointly, which also reflects the importance of social interaction in children's learning (Krisnawati et al., 2018; Rahman et al., 2023). The three stages of activity can be related to the components of character education proposed by Lickona (Mappaenre et al., 2023): the storytelling and moral messages in the opening activity relate to moral knowing, the enjoyment and pride of dancing and playing music relate to moral feeling, and the behaviors listed in Table 2 reflect moral action. The learning also combined Islamic and cultural values (positive acculturation), in which art is understood as a means of expressing gratitude and strengthening ties of friendship (*silaturahmi*).



Figure 2 Children's Reog performance and group documentation of the learning activities

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to describe the planning, implementation, and supporting and inhibiting factors of local culture-based learning using Reog Ponorogo art at TK Islam Arroohman Ponorogo. The learning was systematic, well planned, and applicable: planning was carried out through Teaching Modules that integrate Islamic character values and local wisdom, and the implementation through play, dance, music, and storytelling fostered discipline, courage, mutual cooperation, independence, and pride in regional culture, which contributes a concrete example of how a local performing art can serve as learning material and learning activity in early childhood education. The main supporting factors were collaboration between the school and parents and adequate facilities, while the barriers, namely teacher limited technical art skills and children's short attention span, can be addressed through varied teaching methods and educator training. The limitations of this study are its single-site, descriptive qualitative design and the absence of quantitative measures of character change; therefore, future research is recommended to examine the effect of local arts integration on language, cognitive, and emotional development using quantitative or comparative designs.

RECOMMENDATION

Theoretically, the findings enrich the discussion of local wisdom-based (ethnopedagogical) learning in early childhood education and its role in strengthening character education. Practically, the planning model that combines Teaching Modules with a P5 theme can serve as a reference for teachers and schools in developing contextual local content and Kurikulum Merdeka learning. The study has limitations: it was conducted in a single kindergarten with a descriptive qualitative design over one semester, and it did not measure changes in children's character quantitatively, so the findings cannot be generalized. Teachers are recommended to keep developing creativity in designing variations of movements and supporting traditional games to maintain children's concentration and interest. Schools are recommended to organize regular Reog Ponorogo training or workshops for educators by involving professional local artists and to strengthen synergy with local art studios. Future research may examine the impact of integrating local arts and culture on other developmental aspects, such as language, cognition, and emotional intelligence, through quantitative or comparative studies.

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