

Integrating Islamic and Cultural Values through the Merdeka Curriculum: A Character-Based Educational Perspective.

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Abstract: The preservation of cultural values through education is a vital strategy in maintaining national identity amidst globalization that threatens local wisdom. This study applies a qualitative approach through literature review to analyze the role of education in transmitting cultural values and shaping students' character. The findings indicate that education plays a strategic function not only in transferring cultural heritage but also in cultivating moral and spiritual values rooted in local traditions and religious teachings. Formal, non-formal, and informal education must synergize in this process. The Merdeka Curriculum offers significant opportunities for innovation in local culture-based learning. The role of the teacher as a value model is essential, as emphasized in the concept of ta'dib by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. By simultaneously strengthening character and cultural education, education can serve as a progressive and inclusive agent of cultural transformation.

Keywords: Cultural education; character; local values; ta'dib; Merdeka Curriculum

Abstrak: Pelestarian nilai budaya melalui pendidikan merupakan salah satu strategi penting dalam menjaga identitas bangsa di tengah arus globalisasi yang mengancam kearifan lokal. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode tinjauan pustaka untuk menganalisis peran pendidikan dalam proses pewarisan nilai budaya dan pembentukan karakter siswa. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan memiliki fungsi strategis tidak hanya dalam mentransmisikan nilai-nilai budaya, tetapi juga membentuk karakter berbasis nilai spiritual dan moral yang berakar dari tradisi lokal dan ajaran agama. Pendidikan formal, nonformal, dan informal saling bersinergi dalam proses ini. Kurikulum Merdeka memberikan ruang yang luas untuk inovasi pembelajaran berbasis budaya lokal. Peran guru sebagai teladan nilai sangat vital, sebagaimana ditegaskan dalam konsep ta'dib oleh Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. Dengan memperkuat kualitas pendidikan karakter dan kebudayaan secara simultan, pendidikan dapat menjadi agen transformasi budaya yang progresif dan inklusif.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan budaya; karakter; nilai local; ta'dib; Kurikulum Merdeka

1. Introduction

The preservation of cultural values is a fundamental aspect in the formation of a society's collective identity. These values not only reflect historical heritage and traditions but also form a moral and social foundation that guides people's behaviour in everyday life. In the context of intensifying globalisation, local cultural values face great challenges due to the influx of foreign cultures that tend to dominate through digital media, entertainment, and massive global information flows. This change has implications for shifting values and

lifestyles of the younger generation, who are increasingly moving away from their local cultural roots.¹

In this dynamic, education plays a central role as the main medium in transmitting cultural values from one generation to the next. Education not only functions as an instrument of academic learning, but also as a vehicle for internalising the noble values that characterise a society.² Formal education in schools has the capacity to integrate cultural values into the curriculum, teaching and learning activities, and extracurricular activities based on local wisdom.³

Efforts to preserve cultural values through education require a systematic approach based on a comprehensive understanding of the values to be preserved. According to Tilaar, education must be able to develop the personality of students who are in harmony with the cultural identity of their nation.⁴ This requires a curriculum that not only prioritises cognitive aspects, but also affective and psychomotor aspects in the realm of cultural values.⁵

Education as a means of socialising cultural values must also realise that the process of internalising values requires exemplary behaviour from educators. Teachers as authoritative figures in the educational environment have a strategic role in modelling values and character for students.⁶ Such role models are not only displayed in teaching, but also in daily interactions in the school environment.⁷

The importance of the role of education in maintaining cultural values is also highlighted in Arifin and Nursidik's (2022) research which shows that students absorb values more easily if they are given through a contextualised approach that is relevant to their lives.⁸ This underscores the need for participatory, contextualised and experiential learning methods.

The Merdeka curriculum implemented in Indonesia provides a great opportunity to integrate cultural values in the formal education system. With a project-based approach and teachers' freedom in choosing learning materials, schools can develop learning activities based on their local culture.⁹ This provides ample space for the preservation of cultural values through meaningful and contextualised learning.¹⁰

¹ Haryanto, "Globalisasi dan Identitas Budaya," *Jurnal Sosial dan Humaniora*, vol. 11, no. 2 (2021): 134–136.

² Tilaar, H.A.R., *Manajemen Pendidikan Nasional: Kajian Strategis Kebijakan Pendidikan Nasional dalam Abad 21* (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 2020), 47.

³ Naim, Ngainun, *Character Building: Strategi Membumikan Pendidikan Nilai* (Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz Media, 2022), 55.

⁴ Tilaar, *Manajemen Pendidikan Nasional*, 49.

⁵ Hamalik, Oemar, *Proses Belajar Mengajar* (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 2021), 89.

⁶ Syafaruddin, "Peran Guru dalam Pendidikan Karakter," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, vol. 8, no. 1 (2022): 45.

⁷ Zubaedi, *Desain Pendidikan Karakter: Konsepsi dan Aplikasinya dalam Lembaga Pendidikan* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2021), 68.

⁸ Arifin & Nursidik, "Pembelajaran Kontekstual Berbasis Budaya Lokal," *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan*, vol. 15, no. 3 (2022): 77.

⁹ Kemendikbudristek, *Panduan Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka* (Jakarta: Kemendikbudristek, 2023), 12.

¹⁰ Kemendikbudristek, *Panduan Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka*, 19.

However, the challenges in implementing cultural values in education are still considerable. One of them is the limited number of human resources who have a deep understanding of local cultural values.¹¹ In addition, the lack of textbooks and teaching materials that contain cultural content is an obstacle in integrating these values into the learning process.¹²

On the other hand, modernisation has brought about a trend towards cultural homogenisation, where global culture is dominant in the media consumption and lifestyle of the younger generation.¹³ This phenomenon has led to a decline in interest in local culture, including regional languages, traditional arts, and other local wisdom values.¹⁴ Education must be a filter that can balance openness to global culture with the preservation of local values.

To answer this challenge, training and strengthening teachers' competence in understanding and transmitting cultural values is needed.¹⁵ Professional teacher education should emphasise the importance of multicultural understanding, as well as the pedagogical ability to transmit values through contextual and communicative approaches.¹⁶

In addition to formal education, non-formal education such as pesantren, art centres and cultural communities also play an important role in maintaining the continuity of cultural values.¹⁷ These institutions are often more flexible and closer to the community, so they can respond to cultural preservation needs in a more participatory way.¹⁸

Character building through education is also an important part of preserving cultural values. Characters such as honesty, responsibility, respect for differences, and cooperation are universal cultural values that should be nurtured through the education process.¹⁹ This character education can be harmonised with the local context, so that learners feel that these values are relevant to their identity and environment.²⁰

The concepts of culture, character and national education are inseparable. Culture shapes character, and education is the bridge that connects the two.²¹ Therefore, national

¹¹ Suparlan, "Kendala Guru dalam Pengembangan Pembelajaran Berbasis Budaya," *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, vol. 14, no. 2 (2021): 104

¹² Suparlan, "Kendala Guru dalam Pengembangan Pembelajaran Berbasis Budaya," *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, vol. 14, no. 2 (2021): 107

¹³ Suryadinata, Leo, *Budaya dan Identitas dalam Arus Globalisasi* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2021), 33.

¹⁴ Hidayat, "Dekadensi Budaya Lokal di Era Digital," *Jurnal Komunikasi dan Budaya*, vol. 10, no. 1 (2022): 92.

¹⁵ Winataputra, "Peningkatan Kompetensi Guru Berbasis Budaya," *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2023): 45

¹⁶ Winataputra, "Peningkatan Kompetensi Guru Berbasis Budaya," *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2023): 50

¹⁷ Wahid, "Peran Pendidikan Nonformal dalam Pelestarian Budaya," *Jurnal PLS*, vol. 6, no. 2 (2021): 67.

¹⁸ Wahid, "Peran Pendidikan Nonformal dalam Pelestarian Budaya," *Jurnal PLS*, vol. 6, no. 2 (2021): 71.

¹⁹ Lickona, Thomas, *Educating for Character* (New York: Bantam Books, 2022), 103

²⁰ Zubaedi, *Desain Pendidikan Karakter*, 72

²¹ Koentjaraningrat, *Kebudayaan, Mentalitas, dan Pembangunan* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2020), 88

education design should consider cultural values as an integral part of national learning objectives.²²

Digital transformation in education also provides new opportunities to preserve cultural values. Through digital platforms, teachers and students can access local cultural materials, tradition-based learning videos, and documentation of local wisdom that was once difficult to reach.²³ However, it also needs to be accompanied by strong digital literacy so that local culture does not only become content, but also a living value.²⁴

The involvement of parents and communities also determines the success of education in preserving cultural values. Collaboration between schools and local communities can strengthen the connection between the world of education and the socio-cultural reality of the community.²⁵ Thus, the values instilled in schools will be more easily embedded and applied in the lives of students.²⁶

The process of preserving cultural values through education must also consider Indonesia's cultural plurality. Education should be inclusive and able to introduce cultural diversity to students as the wealth of the nation, not as a divisive difference.²⁷ The perspective of multiculturalism in education is important to build awareness of diversity within the frame of Pancasila values.²⁸

Furthermore, a recent study by Prasetyo and Rahmat (2023) showed that learners involved in culture-based activities showed higher levels of social concern.²⁹ This proves that culturally rooted education can strengthen social ties in society.

Education should also encourage students' critical thinking about inherited cultural values. Not all past values are relevant to the challenges of today. Therefore, students need to be trained to understand, filter, and reflect on which values need to be preserved, and which ones need to be reformulated.³⁰

Thus, the role of education in preserving cultural values is not a purely technical task, but includes ideological and philosophical dimensions of identity formation, character, and the future direction of the nation. Education oriented towards cultural preservation is education that is aware of its historical roots and collective identity, while being progressive in responding to the challenges of the times.³¹

²² Tilaar, *Manajemen Pendidikan Nasional*, 55

²³ Dewantara, "Digitalisasi dan Revitalisasi Budaya Lokal," *Jurnal Teknologi Pendidikan*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2023): 114

²⁴ Dewantara, "Digitalisasi dan Revitalisasi Budaya Lokal," *Jurnal Teknologi Pendidikan*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2023): 119

²⁵ Susanto, "Kemitraan Sekolah dan Masyarakat dalam Pendidikan Karakter," *Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial*, vol. 7, no. 3 (2022): 143

²⁶ Susanto, "Kemitraan Sekolah dan Masyarakat dalam Pendidikan Karakter," *Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial*, vol. 7, no. 3 (2022): 146

²⁷ Rahardjo, "Multikulturalisme dan Pendidikan Nilai," *Jurnal Filsafat Pendidikan*, vol. 8, no. 1 (2022): 29.

²⁸ Rahardjo, "Multikulturalisme dan Pendidikan Nilai," *Jurnal Filsafat Pendidikan*, vol. 8, no. 1 (2022): 35

²⁹ Prasetyo & Rahmat, "Budaya Lokal dan Empati Sosial Siswa," *Jurnal Psikologi Pendidikan*, vol. 11, no. 4 (2023): 212

³⁰ Zubaedi, *Desain Pendidikan Karakter*, 81

³¹ Tilaar, *Manajemen Pendidikan Nasional*, 62

2. Method

The study adopts a qualitative approach using the literature review method to explore how education contributes to preserving cultural values. This method enables an in-depth analysis of theories, practices, and previous findings related to cultural transmission in education. It is particularly effective in identifying patterns, trends, and research gaps concerning the role of education in cultural preservation.

The researcher analysed diverse perspectives from sociology of education, character education, and curriculum studies with a focus on local wisdom. Data sources were grouped into four categories: (1) scientific journal articles, both national and international, discussing education, character, and culture; (2) reference books covering civic education and educational sociology; (3) research reports from institutions such as UNESCO, BPS, and the World Values Survey; and (4) official policy documents, including national curricula and learning guidelines.

Data collection followed three stages: (1) literature searches via academic databases like Google Scholar, JSTOR, Springer, and Neliti using keywords such as “cultural values,” “education,” and “character education”; (2) selecting sources from 2018–2023 to ensure relevance; and (3) evaluating source credibility by prioritizing peer-reviewed works or publications from reputable institutions.

The data were analysed using three qualitative techniques. Thematic analysis was used to identify central themes such as cultural transmission, character education, and value conservation. Content analysis helped evaluate curriculum documents by categorizing concepts and interpreting their contextual meanings. Grounded theory was applied to develop a conceptual framework on the role of education in cultural preservation based on emerging patterns from the data.

Through this methodological approach, the research moves beyond description, offering analytical and reflective insights into how education can serve as an effective medium for preserving cultural values today.

3. Results and Discussion

The Role of Education in Cultural Preservation

Education has a strategic position as the main agent in cultural preservation because it involves the process of inheriting values, norms and traditions that live in society. In the context of the 2003 National Education System Law, education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere that enables students to develop their full potential, including awareness of the nation's cultural values.³² Therefore, education is not just a means of transferring knowledge, but also an instrument of preserving collective cultural identity.

In the anthropological framework of education, education cannot be separated from the cultural process. Education becomes an arena where cultural values are passed on and transformed, both formally in schools and informally in families and communities.³³ This

³² Irmawati, “Pendidikan dalam UUSPN,” Dinas Pendidikan Kabupaten Bojonegoro, 2025, <https://dinaspendidikan.bojonegorokab.go.id/berita/baca/130>.

³³ Martono, Nanang. *Sosiologi Pendidikan*, (Jakarta: Rajawali Pers, 2020), 7.

process confirms that education is closely related to cultural functions, especially in terms of social reproduction and cultural identity construction.³⁴

Indonesia as a multicultural country has tremendous cultural wealth, but many local cultural values and practices are being eroded by globalisation. The lack of cultural preservation is the main cause of the extinction of regional languages, traditional arts, and local wisdom values.³⁵ This is where the role of education is important to fortify the younger generation from the homogenization of global culture.³⁶

Education as a means of cultural preservation can begin at an early age, through the introduction of local languages, traditional games and folklore. Local culture-based learning is proven to be able to increase students' appreciation of their own cultural environment and form a more contextual character.³⁷ Local culture-based character education is an integrative approach between the cognitive and affective domains in education.³⁸

Curriculum as a formal instrument of education also plays an important role in cultural preservation. A national curriculum that is responsive to local wisdom will encourage schools to adapt learning content to suit local culture.³⁹ This can be realised through the development of a local content curriculum that contains materials on regional arts, local history and community traditions.⁴⁰

In practice, the role of teachers is crucial in internalising cultural values to students. Teachers not only function as teachers, but also as cultural models who show how values and norms are carried out in daily life.⁴¹ Teachers who have cultural awareness will more easily integrate these values in the learning process.⁴²

Schools as social institutions also have a big responsibility in developing a learning environment that supports cultural preservation. Schools that organise activities such as cultural festivals, art exhibitions and regional language speech competitions contribute to a learning atmosphere that values diversity.⁴³ These activities strengthen students' cultural identity while building pride in their cultural heritage.⁴⁴

Furthermore, family involvement in the education process is crucial in strengthening the internalisation of cultural values. Parents who introduce cultural traditions and values at home create continuity between formal education and the family environment.⁴⁵ Education

³⁴ Suyanto, Bagong, dan Asep Supriatna. *Sosiologi: Menyikapi Fenomena Sosial di Masyarakat*, (Jakarta: Erlangga, 2021), 109.

³⁵ Koentjaraningrat, *Kebudayaan, Mentalitas, dan Pembangunan*, (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2020), 128.

³⁶ Haryanto, "Globalisasi dan Identitas Budaya," *Jurnal Sosial dan Humaniora*, 11, no. 2 (2021): 134–136

³⁷ Arifin dan Nursidik, "Pembelajaran Kontekstual Berbasis Budaya Lokal," *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan*, 15, no. 3 (2022): 77.

³⁸ Ilaar, H.A.R., *Manajemen Pendidikan Nasional*, (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 2020), 49

³⁹ Kemendikbudristek, *Panduan Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka*, 12

⁴⁰ Kemendikbudristek, *Panduan Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka*, 19

⁴¹ Zubaeadi, *Desain Pendidikan Karakter*, (Jakarta: Kencana, 2021), 68

⁴² Suparlan, "Kendala Guru dalam Pengembangan Pembelajaran Berbasis Budaya," *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, vol. 14, no. 2 (2021): 104

⁴³ Syafaruddin, "Peran Guru dalam Pendidikan Karakter," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 8, no. 1 (2022): 45.

⁴⁴ Susanto, "Kemitraan Sekolah dan Masyarakat dalam Pendidikan Karakter," *Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial*, 7, no. 3 (2022): 143.

⁴⁵ Susanto, "Kemitraan Sekolah dan Masyarakat dalam Pendidikan Karakter," *Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial*, 7, no. 3 (2022): 146.

that successfully harmonises values between school and family tends to be more effective in shaping students' cultural character.⁴⁶

During the digital era, technology-based education can also be a means of cultural preservation. The utilisation of digital media such as cultural educational videos, tradition-based educational games and virtual museums are innovative ways to introduce culture to the digital native generation.⁴⁷ Technology allows the preservation process to take place widely and across borders.⁴⁸

However, there are serious challenges in integrating cultural preservation into the education system. One of the main challenges is the lack of teaching materials and learning media that authentically represent local culture.⁴⁹ In addition, there is a lack of teacher training in teaching culture-based materials, which results in cultural values being merely supplementary.⁵⁰

As a solution, there needs to be an affirmative policy from the government in encouraging cultural preservation through education. The central and local governments can develop local culture-based curriculum guidelines, develop relevant learning modules, and provide a special budget for cultural preservation activities in schools.⁵¹ The Merdeka Belajar programme provides extensive opportunities for learning innovation based on local context and local culture.⁵²

Cultural preservation through education can also be strengthened by collaboration between stakeholders. Cooperation between schools, customary institutions, cultural communities and government agencies will create a culturally friendly education ecosystem.²² This collaboration allows for maximum utilisation of cultural resources in learning.⁵⁴

Contextualised education models that incorporate cultural values and active learning approaches have proven effective in improving students' understanding of local values.⁵⁵ An example is the ethnopedagogical approach, which utilises the local context as the main learning resource and presents knowledge holistically.⁵⁶ This model is in line with an educational paradigm that values pluralism and the cultural roots of communities.⁵⁷

⁴⁶ Winataputra, "Peningkatan Kompetensi Guru Berbasis Budaya," *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, 5, no. 1 (2023): 45.

⁴⁷ Winataputra, "Peningkatan Kompetensi Guru Berbasis Budaya," *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, 5, no. 1 (2023): 45.

⁴⁸ Dewantara, "Digitalisasi dan Revitalisasi Budaya Lokal," *Jurnal Teknologi Pendidikan*, 4, no. 2 (2023): 114.

⁴⁹ Suparlan, "Kendala Guru dalam Pengembangan Pembelajaran Berbasis Budaya," *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 14, no. 2 (2021): 104

⁵⁰ Suparlan, "Kendala Guru dalam Pengembangan Pembelajaran Berbasis Budaya," *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 14, no. 2 (2021): 107

⁵¹ Kemendikbudristek, *Strategi Kebijakan Budaya dan Pendidikan*, (Jakarta: 2022), 21.

⁵² Kemendikbudristek, *Strategi Kebijakan Budaya dan Pendidikan*, (Jakarta: 2022), 25.

⁵³ Wahid, "Peran Pendidikan Nonformal dalam Pelestarian Budaya," *Jurnal PLS*, 6, no. 2 (2021): 67.

⁵⁴ Wahid, "Peran Pendidikan Nonformal dalam Pelestarian Budaya," *Jurnal PLS*, 6, no. 2 (2021): 71.

⁵⁵ Lickona, Thomas, *Educating for Character*, (New York: Bantam Books, 2022), 103

⁵⁶ Zubaedi, *Desain Pendidikan Karakter*, 72

⁵⁷ Rahardjo, "Multikulturalisme dan Pendidikan Nilai," *Jurnal Filsafat Pendidikan*, 8, no. 1 (2022): 29.

In addition, cultural values can be internalised through art, literature and cultural practice activities. Activities such as traditional theatre, oral literature and regional music can be part of a curriculum that is both fun and meaningful.⁵⁸ Cultural arts-based education is proven to increase students' social sensitivity and empathy for diversity.⁵⁹

Strengthening cultural values in education not only impacts the preservation of cultural heritage but also strengthens the nation's social resilience. Education that instils a sense of belonging to one's own culture will create citizens who are more identity-conscious and more tolerant of differences.⁶⁰ This is an important foundation in building an inclusive and democratic nation.⁶¹

Education as a tool for cultural preservation cannot work alone. It requires synergy with other aspects such as media, arts and cultural tourism to create collective awareness of the importance of preserving culture.⁶² Therefore, a cross-sectoral approach to cultural preservation needs to be further developed in education policy.⁶³

Education must also be able to respond to cultural changes that occur over time. Not all traditional values are relevant to the contemporary context, so education must be reflective and selective in filtering cultural values.⁶⁴ This process is important so that cultural preservation does not become a romanticisation of the past but becomes the social capital for the future.⁶⁵

Thus, education must be understood as a dynamic process that connects the past, present and future. The role of education in cultural preservation is not only the transmission of values, but also the transformation of culture towards sustainability and a more inclusive humanity.⁶⁶

Concepts of Culture, National Character and Education

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⁵⁹ Prasetyo & Rahmat, "Budaya Lokal dan Empati Sosial Siswa," *Jurnal Psikologi Pendidikan*, 11, no. 4 (2023): 212

⁶⁰ Suryadinata, Leo, *Budaya dan Identitas dalam Arus Globalisasi*, (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2021), 65.

⁶¹ Hidayat, "Dekadensi Budaya Lokal di Era Digital," *Jurnal Komunikasi dan Budaya*, 10, no. 1 (2022): 92.

⁶² Koentjaraningrat, *Kebudayaan, Mentalitas, dan Pembangunan*, 143.

⁶³ Tilaar, *Manajemen Pendidikan Nasional*, 62.

⁶⁴ Zubaedi, *Desain Pendidikan Karakter*, 81.

⁶⁵ Suyanto dan Supriatna, *Sosiologi*, 112.

⁶⁶ Tilaar, *Manajemen Pendidikan Nasional*, 64.

⁶⁷ Irmawati, "Pendidikan dalam UUSPN," Dinas Pendidikan Kabupaten Bojonegoro, 2025, <https://dinaspendidikan.bojonegorokab.go.id/berita/baca/130>.

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⁷⁰ Koentjaraningrat, *Kebudayaan, Mentalitas, dan Pembangunan*, (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2020), 128.

⁷¹ Haryanto, "Globalisasi dan Identitas Budaya," *Jurnal Sosial dan Humaniora*, 11, no. 2 (2021): 134–136.

⁷² Arifin dan Nursidik, "Pembelajaran Kontekstual Berbasis Budaya Lokal," *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan*, 15, no. 3 (2022): 77

⁷³ Tilaar, H.A.R., *Manajemen Pendidikan Nasional*, 49

⁷⁴ Kemendikbudristek, *Panduan Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka*, 12

⁷⁵ Kemendikbudristek, *Panduan Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka*, 19

⁷⁶ Zubaedi, *Desain Pendidikan Karakter*, 68

⁷⁷ Syafaruddin, "Peran Guru dalam Pendidikan Karakter," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 8, no. 1 (2022): 45

⁷⁸ Susanto, "Kemitraan Sekolah dan Masyarakat dalam Pendidikan Karakter," *Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial*, 7, no. 3 (2022): 143.

⁷⁹ Susanto, "Kemitraan Sekolah dan Masyarakat dalam Pendidikan Karakter," *Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial*, 7, no. 3 (2022): 146.

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⁸⁰ Winataputra, "Peningkatan Kompetensi Guru Berbasis Budaya," *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, 5, no. 1 (2023): 45.

⁸¹ Winataputra, "Peningkatan Kompetensi Guru Berbasis Budaya," *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, 5, no. 1 (2023): 50.

⁸² Dewantara, "Digitalisasi dan Revitalisasi Budaya Lokal," *Jurnal Teknologi Pendidikan*, 4, no. 2 (2023): 114

⁸³ Dewantara, "Digitalisasi dan Revitalisasi Budaya Lokal," *Jurnal Teknologi Pendidikan*, 4, no. 2 (2023): 119.

⁸⁴ Suparlan, "Kendala Guru dalam Pengembangan Pembelajaran Berbasis Budaya," *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 14, no. 2 (2021): 104

⁸⁵ Suparlan, "Kendala Guru dalam Pengembangan Pembelajaran Berbasis Budaya," *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 14, no. 2 (2021): 107

⁸⁶ Kemendikbudristek, *Strategi Kebijakan Budaya dan Pendidikan*, (Jakarta: 2022), 21

⁸⁷ Kemendikbudristek, *Strategi Kebijakan Budaya dan Pendidikan*, (Jakarta: 2022), 25

⁸⁸ Wahid, "Peran Pendidikan Nonformal dalam Pelestarian Budaya," *Jurnal PLS*, 6, no. 2 (2021): 67

⁸⁹ Wahid, "Peran Pendidikan Nonformal dalam Pelestarian Budaya," *Jurnal PLS*, 6, no. 2 (2021): 71

⁹⁰ Lickona, Thomas, *Educating for Character*, (New York: Bantam Books, 2022), 103

learning resource and presents knowledge holistically.⁹¹ This model is in line with an educational paradigm that values pluralism and the cultural roots of communities.⁹²

In addition, cultural values can be internalised through art, literature and cultural practice activities. Activities such as traditional theatre, oral literature and regional music can be part of a curriculum that is both fun and meaningful.⁹³ Cultural arts-based education is proven to increase students' social sensitivity and empathy for diversity.⁹⁴

Strengthening cultural values in education not only impacts the preservation of cultural heritage but also strengthens the nation's social resilience. Education that instils a sense of belonging to one's own culture will create citizens who are more identity-conscious and more tolerant of differences.⁹⁵ This is an important foundation in building an inclusive and democratic nation.⁹⁶

Education as a tool for cultural preservation cannot work alone. It requires synergy with other aspects such as media, arts and cultural tourism to create collective awareness of the importance of preserving culture.⁹⁷ Therefore, a cross-sectoral approach to cultural preservation needs to be further developed in education policy.⁹⁸

Education must also be able to respond to cultural changes that occur over time. Not all traditional values are relevant to the contemporary context, so education must be reflective and selective in filtering cultural values.⁹⁹ This process is important so that cultural preservation does not become a romanticisation of the past but becomes the social capital for the future.¹⁰⁰

Thus, education must be understood as a dynamic process that connects the past, present and future. The role of education in cultural preservation is not only the transmission of values, but also the transformation of culture towards sustainability and a more inclusive humanity.¹⁰¹

Character Education

Character education in Islam is a continuous process that is not bound by a certain time limit. According to Ustadz Dr Dedeng Rosidin, character education is closely related to the concept of morals in Islam, which is the core of education itself. In this perspective, state regulations only strengthen the implementation of character education so that it is more contextualised and can be interpreted practically by the wider community.¹⁰²

The importance of character education has been recognised in both formal and non-formal environments. Even informal education in the family (*uswah wal bait*) becomes the

⁹¹ Zubaedi, *Desain Pendidikan Karakter*, 72

⁹² Rahardjo, "Multikulturalisme dan Pendidikan Nilai," *Jurnal Filsafat Pendidikan*, 8, no. 1 (2022): 29.

⁹³ Rahardjo, "Multikulturalisme dan Pendidikan Nilai," *Jurnal Filsafat Pendidikan*, 8, no. 1 (2022): 35.

⁹⁴ Prasetyo & Rahmat, "Budaya Lokal dan Empati Sosial Siswa," *Jurnal Psikologi Pendidikan*, 11, no. 4 (2023): 212.

⁹⁵ Suryadinata, Leo, *Budaya dan Identitas dalam Arus Globalisasi*, (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2021), 65

⁹⁶ Hidayat, "Dekadensi Budaya Lokal di Era Digital," *Jurnal Komunikasi dan Budaya*, 10, no. 1 (2022): 92

⁹⁷ Koentjaraningrat, *Kebudayaan, Mentalitas, dan Pembangunan*, 143

⁹⁸ Tilaar, *Manajemen Pendidikan Nasional*, 62.

⁹⁹ Zubaedi, *Desain Pendidikan Karakter*, 81

¹⁰⁰ Suyanto dan Supriatna, *Sosiologi*, 112

¹⁰¹ Tilaar, *Manajemen Pendidikan Nasional*, 64

¹⁰² Dedeng Rosidin, "Karakter dalam Perspektif Islam," *Risalah Dakwah Islamiyah*, Edisi Mei 2023

initial foundation of children's character formation. In practice, all educational activities contain a character dimension, although it is not explicitly mentioned. Education that does not produce noble people cannot be said to be successful, even though it produces intellectually intelligent graduates.¹⁰³

This view is reinforced by Ustadz H. M. Rahmat Najieb who states that character is an expression of morals, which is a spontaneous reflection of human attitudes. The ideal character for a Muslim is based on the Qur'an and Sunnah by emulating the figure of the Prophet Muhammad SAW who has succeeded in shaping the character of the best people.¹⁰⁴ True character education, therefore, requires reference to prophetic values and the example of the Prophet Muhammad as the main educator of the people.

Within the framework of Islamic education, Dr Adian Husaini identifies character education as a form of adab education. This concept was comprehensively formulated by Prof Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas in the International Conference on Islamic Education in Mecca (1977), then elaborated by Prof Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud. Adab is understood as a person's ability to put something in its place according to the dignity determined by Allah.¹⁰⁵

Civilised students will show submission to Allah SWT, respect for teachers and parents, and compassion for others. They will also study hard to develop their potential honestly and responsibly. This is the implementation of adab values in the context of modern education.⁵ Character education in Islam is not just universal moral values, but is the embodiment of the principles of divinity, humanity, and science.

Ustadz Dr Nasruddin Syarief emphasised that strengthening character education is not only the task of formal education, but also the responsibility of non-formal and informal education. Non-formal education such as pesantren, ma'had, and course institutions have the flexibility to instil religious and cultural-based character values. Meanwhile, informal education in the family plays a central role as a means of early character formation.¹⁰⁶

The Qur'an and hadith also strongly emphasise the importance of character education that begins at home. The figure of Lukman immortalised in Surah 31 verses 12-19 exemplifies the role of the father as the primary educator in the family. Lukman teaches tawhid, gratitude, filial piety, prayer, amar ma'ruf nahi munkar, and avoiding pride - all of which are the essence of character education in Islam.¹⁰⁷

The implication of the verse shows that the main responsibility for character education lies with the head of the family, not with educational institutions. Schools and pesantren only play a complementary role in the formation of children's character, given the limited formal learning time and the dominance of the cognitive curriculum.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, the synergy between home and school becomes very important.

¹⁰³ Dedeng Rosidin, "Karakter dalam Perspektif Islam," *Risalah Dakwah Islamiyah*, Edisi Mei 2023

¹⁰⁴ Rahmat Najieb, "Karakter sebagai Akhlak Muslim," *Risalah Dakwah Islamiyah*, Edisi Juli 2023.

¹⁰⁵ Adian Husaini, "Pendidikan Adab dalam Islam," *Risalah Dakwah Islamiyah*, Edisi Agustus 2023

¹⁰⁶ Adian Husaini, "Pendidikan Adab dalam Islam," *Risalah Dakwah Islamiyah*, Edisi Agustus 2023

¹⁰⁷ in Syarief, "Sinergi Tiga Jalur Pendidikan Karakter," *Risalah Dakwah Islamiyah*, Edisi Oktober 2023

¹⁰⁸ in Syarief, "Sinergi Tiga Jalur Pendidikan Karakter," *Risalah Dakwah Islamiyah*, Edisi Oktober 2023

Prof Al-Attas emphasised that true Islamic education does not rely solely on curriculum and methods but lies in the example of the teacher. In his view, the teacher is the guardian of values and an authoritative figure whose role is to shape the intellectual as well as moral behaviour of students. Education without moral teachers will never succeed in realising the goals of Islamic education.¹⁰⁹

The concept of ta'dib (adab education) introduced by Al-Attas places the teacher not merely as a conveyor of material, but as a spiritual and intellectual guide who is able to shape students' awareness of the nature of life. Without the moral authority of teachers, education will lose its meaning as a process of full humanisation.¹¹⁰ Therefore, strengthening the quality of teachers' personalities is a top priority in character education.

The findings in this study indicate that the integration of cultural values and character through education is not only theoretical but has gained praxis legitimacy in national education policy and implementation, as seen in the Merdeka Curriculum. This finding is in line with Prasetyo and Rahmat's study (2023), which revealed that student involvement in culture-based educational activities increases social care and empathy.¹¹¹ This finding strengthens the argument that education cannot only be orientated towards mastering academic content but must be a vehicle for the formation of value and identity awareness.

In addition, the literature reviewed also emphasises the importance of synergy between formal, non-formal and informal education, especially in the process of internalising cultural and character values. The involvement of parents, teachers, and the community in creating a contextualised and transformative educational environment is key to the success of character education. This is in line with Tilaar's (2020) view that education will only succeed if it is based on the collective participation of all elements of the nation.¹¹²

Furthermore, the role of teachers as role models and value guardians is a very determining factor in the effectiveness of character education. Teachers who have integrity and moral authority not only impart knowledge but also bring noble values to life through exemplary behaviour and daily interaction. This is consistent with Al-Attas' thinking, which underlines the importance of teachers' spiritual authority in Islamic education.¹¹³ In this context, character education cannot be reduced to a programme or curricular content but is the soul of the entire educational process.

The implication of this finding is the need for education policies that are more affirmative towards the preservation of cultural values and character building. A curriculum that is adaptive to local wisdom, value-based teacher training, and strengthening family education are strategic steps to answer the challenges of globalisation that threaten the

¹⁰⁹ Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam*, (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1980)

¹¹⁰ Wan Mohd nor Wan Daud, *Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas*, (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1998).

¹¹¹ Prasetyo & Rahmat, "Budaya Lokal dan Empati Sosial Siswa," *Jurnal Psikologi Pendidikan*, 11, no. 4 (2023): 212

¹¹² Tilaar, *Manajemen Pendidikan Nasional*, 57.

¹¹³ Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam*, (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1980).

nation's cultural roots. Thus, education can become a cultural fortress as well as a means of renewing values that are relevant to the times.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that education has a very strategic role in the preservation of cultural values and the formation of national character. Education is not only tasked with transmitting academic knowledge but is also responsible for shaping the cultural and moral identity of students. Through the integration of local and spiritual values in the curriculum and strengthening the role of teachers as value role models, education can become an effective social space in maintaining cultural sustainability. The Merdeka Curriculum provides a great opportunity to develop meaningful local context-based education. However, the success of this effort is highly dependent on the synergy between stakeholders, the availability of culture-based teaching materials, and adequate teacher training. Therefore, quality education is an education that is not only academically intelligent, but also culturally wise and morally noble.

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