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Influence of Traditional Indonesian Values and Local Culture on Teaching Practices and Student Engagement

A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban Schools

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ABSTRACT

A school culture that supports collaboration, inclusivity, and openness to change can increase student engagement, teaching effectiveness, and academic achievement. Conversely, a more rigid or non-change-supporting culture tends to limit teachers' ability to implement learning innovations. The purpose of this study is to review recent research that highlights the influence of local cultural values on teaching practices and student engagement in school. This research has gone through a process of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion through journals obtained from ERIC, Springer, and ScienceDirect. In reporting this research, the keywords used are "Traditional Value and Local Culture." The main findings from these studies underscore the importance of flexibility in teaching approaches that can appreciate cultural diversity to create more effective and meaningful learning experiences.

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Introduction

The Indonesian education system is closely linked to cultural values and beliefs. Indonesia is a country with over 300 diverse and coexisting ethnic groups. This ethnic diversity can influence local culture, reflecting the teaching practices found today. Long-standing cultural values shape the identity and beliefs of each region.

In formal school teaching practices, teachers play a significant role, not only as educators but also as moral guides who pass on cultural values to their students from one generation to the next. How a teacher teaches his students in class is closely related to his culture and identity, which are influenced by his education, teaching, and moral values [1]. In other words, teachers who teach in rural schools where cultural values are still deeply rooted will tend to have a conservative approach to teaching, for example, learning that still refers heavily to the teacher or teacher-centered. Furthermore, in their teaching process, teachers will also emphasize religious and moral values. Conversely, teachers working in urban schools tend to have much more modern teaching practices. They arguably adopt a more progressive approach that encourages all students to think more critically, express their opinions boldly, and be more accepting of differing opinions [2].

The same thing also occurs for students in rural and urban schools. Students studying in rural schools tend to be passive learners and only listen to teacher explanations [3]. They are accustomed to a teacher-centered learning system. Students in rural schools usually do not have much interest in learning [4]. However, they still uphold the cultural values they have believed in for generations. They highly respect their teachers in the teaching and learning process, and they tend to be passive, only listening to what their teachers explain. This presents a challenge for educators to be able to convey learning materials simply so that students can easily understand. Conversely, students in urban schools tend to have a high level of curiosity, have different perspectives or opinions, and a desire to be more focused on more than just teachers or textbooks [4].

Since the author is from Berau, East Kalimantan, and through existing observations, many teachers teach students by inserting local culture from Berau in the learning materials and holding cultural events in the practice of increasing awareness of local culture. There is not much research found discussing the role of traditional Indonesian cultural values on teachers' teaching methods and student engagement, especially Generation Alpha. Therefore, this study aims to explore further the role of traditional Indonesian cultural values in choosing teaching methods and student engagement, especially Generation Alpha, by comparing schools in rural and urban areas. The results of this study are expected to show how local culture influences teachers' teaching practices and student engagement.

Literature Review

Local culture is composed of two words: "culture" and "local," where the word "culture" becomes "local." In its meaning, culture has several meanings according to several experts. Culture comes from the Sanskrit word *Buddha,* which has the meaning of human intelligence and reason, whereas if we trace its meaning into English, the equivalent word that is in

harmony with culture is *culture,* which means to do [5]. Culture is a changing set of values and traditions that encompass social and political relations bound by a combination of factors such as social class, language, religion, geographic location, and so on [6]. It could be said that every person has a culture that is formed as a result of socio-political relations and various other factors. In other words, culture is not something fixed that is passed down from one generation to another but something that can be learned and shaped over time. Local culture is a culture specific to a particular region. It is a form of identity within a place, recognized by the community. Local culture is defined as a form of local values born from the behavior and thoughts of a community over time [7]. Local culture serves as a distinguishing feature between one region and another [8].

Education in Indonesia faces various challenges, ranging from teaching quality, access to education, to curriculum relevance. To improve the education system and ensure that education can be implemented equitably throughout Indonesia, educational transformation is urgently needed. In the educational transformation process, several challenges are often encountered, such as teaching quality, access to education, and curriculum relevance [9]. In terms of teaching quality, many teachers lack adequate qualifications, and teaching methods are often traditional. Education in Indonesia remains unequal, particularly between schools in rural and urban areas. Students in remote areas often struggle to access or access quality educational facilities, which results in significantly disparate educational outcomes. Furthermore, the implemented curriculum is often considered irrelevant to students' needs.

Material and Methods

This study used three Systematic Literature Review (SLR) databases, searching for literature through Sciencedirect, Springerlink, and ERIC databases to investigate the relationship between traditional values and local culture. After formulating the research question, keywords were then used to identify and find relevant journal articles in the three search engines. The search was conducted over two days, from November 15-16, 2024. To ensure that all desired articles were included in this research data, the researcher limited the publication time to the last five years (2020-2024). Next, determine appropriate keywords obtained from the title. In entering several appropriate keywords, the researcher combined the words OR or AND. The keywords used were Traditional values and local culture.

PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) was used for transparent selection and bibliometric mapping with VOSviewer, extracting authorship, year, keywords, and citations. Topics discussed include the influence of local cultural values on teaching practices and student engagement in learning at school.

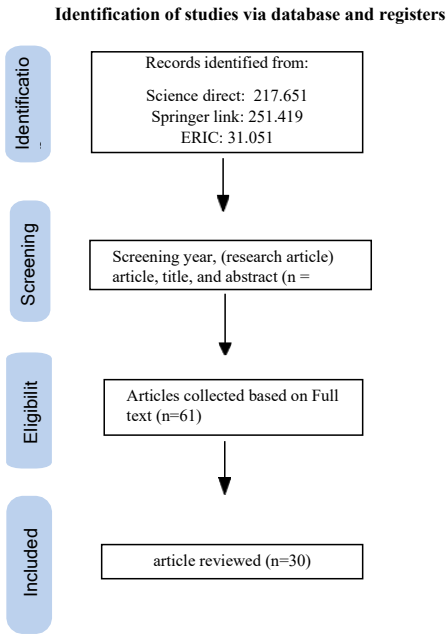


Fig. 1. PRISMA flow diagram of the article selection process

Results and Discussions

A. Identification

In searching the data with the keyword "Traditional Value and Local Culture" listed in Table 1, the researcher used three databases, namely Sciencedirect, Springerlink, and ERIC, to obtain relevant journal articles.

Table 1. Selection of Articles from the Science Direct, Eric, and Springer Link databases

Data Filtering	Science Direct	Eric	Springer link
Keyword	Traditional value and local culture	Traditional value and local culture	Traditional value and local culture
First Search Range Year 2020-2024	217,651	31,051	251,419
Title Screening	80,278	5,610	86,148
Abstract Screening	69,274	4,374	547
Full Text	23	16	22

To obtain the desired journal articles, the researcher determined the initial criteria, namely, articles that have abstracts and are presented in full or full text. In this search, the results obtained were 217,651 articles in the Science Direct database, 31,051 articles obtained from the ERIC database, and 251,419 articles obtained from the Springer Link database after filtering the title (article title), year of publication (year of publication), type of article (type of document), use of language (the language), and accessible articles (the accessibility of the articles) and abstract screening, there are 30 articles to be identified. These selected articles were then subjected to further eligibility assessment and in-depth review to ensure their relevance, quality, and alignment with the objectives of this study.

B. Screening

Researchers need to filter according to the provisions of the PRISMA research method. A total of 500,121 articles in the initial search need to be filtered to *exclude* or include to obtain the articles you truly desire. The filtering criteria used are based on the article title, year of publication, type of document, language, and accessibility of the articles. The filtering year was determined to be the last 20 years, or 2000-2024.

C. Inclusion

During the process of screening relevant texts, this research was deemed relevant and added to the identified reference list. Because journal articles provide a more comprehensive perspective than other sources, the authors consider this journal to be a reliable and accountable source of information.

Discussions

The findings and data analysis were presented in this analysis. Thirty articles were selected for the systematic review after being screened using eligibility criteria. This study used three research questions as a reference to filter articles that met the criteria of the influence of local culture on teachers' teaching methods. The selected articles were summarized based on author type (year), research location, and research method.

Table 2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria used in SLR

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Title and content of the article	Appropriate title	Unrelated title and did not meet the requirements of the study
Year of publication	Publications 2000 to 2024	Publication other than the specified
Publication type	Journal articles	Review
Language	English	Other
Accessibility	Full-text articles	Preview

In Table 2, the criteria are determined as an essential methodological step to ensure the quality, relevance, and consistency of the study. The criteria were designed to systematically screen articles based on the suitability of the title and content to the research focus on traditional values and local culture in teaching practices and student engagement, so that only studies that truly align with the research objectives are analyzed further. The limitation of publication years to the range of 2000–2024 aims to capture conceptual and empirical developments relevant to the dynamics of contemporary education, while the selection of journal articles as the only type of publication is intended to maintain scientific validity through sources that have gone through the peer-review process. In addition, English language restrictions are applied to ensure uniformity of academic interpretation and access to recognized international literature, as well as accessibility criteria established so that the

analysis can be carried out in depth, both in terms of methodology and the substance of the research findings.

Table 3 presents a summary of the results on 30 selected articles that discuss the influence of traditional values and local culture on teaching practices and student engagement in various educational contexts.

Table 3. SLR Summary

No.	Author	Research Location	Participants	Research Methods	Findings
Southeast Asia					
1.	Ratri et al. [18]	Southeast Asia	The systematic review synthesized findings from 25 selected articles.	Systematic Literature Review	Aligned with national education policy, local culture strengthens students' motivation and engagement.
2.	Ardiansyah et al. [19]	Bima City, West Nusa Tenggara Province	Teachers who are members of the social studies teacher community in Bima City, the Head of the Bima City Education and Sports Office, and the Head of the Bima City Child Protection Agency.	*Research and Development* (R&D) at the preliminary study stage, with the model developed by Borg and Gall	Collaboration between teachers, parents, and the use of learning media that contain local cultural values can reduce the negative impacts of technology use.
3.	Alam et al. [20]	Four divisional capitals of Bangladesh, namely: Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rangpur	Parents, principals, Early Childhood Education teachers, and government stakeholders and experts.	Mixed-methods approach	The need for a holistic early childhood education approach involving local culture, parents, government, and experts in Bangladesh.
4.	Fiharsono et al. [21]	A lowland-remote area of Indonesian Papua, specifically a school situated within the Korowai community that has only recently begun to modernize	Korowai students living in this remote area, their local school, and teachers.	A case study approach	Integrating cultural elements into school enhances student engagement and belonging, which is fundamental.

No.	Author	Research Location	Participants	Research Methods	Findings
5.	Sari et al. [12]	Primary schools that included students from diverse cultural backgrounds of Turkish, Iranian, Afghan, and Syrian communities	Nine primary school teachers with varying professional experience.	A phenomenological design	The complexity of intercultural education and the need for teachers to develop strategies to manage the challenges in multicultural classrooms effectively.
6.	Nguyen [22]	Vietnam	Learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Vietnam.	Qualitative method	English language teaching needs to evolve along with the changing role of English in the world, from a language associated with one particular culture to a global language that accommodates many cultures.
7.	Widyaningtyas [23]	Yogyakarta and Lampung, Indonesia	120 grade X students were selected using cluster sampling techniques.	Quasi-experimental design	Significant differences in creative thinking and problem-solving skills were found between the Cripics-Qu model and the control class using the conventional method.
8.	Pramanick [24]	Bangladesh	Translation of Japanese children's literature into Bangla.	Mixed-methods research approach	This translated work serves as an important tool to promote moral and educational values that go beyond formal educational institutions.
East Asia					
9.	Dreher et al. [25]	Taiwan and Germany	38 experts in mathematics education: 19 from Taiwan and 19 from Germany.	Concurrent cross-national qualitative design	These findings highlight how cultural norms shape the assessment and operationalization of teacher noticing across educational contexts.

No.	Author	Research Location	Participants	Research Methods	Findings
10.	Zhan et al. [26]	China, the United Kingdom, and the United States.	Pre-service teacher education and teaching practice systems in China, the UK, and the USA.	Comparative analysis	The need for stronger cooperation between universities, schools, and local educational authorities to ensure effective teaching practice and ongoing professional development of pre-service teachers.
11.	Lou et al. [27]	Secondary schools in China	Three secondary school teachers of English.	Qualitative research design, specifically semi-structured interviews	The learner-centered philosophy in China's National English Curriculum interacts with local traditions, teachers' beliefs, and existing educational practices.
Australia					
12.	Spillman et al. [10]	Schools in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT)	26 teachers actively participated, and in the second phase, the remaining 13 teachers continued.	Qualitative method with a participatory approach	The application of Country as Teacher pedagogy supports holistic learning, enhances students' well-being, and promotes culturally relevant teaching practices.
13.	Coombs et al. [14]	New South Wales (NSW) schools in Australia	Teachers who work in New South Wales (NSW) schools in Australia.	Qualitative methodology, focusing on data collected from teachers involved in the LFC strategy within the CNS project	LFC positively enhances teachers' capacity for culturally nourishing teaching, improving Aboriginal students' learning experiences and success.
14.	Lowe et al. [28]	Australian schools specifically address the	Educators working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait	Literature review and theoretical analysis	Conceptual development of a culturally nurturing

No.	Author	Research Location	Participants	Research Methods	Findings
		educational experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.	Islander students in Australian schools.		pedagogy, focusing on how educators learn and implement it.
15.	Liddicoat et al. [29]	Australia	Language teachers, the school principal, and other parties in education policy.	Qualitative methods, namely interviews, classroom observations, policy and document analysis, FGDs	A school culture that encourages collaborative learning between teachers and students, as well as an appreciation for linguistic diversity, contributes to a more effective learning environment.
Europe					
16.	Abacioglu et al. [30]	The Netherlands, specifically in upper primary school classrooms	34 upper primary school teachers and 708 students.	Quantitative research design using structural equation modeling (SEM)	Peer relationships mediate the impact of multicultural education on student engagement, with stronger effects in classrooms with more minoritized students.
17.	Myllykoski-Laine et al. [31]	Finland	51 Finnish university teachers.	A qualitative research approach, specifically thematic interviews, and content analysis	Fostering a sharing culture that values teaching, collegiality, and mutual respect among teachers is essential.
18.	Englund et al. [32]	University in Sweden and the University of Bedfordshire in the UK	Teachers involved in the MSc Pharm online program.	A qualitative approach, specifically interviews	Academic development strategies should foster support and reflective communication to promote teaching development.
19.	Kumpulainen et al. [33]	Several countries, including Finland, Australia, and the United States	Teachers, students, and professionals from diverse cultural backgrounds.	Sociocultural and ethnographic approaches	A blend of professional cultures creates new workplace learning opportunities and links local practice to broader

No.	Author	Research Location	Participants	Research Methods	Findings
					communities of practice.
20.	Filho et al. [15]	Environmentally based education programs in Europe	Educators, students, and policy makers who influence curriculum and educational approaches related to sustainability.	Qualitative methods – case studies	Education for sustainability must involve communities through local knowledge, community participation, and collaboration with educational institutions.
Middle East					
21.	Eusafzai [34]	Yanbu, Arab Saudi	Foreign English teachers who teach in local environments.	Qualitative method	Local aspects that are valued by foreign teachers and how this knowledge is applied in their teaching practices to help foreign teachers localize their pedagogy.
Cross-national					
22.	Fullan [11]	In three schools that have different cultural contexts in implementing curriculum changes	Several groups of school A with two classes, school B with one class, and school C with one class.	Qualitative approach that involves in-depth data collection from various sources	Curriculum changes are strongly shaped by school culture, structure, and teacher leadership.
23.	Hofstede [35]	International teacher-student interactions across diverse cultural contexts	Teachers and students are archetypal role pairs across different societies.	Literature Analysis, Case Study Observations, Reflection and Comparative Approach, Anthropological Approach, Experimental Techniques, and Evaluation	This study underscores the flexible teaching methods and respect for cultural differences to support effective learning.
24.	Johnson et al. [13]	Countries with high power distance, where inequality in social relations and respect for authority are more valued	Students from different cultural groups are influenced by the dominant cultural values in their country or society.	Quantitative methods – questionnaires and surveys	Students from individualistic cultures feel more connected to school when valued as individuals, whereas those from high power-distance cultures tend to be less

No.	Author	Research Location	Participants	Research Methods	Findings
					socially connected and less involved in school activities.
25.	Marambe et al. [36]	Universities in countries with individualistic and collectivist cultures	Students from individualistic cultures and collectivistic cultures.	Qualitative methods – case studies	Students from individualistic cultures prefer independent learning and personal initiative, while students from collectivistic cultures prefer group work and respect hierarchy in classroom interactions.
26.	Akkari & Loomis [37]	Developed countries with large multicultural populations and developing countries that are trying to integrate cultural diversity into their education systems	Students from diverse cultural backgrounds, teachers and educators with diverse student populations, and educational policymakers.	Mixed methods - Comparative approach, case studies, policy analysis	The education system accommodates cultural diversity as a source of strength to enrich the learning process. While the challenges of integrating cultural diversity remain significant, many countries have successfully developed inclusive education policies that reflect respect for differences.
27.	Hossain [16]	Countries with large English-learning populations	EFL or ESL students from diverse cultural backgrounds and English language educators who teach at various levels face challenges in integrating culture into their teaching.	Qualitative methods – case studies	Integrating cultural dimensions into language learning can create significant opportunities to enrich the learning experience, but it also presents challenges that educators must overcome.
28.	Chinh [17]	Schools or universities in multicultural countries that have a population of international	Students from diverse cultural backgrounds in countries with high cultural diversity, from various levels of	Qualitative methods - interviews, FGD	Cultural diversity significantly influences English language learning and underscores the need for culturally

No.	Author	Research Location	Participants	Research Methods	Findings
		students or students from various ethnic backgrounds	education, both in secondary school and in college.		sensitive teaching that values students' cultural contexts.
29.	Bayar & Karaduman [38]	The research locations covered several regions in a particular country, with a focus on schools with diverse cultural backgrounds.	The students at secondary and higher education levels, and educators.	Quantitative methods – questionnaires, surveys, interviews	Schools with cultures that support collaboration, innovation, and openness to new ideas tend to demonstrate better academic achievement and increase student learning motivation and engagement.
30.	McChesney & Cross [39]	Some schools in urban and rural areas	Teachers who have participated in professional development programs at several schools.	Qualitative methods - case studies	School culture plays a crucial role in determining the extent to which teachers can implement the learning they gain from professional development programs.

Table 3 presents a summary of the results of 30 selected articles that discuss the influence of traditional values and local culture on teaching practices and student engagement in various educational contexts. The findings across regions consistently emphasize that integrating cultural contexts into education enhances student engagement, motivation, and meaningful learning. In Southeast Asia, cultural alignment with national education policies strengthens students' motivation and engagement, indicating that culturally responsive education creates more relevant and meaningful learning experiences [18]. This aligns with findings from Indonesian Papua, where integrating local cultural elements into school practices increased students' sense of belonging and engagement, particularly in remote communities undergoing modernization [21]. These findings suggest that culture functions not merely as a contextual backdrop but as a foundational element that shapes students' learning identity and participation.

Furthermore, cultural integration contributes to mitigating the adverse effects of technological and social change. Ardiansyah et al. [19] found that collaboration between

teachers and parents and the use of culturally embedded learning media can reduce the negative impacts of technology on students. This reflects the importance of sociocultural mediation in contemporary education, especially as digitalization transforms learning environments. Similarly, Alam et al. [20] emphasized the importance of holistic education approaches involving parents, communities, and cultural values, particularly in early childhood education. These findings reinforce the sociocultural perspective that education is a collective process influenced by community participation and shared cultural norms.

The growing diversity of classrooms further highlights the need for culturally responsive teaching strategies. Teachers working in multicultural classrooms face complex challenges and must develop strategies to address diverse cultural backgrounds effectively [12]. This complexity is also evident in English language teaching contexts, where English is no longer tied to a single culture but has evolved into a global language requiring culturally inclusive approaches [22]. Supporting this view, Chinh [17] and Hossain [16] found that integrating cultural dimensions into language learning enriches educational experiences but requires pedagogical adaptation and sensitivity. These findings suggest that cultural responsiveness is essential not only for engagement but also for fostering inclusive and equitable learning environments.

In East Asian and cross-national contexts, cultural norms significantly influence teaching practices, teacher development, and educational effectiveness. Dreher et al. [25] demonstrated that cultural norms shape how teachers interpret and implement professional practices, such as teacher noticing in mathematics education. Similarly, Lou et al. [27] showed that learner-centered curricula interact with local traditions and teacher beliefs, highlighting the importance of contextual adaptation. At a broader level, cultural differences influence students' learning preferences and social engagement. Students from individualistic cultures tend to prefer independent learning, whereas those from collectivistic cultures prefer collaborative and hierarchical learning environments [36]. These differences underscore the importance of culturally adaptive pedagogies that align instructional approaches with students' cultural expectations.

School culture and institutional collaboration also play critical roles in supporting culturally responsive education. Fullan [11] emphasized that curriculum change is strongly shaped by school culture, leadership, and organizational structure. Similarly, McChesney and Cross [39] found that school culture determines the extent to which teachers can implement professional learning effectively. These findings suggest that cultural responsiveness must be supported not only at the classroom level but also through institutional culture and leadership. Moreover, cooperation between universities, schools, and educational authorities is essential to ensure effective teacher preparation and professional development [26]. This highlights the

systemic nature of culturally responsive education, requiring alignment across multiple levels of the education system.

The findings from Australia further demonstrate the transformative potential of culturally grounded pedagogies. The "Country as Teacher" pedagogy supports holistic learning, enhances students' well-being, and promotes culturally relevant teaching practices [10]. Similarly, culturally nourishing teaching strategies improve Aboriginal students' learning experiences and outcomes by strengthening teachers' cultural competence [14]. These findings highlight that culturally grounded pedagogies not only improve academic outcomes but also support students' emotional well-being and identity development. Such approaches recognize students as cultural beings whose identities influence their learning processes.

In European contexts, multicultural education and collaborative cultures significantly influence student engagement and teacher development. Peer relationships mediate the impact of multicultural education on student engagement, especially in diverse classrooms [30]. Additionally, fostering collegiality, mutual respect, and collaborative teaching cultures enhances teaching effectiveness and professional growth [31], [32]. These findings suggest that cultural responsiveness extends beyond student learning to include professional learning communities among educators. Education for sustainability also emphasizes the importance of integrating local knowledge and community participation into education, reinforcing the interconnectedness between education and local culture [15].

Cross-national research further confirms that cultural diversity, when appropriately integrated, strengthens education systems. Akkari and Loomis [37] found that culturally inclusive education systems leverage diversity as a strength, enhancing learning processes and promoting inclusion. Similarly, Hofstede [35] emphasized that flexible teaching methods and respect for cultural differences are essential for effective learning across societies. Cultural diversity also influences students' motivation, engagement, and academic achievement, particularly in schools that promote collaboration and openness [38]. These findings suggest that culturally responsive education contributes to both individual learning outcomes and broader educational system effectiveness.

Overall, the discussion highlights that culture plays a fundamental role in shaping educational practices, student engagement, and institutional effectiveness. Cultural integration enhances motivation, supports identity development, promotes inclusive learning environments, and strengthens educational systems. However, effective implementation requires systemic support, including culturally responsive curricula, teacher preparation, institutional leadership, and community collaboration. These findings reinforce the importance of viewing education as a culturally situated process, where learning is shaped by

social, cultural, and institutional contexts. As education systems continue to evolve in response to globalization and technological change, integrating cultural perspectives remains essential for ensuring meaningful, equitable, and sustainable education.

Conclusion

The research summarized in this table demonstrates the importance of integrating local cultural values into education to create more relevant and meaningful learning experiences for students. Various studies highlight how local culture can enhance student motivation, engagement, and identity in educational contexts, both in developed and developing countries. The importance of implementing pedagogy that respects cultural differences is reflected in several studies. A curriculum responsive to local cultural contexts can enrich the learning process. Research also reveals that in multicultural education, teachers are expected not only to teach academic knowledge but also to build cultural awareness and manage diversity in the classroom. The importance of cultural diversity in teaching and how integrating local or community culture can enhance teaching effectiveness. Furthermore, the importance of adapting English language instruction to be more sensitive to cultural diversity, allowing students to feel more valued and connect the subject matter to their own cultural experiences. Overall, these studies confirm that education based on local culture and diversity can create a more inclusive and holistic learning environment, enriching students' learning experiences and motivating them to participate more actively in the learning process. Integrating local culture into education can also contribute to students' character development and strengthen their cultural identity.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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