



The Role of Teachers in Implementing Local Wisdom-Based Learning in Elementary Schools in Makassar

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Local Wisdom, Culture-Based Learning, Elementary School	<i>Basic education plays a crucial role in shaping students' character and cultural identity, including through learning based on local wisdom. In this context, teachers occupy a central position as agents who bridge the curriculum with the cultural values that thrive in students' communities. This study aims to examine the role of teachers in implementing local wisdom-based learning in elementary schools in Makassar City, covering teachers' understanding of local wisdom, the forms of integration in learning, the challenges they face, and the impact on students. The study employs a qualitative case study design at SD Muhammadiyah Perumnas and UPT SPF SD Inpres Cilallang. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with teachers and school principals, classroom observations, and analysis of learning documents, and were analyzed using thematic analysis with triangulation of sources and techniques to ensure data validity. The research findings indicate that teachers at both schools possess a fairly good understanding of Bugis–Makassar cultural values such as tabe', Siri' na Pacce, and gotong royong, and actively integrate them into various subjects such as Pancasila Education, Civic Education, and Cultural Arts, through an integrative thematic and values-based approach. The forms of integration implemented by teachers include teaching the traditional Mappadendang dance, folk tales, the use of the local language, and instilling the value of tabe' in daily interactions. In carrying out their roles, teachers face three main challenges: limited resources and facilities, low parental support, and the absence of clear policy guidelines. Nevertheless, teachers' role in local wisdom-based learning has a positive impact, evidenced by increased student politeness and a growing sense of pride in local culture. This study concludes that optimizing teachers' roles requires a harmonious educational ecosystem encompassing schools, families, and policy.</i>
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1. INTRODUCTION

Basic education plays a strategic role in shaping students' intellectual foundation and character. At this stage, schools not only play a role in developing academic abilities but are also responsible for instilling values, norms, and cultural identities as integral parts of children's personality development. This responsibility aligns with the character-oriented education paradigm, which views local wisdom as

a source of relevant, applicable values in students' daily lives. Local wisdom, encompassing ethical values, social norms, traditions, cultural practices, and community life principles, is an asset that can enrich learning while strengthening students' identities (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

In the context of Makassar City, the cultural richness of Bugis–Makassar presents various noble values such as *Siri' na Pacce*, the concept of *tabe'*, mutual respect, social solidarity, and various cultural practices that have been inherited from generation to generation (Hisbul et al., 2024; Lebba, 2022). These values are not just cultural symbols; they contain moral and ethical messages that are highly relevant to instill in students from an early age. Primary schools, as educational institutions that are closest to children's social environment, have a great opportunity and responsibility to ensure that these local cultural values are systematically internalized through learning.

In the midst of these responsibilities, teachers occupy a central position as the main actors who bridge the curriculum with the local cultural context. Teachers not only convey material but also serve as cultural agents who actively transmit local values to students through daily learning practices (Adiwilaga et al., 2017; Darmayanti, 2023). Teachers' ability to interpret, design, and implement learning grounded in local wisdom is the main determinant of the extent to which cultural values can truly be present in students' learning experiences.

However, various studies show that empirical conditions do not fully reflect these expectations. The integration of local wisdom in learning still faces many obstacles, ranging from limited teachers' understanding of the concept of local wisdom to the lack of curriculum support to implement cultural values consistently (Idhayani et al., 2023; Pratama & Latifa, 2024; Ramlah & Julyyanti, 2025; Zahro & Fauziah, 2024). Teaching materials that should be contextualized with students' social environment are often unavailable or not designed to reflect regional cultural richness (Cahya & Ramadhana, 2023; Hasan et al., 2024). This gap shows that the role of teachers remains crucial, yet they are vulnerable to various structural constraints that limit their movement.

The pressure on teachers' roles is growing amid social changes driven by globalization and the development of digital technology. Elementary school children are now more exposed to global culture through social media, games, videos, and other high-appeal digital content (Kurniawati et al., 2024; Ratri & Najicha, 2022; Siregar et al., 2024). The high intensity of digital culture consumption increasingly excludes local cultural values from children's life experiences. This phenomenon is exacerbated by low cultural literacy and the lack of family and community involvement in cultural preservation (Artisna et al., 2022; Oktaviasary & Sutini, 2024; Pasaribu & Usiono, 2024). Under such conditions, teachers stand as one of the last lines of defense that can ensure local values remain alive in the consciousness of the younger generation.

Various previous studies have emphasized that integrating local wisdom into learning positively impacts students' character and cultural identity. Saputri et al., (2024) show that local cultural values can serve as a moral buffer amid a global

cultural wave. However, most research is still focused on the inventory of cultural values or the development of learning media, and few have comprehensively examined how teachers carry out their role in implementing culture-based learning in real classroom practice (Fitriani et al., 2022; Suratmi, 2022). This gap is the research gap that needs to be filled.

Therefore, this study aims to provide an empirical picture of teachers' roles in implementing local wisdom-based learning in Makassar City elementary schools, particularly regarding teachers' understanding, the pedagogical strategies used, and the obstacles encountered in its implementation. SD Muhammadiyah Perumnas and UPT SPF SD Inpres Cilallang were chosen as the research locations because both are in social environments rich in Bugis–Makassar cultural values, but face real challenges in maintaining students' connection to that culture.

The results of this study are expected not only to make an empirical contribution to the ethnopedagogical literature and culture-based learning but also to offer applicable recommendations for schools, local governments, and policymakers in designing learning that is responsive to local cultural values, pedagogically relevant, and adaptive to the challenges of the times.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative case study design to deeply understand the role of teachers in implementing learning grounded in local wisdom in elementary schools in Makassar City. The qualitative approach was chosen because it enables researchers to capture the dynamics, meanings, and subjective experiences of teachers as they integrate Bugis–Makassar cultural values into daily learning practices (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The case study design was used because this research focuses on a context-bound phenomenon, namely, how teachers in two specific elementary schools interpret and implement local wisdom in real learning situations.

2.1 Location and Participants

Two schools were selected as the research sites through purposive sampling, namely SD Muhammadiyah Perumnas and UPT SPF SD Inpres Cilallang. The selection of these two schools was based on three considerations: (1) both are situated in a social environment that still practices Bugis–Makassar cultural traditions; (2) there are teachers who have implemented elements of local culture in the learning process; and (3) both represent different school characteristics, allowing for meaningful comparisons. The research participants were classroom teachers and principals from both schools, selected based on their direct involvement in implementing learning grounded in local wisdom.

2.2 Data Collection Techniques

Research data were collected using three complementary techniques: in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner with classroom teachers and principals to explore their understanding of the concept of local wisdom, the pedagogical strategies used, and the obstacles faced in its implementation. The interview guides

were structured based on the research focus and developed flexibly during the interview process to obtain more in-depth data.

Classroom observation was conducted to examine the integration of local cultural values into learning practices, including the use of regional languages, the expression of Siri' na Pacce values, teacher student interaction, and activities that reflect Bugis–Makassar cultural practices. Observations were conducted across several learning sessions in each school, ensuring the data obtained were not incidental. In addition, document analysis was performed on the curriculum, syllabus, lesson plans, and teaching materials to assess the suitability of local cultural content within the curriculum structure used by teachers.

2.3 Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the framework of [Braun & Clarke \(2006\)](#) which was carried out in six stages: data familiarization, initial code generation, theme search, theme review, theme definition and naming, and report writing. All interview transcripts and observation notes were read repeatedly to gain a thorough understanding before coding. The codes that emerged were then grouped into main themes, such as teachers' understanding of local wisdom, strategies for integrating cultural values into learning, and implementation challenges. Each theme was critically analyzed by taking into account the school's cultural context and findings from previous research.

2.4 Data Validity

Data validity was maintained through four strategies. First, source triangulation was conducted by comparing data from teachers, principals, and school documents. Second, technique triangulation was achieved by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and document analysis to ensure the consistency of findings. Third, member checking was conducted by asking several informants to review the researcher's interpretations to verify the accuracy and fairness of the findings. Fourth, an audit trail was implemented by systematically documenting the entire research process, from data collection to drawing conclusions, to ensure transparency and accountability of research procedures.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result

This study aims to examine the role of teachers in implementing local wisdom-based learning at SD Muhammadiyah Perumnas and UPT SPF SD Inpres Cilallang. Based on in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, four main themes emerged that describe how teachers understand, integrate, and face challenges in learning grounded in local wisdom. These four themes are discussed in order below.

3.1.1. Teachers' Understanding of Local Wisdom

The role of teachers in local wisdom-based learning cannot be separated from the extent to which they understand the concept of local wisdom itself. A deep understanding is a prerequisite for teachers to interpret, select, and integrate cultural values appropriately into learning practices. Local wisdom refers to cultural values,

traditions, knowledge, and habits that develop in a community and are inherited from generation to generation as an inseparable part of the community's identity (Lestari et al., 2021). In the context of education, teachers' understanding of local wisdom does not stop at introducing cultural artifacts alone; it must also include the ability to capture the moral and social values embedded within them and transform them into meaningful learning experiences for students.

The interviews revealed that teachers in both schools had a fairly good understanding of local wisdom and its relevance to education. They not only understand local wisdom as knowledge of customs but also recognize its role in shaping students' character and cultural identity. This is reflected in the statement of Mrs. Fitriani (Classroom Teacher, UPT SPF SD Inpres Cilallang):

"We teach Mappadandang not just as a dance. Within it lie the values of cooperation, humility, and gratitude. That is what we instill in the children."

This statement shows that teachers do not merely introduce cultural artifacts but consciously use them as a medium for value transmission. Teachers with high cultural awareness tend to design learning that is not only informative but also transformative in developing students' character. In line with this, Mrs. Suprawati (Classroom Teacher, UPT SPF SD Inpres Cilallang) emphasized that the value of *tabe'* which is politeness and mutual respect is the foundation of every interaction in the classroom:

"Tabe' is not just about how to speak. It's about how the child values others and respects elders. I always associate it with their daily lives."

This statement indicates that teachers understand local wisdom not as stand-alone lesson content, but as values that must animate the entire classroom interaction. For teachers in both schools, *tabe'* is not merely a hand gesture or formal speech, but a social philosophy that governs how individuals position themselves in their community. This kind of understanding is difficult to acquire without direct life experience in the culture concerned, so the role of teachers as cultural insiders becomes highly strategic. Local teachers have the advantage of bridging the formal aspects of the curriculum with the rich cultural meanings that live in their communities.

This good teacher understanding aligns with the findings of Nooviar et al., (2024), which show that teachers in Makassar elementary schools have a high awareness of the importance of local cultural values in shaping students' character, especially in terms of politeness, responsibility, and cooperation. Darmayanti, (2024) also emphasized that integrating local wisdom into learning can increase students' pride in their culture and strengthen their social and cultural identity. Furthermore, Rahmawati et al., (2025) found that teachers with a deep understanding of local culture tend to be more successful in fostering students' self-awareness of the importance of preserving their cultural heritage. Lestari et al., (2021) added that teachers' holistic understanding of local wisdom is a significant predictor of the success of culture-based learning, outperforming other factors such as the availability of teaching materials and facilities.

However, a good understanding is not always directly proportional to the ability to implement. Mrs. Hasniah (Principal, UPT SPF SD Inpres Cilallang) admitted that limited funds are often an obstacle in realizing more meaningful culture-based activities, such as study tours to cultural sites or traditional art performances. This condition indicates a gap between teachers' conceptual understanding and their practical capacity to implement local wisdom-based learning optimally. This gap is important to understand because it shows that strengthening teachers' roles is not enough through improving conceptual understanding alone; it must also be accompanied by strengthening structural capacity through adequate funding, facilities, and policy support. This phenomenon also aligns with the analysis of [Sunaryati et al., \(2024\)](#), which states that teacher capacity can only be optimally manifested in a supportive educational ecosystem, including structural, collegial, and cultural support.

3.1.2 Integration of Local Wisdom in Subjects

A good understanding of local wisdom encourages teachers to actively integrate it into various subjects. This integration is a tangible manifestation of the teacher's role as a learning designer responsive to cultural context. In this study, it was found that teachers used two main approaches to integrate local wisdom: the integrative thematic approach and the value-based approach. These two approaches are not mutually exclusive and are often applied simultaneously in a single learning session, depending on the subject and the learning objectives.

The integrative thematic approach is evident in how teachers relate local wisdom values to the subject matter being taught. Mrs. Masniar (Classroom Teacher, SD Muhammadiyah Perumnas) explained that in the subject of Pancasila Education, local cultural values such as cooperation and mutual help are integrated through collaborative practices in the classroom:

"I do not separate Pancasila from local culture. Mutual cooperation is in the third precept, and it is also part of our tradition. I invite children to see the two as a whole."

This approach reflects the teacher's ability to build a conceptual bridge between national values and local wisdom. By associating Pancasila with the local tradition of mutual cooperation, teachers help students understand abstract values through concrete experiences that they are already familiar with in their daily lives. This bridging strategy is important because it prevents dissociation between what is taught in school and what students experience at home and in their communities.

Meanwhile, the value-based approach is evident in how teachers use folklore and cultural practices as a medium for moral learning. Mrs. Fatma (Classroom Teacher, SD Muhammadiyah Perumnas) uses local folklore in Civic Education lessons to instill the values of honesty, hard work, and appreciation for others. In the subject of Cultural Arts, Mrs. Fitriani introduced the Mappadendang dance along with South Sulawesi specialties such as barongko as part of the introduction to regional cultural wealth. The use of folklore and traditional arts as pedagogical media is not only a creative strategy but also an effective way to introduce moral

values, as such media are presented in contexts that are familiar and emotionally engaging for students.

The use of regional languages is also a strategy consistently applied. Mrs. Suprawati teaches students to name objects around them in the local language and to apply this knowledge in various communication activities among students. This strategy not only teaches the language but also introduces a way of thinking and interacting in accordance with local cultural norms. Language is not only a means of communication but also a carrier of cultural values and identity, so teaching regional languages to students means shaping how they understand and interpret the social and cultural realities around them.

These findings align with [Putra & Windayani \(2024\)](#), who stated that folklore and traditional arts are effective media for teaching moral values and social character to elementary school students. [Rahmawati et al., \(2025\)](#) also found that local wisdom helps strengthen students' cultural identity and increases their pride in their own culture. Furthermore, [Suratmi \(2022\)](#) emphasized that integrative approaches to culture-based learning have proven more effective than separate approaches, as they allow students to see the relevance of cultural values across various aspects of their academic and social lives. [Hisbul et al., \(2024\)](#) added that the success of integrating local wisdom in South Sulawesi is largely determined by teachers' ability to translate abstract values such as *Siri' na Pacce* into concrete practices that students can experience. Thus, the role of teachers as designers and implementers of learning is crucial in ensuring that local values are not only introduced but also internalized by students in their daily lives.

3.1.3 Challenges in the Implementation of Local Wisdom-Based Learning

Although teachers have shown good understanding and genuine integration efforts, the implementation of local wisdom-based learning has not been without obstacles. This study identifies three main challenges that directly limit teachers' ability to optimize culture-based learning. It is important to note that these three challenges do not stand alone; rather, they are interrelated and, together, create conditions that make it difficult for teachers to perform their roles optimally. These challenges are described as follows.

a. Limited Resources and Facilities

Limited funds are the most frequently mentioned obstacle by teachers in both schools. Culture-based activities that involve hands-on experience, such as art performances, craft-making, or visits to cultural sites, often require budgets that are not always available. Mrs. Fitriani revealed that this condition forces teachers to limit activities to within the classroom by using simple media such as cultural videos and folklore discussions. Mrs. Fatma added that the limited size of classrooms is also an obstacle for activities that require more space.

This condition has direct implications for the depth of students' learning experiences. Learning that should be experiential and contextual is forced to be simplified into text-based learning or discussion-only formats, so that the cultural values intended to be instilled cannot always be felt authentically by students. As a result, the process of internalizing cultural values becomes superficial and

unsustainable, even though teachers have good intentions and adequate understanding.

This finding is reinforced by Cahya & Ramadhana (2023), who showed that the limitations of local culture-based teaching materials are among the most persistent obstacles to the implementation of local wisdom-based learning in Indonesia. Hasan et al., (2024) also noted that the lack of investment in developing culture-based learning media forces teachers to create their own teaching materials with very limited resources, which in turn affects the quality of learning produced.

b. Lack of Parental Support

The second challenge stems from the limited support of some parents for activities rooted in local wisdom. Mrs. Suprawati revealed that some parents consider culture-based activities as not directly contributing to their children's academic achievement. This perception leads some parents to be reluctant to grant permission or provide financial support for cultural activities outside school hours.

This phenomenon reflects a broader challenge, namely the lack of collective awareness between schools and families about the importance of cultural preservation as part of character education. When schools and families do not share an understanding of the value of culture-based education, the impact of the learning that teachers strive for at school may weaken because it is not reinforced in the family environment. Teachers also have to bear the additional burden of convincing parents, beyond their main duties as teachers, which ultimately drains the energy and time that should be devoted to developing the quality of learning.

This phenomenon aligns with the findings of Pasaribu & Usiono (2024), which show that low cultural literacy among parents is one of the main factors hindering the success of education based on local wisdom. Artisna et al., (2022) noted that the lack of family involvement in cultural preservation exposes children to cultural values only at school, without reinforcement at home, resulting in suboptimal value internalization. Oktaviasary & Sutini (2024) emphasized that school-family collaboration is a key factor in the transmission of cultural values across generations, and the absence of this collaboration is one of the roots of the fading of local wisdom among the younger generation.

c. Lack of Clear Policy Guidelines

The third challenge is structural and systemic. Mrs. Hasniah explained that although local content has become part of the national curriculum, there are no sufficiently clear guidelines on how to integrate local wisdom into each subject. As a result, implementation is highly dependent on the initiative and creativity of each teacher, making consistency between schools and classrooms difficult to maintain. Mrs. Fatma added that the absence of specialized training on integrating local wisdom forces teachers to figure out the most appropriate strategy on their own.

This condition places teachers in a paradoxical position: on the one hand, they are expected to be agents of cultural preservation, but on the other hand, they are not equipped with adequate guidance to fulfill that role. Without clear guidelines and ongoing training, teacher-led learning innovations based on local wisdom tend to be sporadic, unstructured, and difficult to sustain in the long term. Initiatives that were

initially enthusiastic eventually fade away because they are not supported by an adequate structural foundation.

This finding is corroborated by [Hasanah \(2024\)](#), who identifies resource limitations and suboptimal policies as the main obstacles to culture-based learning in elementary schools. [Rahma et al., \(2024\)](#) also emphasized that without adequate training, teachers' goodwill is not enough to ensure consistent and high-quality implementation. [Nurhastuti et al., \(2025\)](#) added that the disparity between teacher enthusiasm and available structural support is the root of the inconsistency in the implementation of local wisdom-based learning in various elementary schools in Indonesia. [Idhayani et al., \(2023\)](#) underlined that the development of teacher professionalism in the context of culture-based learning requires a systemic approach that includes ongoing training, collegial support, and policies that provide space for pedagogical innovation at the school level.

3.1.4 The Impact of Local Wisdom-Based Learning on Students

Despite the various challenges, teachers in both schools reported positive changes in students' attitudes and behaviors as a result of local wisdom-based learning. Mrs. Suprawati observed an increase in students' politeness in their interactions, both with teachers and with peers, which she attributed to the consistent application of *tabe'* values in learning. Mrs. Fitriani also noted the growing interest of students in traditional dances and regional cuisines, which indicates a growing sense of pride in their cultural identity.

When students are invited to recognize, practice, and appreciate local cultural values through fun and contextual learning, they not only gain cultural knowledge but also develop a sense of belonging to their cultural community. This sense of belonging, in turn, strengthens the intrinsic motivation to preserve and protect their culture in the future. The positive impact felt by teachers is also related to the improved quality of social interaction in the classroom. The application of values such as *tabe'*, mutual cooperation, and mutual respect not only shapes individual student behavior but also creates a classroom climate more conducive to learning.

This is in line with the findings of [Fitriani et al., \(2022\)](#), who showed that classes that consistently apply local wisdom values tend to have more positive social dynamics, with lower levels of student conflict and higher levels of participation. Thus, the role of the teacher as a behavioral model becomes very important the teacher not only teaches cultural values but also embodies them in their daily actions.

Although these changes have not been quantitatively measured, these qualitative findings are in line with [Saputri et al., \(2024\)](#), who showed that local cultural values can serve as a moral buffer for students amid the rapid influence of global culture. [Rahmawati et al., \(2025\)](#) also emphasized that culture-based education fosters students' self-awareness of the importance of preserving their cultural heritage. [Adiwilaga et al., \(2017\)](#) added that students who consistently receive education based on local wisdom show better social adaptability because they have a strong value system as a foundation for dealing with the influence of outside cultures. [Arifin et al., \(2025\)](#) underlined that sustainable, locally rooted

learning not only shapes students' individual character but also contributes to the communal sustainability of local culture through the regeneration of cultural knowledge and practices among the younger generation. Kurniawati et al., (2024) also emphasized that, in the digital era that increasingly dominates children's experiences, learning based on local wisdom is becoming increasingly important as a counterweight that provides an anchor of identity amid complex global information flows.

These findings reinforce the argument that teachers' role as cultural agents has a real impact on students' character and cultural identity, although it is still constrained by various structural challenges. With more systematic support from schools, families, and education policies, the impact has the potential to be broader, deeper, and more sustainable. Beyond that, the role of teachers in this context cannot be limited to a technical-pedagogical role but must also be seen as a socio-cultural role with implications far beyond the classroom that is, as a key actor in the preservation and regeneration of the nation's culture.

4. CONCLUSION

As the main actors who bridge the curriculum with cultural context, teachers hold a central position in learning grounded in local wisdom. This study summarizes how this role is carried out in SD Muhammadiyah Perumnas and UPT SPF SD Inpres Cilallang, as follows.

Teachers play a central role in implementing learning grounded in local wisdom, which manifests in four interrelated dimensions. First, teachers play the role of understanders and interpreters of local wisdom, with the awareness that values such as *tabe'*, *Siri' na Pacce*, mutual cooperation, and humility are not just the content of the lessons, but an ethos that animates the entire learning process. Second, teachers serve as designers of learning integration through integrative and value-based thematic approaches, which allow local wisdom to be internalized across various subjects, ranging from Pancasila Education and Civic Education to Cultural Arts. Third, teachers act as cultural agents who are directly confronted with various structural challenges ranging from limited resources and low parental support to the absence of clear policy guidelines. Fourth, teachers play a role as shapers of students' character and cultural identity, with a real impact on increased politeness, pride in local culture, and the quality of social interaction in the classroom.

These findings contribute to the ethnopedagogical literature by showing that the success of learning grounded in local wisdom is not determined solely by individual teacher capacity, but also by the alignment of the educational ecosystem, including schools, families, and policies. Even teachers who have a deep understanding and high commitment will encounter limitations if structural support is not adequately available. The practical implications of these findings lead to the need for three strategic steps: (1) strengthening teacher capacity through continuous training on culture-based pedagogical strategies; (2) the provision of resources and teaching materials that are contextual with the Bugis-Makassar

culture; and (3) the formulation of more explicit policy guidelines regarding the integration of local wisdom in the elementary school curriculum.

The study has limitations, especially in terms of site coverage, which involves only two schools, and a qualitative approach that has not quantitatively measured impact. Therefore, further research is recommended to examine the long-term impact of learning based on local wisdom on students' character and cultural identity, through comparative studies across schools or regions. A mixed-methods approach can be used to obtain results that not only describe qualitative experiences but also quantify changes in learning behaviors and cultural attitudes. Future research should also explore innovative learning strategies for schools with limited facilities, enabling culture-based learning practices to be applied more evenly and sustainably. Thus, strengthening teachers' role as cultural agents is not only an academic discourse but also a concrete step toward ensuring that local wisdom remains alive in the education of future generations.

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