

Preserving South Kalimantan Cultures and Supporting Creative Economy: Best Practices from a Kindergarten in Banjarmasin

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ABSTRACT

Merdeka's curriculum allows teachers to tailor learning experiences that align with students' interests, abilities, and learning styles. This research explores the realm of best practices in the Merdeka curriculum implementation in TK Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 42 Banjarmasin. This study identifies strategies and advantages for effective Merdeka curriculum development that covers local cultures, drawing on a comprehensive literature review and empirical case study. The researchers employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. As an instrument in this study, the researchers were present in the field to collect, process, and check the validity of the data obtained. An observation, documentation, and interview were conducted with the school principal and teachers to obtain the best practice with the STAR method. It is found that the learning in class is integrated with South Kalimantan cultures under the theme "Aku Cinta Budayaku," covering local cultures such as tanggui, sasirangan, and topi purun that are brought to class. The school principal, teachers, students, and parents are involved in the implementation. The learning has been implemented in the form of a project that students have run once a week for the whole semester since 2022. The students are actively involved in all activities. Integrating local cultures in classes aims to enhance educational quality, involve the preservation of the culture, and support the creative economy.

Keywords: Best practices, creative economy, kindergarten, preserving cultures

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INTRODUCTION

RI Law Number 20 of 2003 emphasizes the connection between Indonesia's regional cultural values and the national education system, promoting the integration of Pancasila into kindergarten curriculums

(Darmadi, 2018; Irwahyudi et al., 2023). Cultural values are essential for national identity and should be taught early in life through education. Indonesia's younger generation is becoming more disconnected from their local culture due to outside influences (Akib et al., 2020; Alhosani, 2022; Haanurat, 2021; Hu & Ødemotland, 2021). Preserving local culture in education is crucial for cultural continuity and national pride (Aziz & Adnan, 2020; Kleemann, 2021; Kristianus, 2020; Surahman & Salmon, 2023).

Teachers had trouble covering all class content in the past, leading to less time for creative teaching methods (Chang et al., 2014; Perryman et al., 2024; Suparman et al., 2023). Insufficient training in culturally relevant pedagogy made tailoring the curriculum to Indonesia's diverse student population difficult. (Utami & Suswanto, 2022). Indonesia created the Merdeka Curriculum to shift focus from content to students' potential. It allows teachers more freedom to innovate, but success requires adequate training and resources (Rizki & Fahkrunisa, 2022; Utami & Suswanto, 2022)

Merdeka Curriculum promotes local culture integration, fostering student engagement and personal and cultural growth through active participation in learning (Siahaan, 2022). This integration allows students to appreciate their cultural identity and improve their academic skills. TK Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 42 Banjarmasin effectively implements the Merdeka Curriculum, integrating South Kalimantan culture through the "I Love My Culture" program, fostering cultural understanding and appreciation among students (Darma et al., 2019; Offorma, 2016; Yuda et al., 2022).

Cultural awareness significantly impacts the creative economy by enhancing market appeal, enriching outputs, and preserving cultural heritage for economic growth (Boccella & Salerno, 2016; Osses-vargas & Adams, 2022). It can also boost economic activity in communities through tourism and craft industries, transforming cultural heritage into a valuable asset for sustainable development (Boccella & Salerno, 2016b; Hu & Ødemotland, 2021; Nuraini, 2017; Osses-vargas & Adams, 2022).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The flexibility of the Merdeka curriculum poses challenges in its implementation, especially in ensuring that it aligns with local cultural values while meeting educational goals. Despite the potential benefits, there is limited documentation on effective methods to incorporate local cultural elements such as *tanggung*, *sasirangan*, and *topi purun* into the curriculum. This study explores the best practices for integrating South Kalimantan culture into the Merdeka curriculum at TK Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 42, examining the role of teachers, students, and the community in this process.

To address this problem, the researchers employed a qualitative case study approach, which involves an in-depth exploration of the real-world implementation of the Merdeka curriculum. The data collected through observations, interviews, and documentation is

analyzed using thematic analysis. This technique allows the researchers to identify key patterns and recurring themes in the data, particularly regarding how the integration of local culture enhances students' learning experiences and their connection to their heritage. Through this method, the study aims to uncover the best practices in curriculum implementation and the role of local cultural content in shaping educational outcomes.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How does the integration of South Kalimantan's local cultures through project-based learning enhance educational quality and contribute to cultural preservation and the local creative economy? The STAR method was utilized in a study on the "I Love My Culture" program at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 42 Banjarmasin, focusing on cultural preservation and creative economy initiatives. The "I Love My Culture" program at TK Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 42 Banjarmasin faces funding and fine motor skill challenges. Cooperation between teachers and parents is crucial for funding and individual attention, involving discussions, understanding, and planning. The next stage is Peer teachers collaborating with students to plan learning plans, collaborate with parents to involve them and implement the "I Love My Culture" intracurricular program, integrating cultural aspects into everyday learning in Figure 1.

The last step in the process is reflection, which is crucial. Teachers collaborate on effective teaching methods, lesson planning, and instructional strategies, fostering a culture of TK Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 42 Banjarmasin hosts guest speakers, including local experts, artists, and storytellers, to share knowledge about South Kalimantan's culture, history, and values. Traditional arts and crafts are incorporated into the curriculum, nurturing creativity and reinforcing cultural identity among young students (Akib et al., 2020; Astari, 2023).

However, the number of *Tanggui* makers is gradually decreasing. Similarly, *Tanggui* is rarely accessible for purchase on the outskirts of Banjarmasin. Only a few artists are presently engaged in the production of this traditional Banjar headgear. It affects the economics of the region as well. Sariyah (50 yo), for example, in the Tribunnews article, is the one who truly relies on money from *tanggui* due to the husband's inability to work as a



Figure 1. Activities of teachers and students collaborated in carrying out to celebrate culture

result of a stroke. She currently lives in poverty because the sale of tanggui has decreased (Banjarmasin *tribunnews.com*). The existence of tanggui would really help her and her family to survive.

Researchers discovered that a kindergarten in Banjarmasin successfully preserves South Kalimantan cultures and supports the creative economy by combining local culture with learning (Tohri et al., 2022; Utami & Suswanto, 2022). Tanggui is a large woven handicraft made from nipa palm leaves used as protection from rain and sun (Widyanti et al., 2022). The production center is in Banjarmasin, specifically Alalak Selatan Village (Yang & Li, 2022). School principal designates tanggui as a best practice to integrate culture into learning aids, increasing student interest and supporting tanggui makers' creative economy (Boccella & Salerno, 2016; Yuda et al., 2022).

The kindergarten teaches children traditional knowledge, values, and practices to build a strong cultural identity (Boccella & Salerno, 2016; Widyanti et al., 2022). It helps children develop pride in their culture and skills to creatively engage with their heritage. It leads to the emergence of creative entrepreneurs who use their cultural roots for innovation (Akib et al., 2020; Utami & Suswanto, 2022). It preserves cultural heritage and boosts the local creative economy's diversification and sustainability.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the importance of integrating cultural heritage into education for economic growth and identity preservation, highlighting successful strategies for policymakers, educators, and cultural keepers. While this study offers valuable insights into implementing the Merdeka curriculum at TK Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 42 Banjarmasin, several limitations exist. First, the research is based on a single case study, so the findings may not easily apply to other schools or regions. The local cultures of South Kalimantan, such as tanggui, sasirangan, and topi purun, are deeply rooted in the area, so the approach to integrating these traditions might differ in other parts of Indonesia or beyond. Second, this study relies on qualitative data, including interviews, observations, and document analysis. While these methods provide rich and detailed information, they also reflect the perspectives of a small group of participants—namely, the school principal, teachers, students, and parents. This means the findings might be influenced by the personal views and experiences of those directly involved in the study. Additionally, the researchers conducted the data collection themselves, which could have introduced some bias in how information was gathered and interpreted.

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