

Culture As a Source of Learning: Integration of Merauke Local Wisdom in Deep Learning Approach

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the integration of Merauke's local wisdom into deep learning through a literature study using a qualitative approach. Deep learning is understood as a pedagogical approach that emphasizes mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning, thereby encouraging students to construct conceptual understanding, think critically, and apply knowledge contextually. On the other hand, Merauke's local wisdom, reflected in the practices of totemism, adat sasi, yur traditions, as well as social rituals and traditional leadership systems, has ecological, social, and spiritual values that are relevant to contextual education. The results of the analysis show that integrating the two can strengthen cultural literacy, ecological awareness, and character building among students. The ecological values in sasi and yur can be used for meaningful learning, spiritual and social values such as "Izakod Bekai Izakod Kai" are relevant for mindful learning, while traditional celebrations contribute to joyful learning. However, challenges such as limited infrastructure, teacher competence, and scientific validation of local knowledge need to be overcome through training, innovative learning media, and an ethnoscience approach. This research concludes that integrating deep learning with Merauke's local wisdom has the potential to create a contextual pedagogical model that not only enriches the learning experience but also preserves cultural identity and supports sustainable education.

Keywords: deep learning, local wisdom, Merauke

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INTRODUCTION

The development of education in the 21st century requires a paradigm shift in learning from merely mastering factual knowledge to a deeper, more reflective, and applicable conceptual understanding. This approach is known as deep learning, which emphasizes three main principles, namely mindful learning, meaningful learning, and joyful learning (Hidayat & Haryati, 2025). Deep learning enables learners to not only remember information, but also integrate it with real-world experiences, think critically, and develop the ability to solve problems creatively (Sujinem, 2025). Previous research shows that deep learning plays a significant role in improving higher-order thinking skills, collaboration skills, and ecological awareness, which form the basis of sustainable education (Bachtiar et al., 2025).

On the other hand, modernization and globalization pose serious challenges to the sustainability of local cultures, especially in regions with ethnic diversity such as Merauke, South Papua. Merauke is known as the "Land of Peace" with the local motto

Izakod Bekai Izakod Kai (one heart, one goal), which represents the values of brotherhood, togetherness, and social harmony (Manik, 2022). The local wisdom of the Merauke community, reflected in the practices of totemism, *sasi* customs, *yur* traditions, and social rituals such as *Yamu* and *Api Sep*, has important ecological, spiritual, and social functions. For example, *sasi* functions as a conservation mechanism to maintain the sustainability of natural resources (Basuni & Soekmadi, 2013). Meanwhile, the Kanum tribe prohibits harvesting crops before they are ripe to ensure the continuity of the growth cycle (Palittin & Hallatu, 2023). These values represent a traditional knowledge system that is relevant to supporting contextual and sustainable education.

Several studies have found that although local culture is rich in pedagogical potential, learning practices in primary and secondary schools in Merauke are still dominated by conventional approaches that focus on memorization and do not adequately accommodate local cultural values (Ranggitia et al., 2025). This is exacerbated by the lack of creative learning media that connects local traditions with modern curriculum requirements, resulting in students losing the opportunity to develop their cultural literacy and local identity (Sormin, Tembang, et al., 2021).

This is in line with the author's observations in several schools in Merauke Regency. The learning process is still dominated by the use of general material from national textbooks without reference to the local context. Teachers tend to deliver lessons in a conventional manner and have not yet integrated examples sourced from local culture or environment. This condition shows that the use of local wisdom as a learning resource is still very limited, both due to the limited knowledge of teachers and the unavailability of Merauke culture-based learning guidelines. As a result, students receive learning that is less contextual and has no direct connection to the cultural reality around them.

Against this backdrop, the integration of in-depth learning and local wisdom in Merauke has become both an urgent necessity and a strategic opportunity. This approach not only enriches the learning experience of students, but also supports the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes project-based learning, the Pancasila student profile, and the strengthening of character and cultural literacy. The main question that arises then is how Merauke's local wisdom can be systematically integrated into a deep learning framework to produce a contextual education model that is rooted in local culture but remains relevant to global demands.

Herefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze the results of literature studies related to deep learning and local wisdom in Merauke, as well as to formulate the integration of the two in the form of a conceptual model of deep learning based on local wisdom. Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of contextual pedagogy and multicultural education. Practically, the results of this study are expected to provide alternative innovations for educators in Merauke and other regions with similar cultural diversity in developing more reflective, relevant, and sustainable learning.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative literature review approach with a focus on exploring the integration of Merauke's local wisdom within the framework of deep learning. The selection of this method was based on the research objective, which was to formulate a conceptual understanding and integration model through critical analysis of relevant literature.

1. Research Design

The research design used was a literature review with a descriptive qualitative analysis approach. This method allows researchers to systematically identify, evaluate, and synthesize previous research findings to build a strong conceptual foundation.

2. Data Sources

The data sources for this research come from:

- a. Reputable international journal articles and accredited national journals (2015–2025) discussing the topic of deep learning in education.
- b. Articles and research reports on the local wisdom of Merauke, particularly those related to cultural practices, ecological conservation, and the social and spiritual values of the Marind-Anim, Kanum, and other tribes in Merauke.
- c. Other relevant supporting documents, such as the results of ethnoscience research, conservation studies in Wasur National Park, and the development of learning media based on local culture.

3. Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through literature searches using academic databases (Google Scholar, Scopus, DOAJ, and national journal portals). Keywords used include: deep learning in education, contextualized pedagogy, local wisdom Merauke. All articles obtained were selected based on topic relevance, publication recency (≤ 10 years), and source credibility.

4. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted by adapting the Miles and Huberman model, which includes:

- a. Data reduction, which involves selecting, filtering, and classifying literature based on major themes: (1) the concept of deep learning in education, (2) forms of local wisdom in Merauke, and (3) opportunities for integrating the two.
- b. Data display, namely presenting information in the form of comparison matrices, summary tables, and synthesis narratives to facilitate understanding of the interrelationships between themes.
- c. Verification and conclusion drawing, namely conducting critical interpretation of literature findings and formulating a conceptual model of integrating Merauke local wisdom into deep learning.

Using this method, the research is expected to produce a comprehensive synthesis of how Merauke's local wisdom can be systematically integrated into a deep learning framework to strengthen contextual, character-based, and sustainable learning.

5. Research Supporting Tools

In the process of writing this article, the author also utilized scientific writing support technology. The authenticity of the writing is checked using Turnitin as a similarity detection tool to ensure academic integrity and avoid potential plagiarism. References are managed using the Mendeley Desktop application so that the process of citing, compiling a bibliography, and organizing reference sources can be done systematically and in accordance with the citation format used. The use of these two technologies is expected to improve writing accuracy, citation neatness, and maintain the authenticity of scientific works.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Deep Learning

A review of the literature shows that in the world of education, deep learning is understood in two main dimensions. First, deep learning as an artificial intelligence technology that serves to support personalized learning, predict student learning outcomes, and develop adaptive learning systems. Second, deep learning is understood as a pedagogical approach or in-depth learning that emphasizes conceptual understanding, critical reflection, and meaningful application in real life (Munandar et al., 2025). Several research studies in Indonesia emphasize that this approach is in line with the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum. A study of teacher training based on Fullan's 6C framework (character, citizenship, collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking) in Bogor showed a significant increase in teachers' awareness of deep learning principles, pedagogical confidence, and willingness to implement more contextual learning (Bachtiar et al., 2025). A similar approach is found in high school practices, where deep learning is integrated with mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning to create a reflective and enjoyable learning environment (Sujinem, 2025).

Furthermore, research on junior high school mathematics textbooks found that the aspects of mindful learning and joyful learning were relatively strong, as seen in the variety of concept presentations, the use of visual media, and activities that encouraged student confidence. However, meaningful learning is still limited, especially in terms of integration between subjects and the use of digital technology. Therefore, reinforcement through exploratory and collaborative projects is recommended so that learning truly fulfills the principles of deep learning (Dewi et al., 2025). Similar findings in elementary schools show that deep learning is effective when implemented with three main pillars, namely differentiated learning, critical thinking, and a pleasant learning atmosphere. The application of deep learning at this level emphasizes contextual learning across subjects such as Mathematics, Science, Indonesian Language, and Civics (Hidayat & Haryati, 2025).

Based on the above literature, it can be concluded that deep learning can be used as a pedagogical approach that supports the transformation of 21st-century education. By emphasizing mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning, deep learning opens up great opportunities for integration with local contexts, including the local wisdom of Merauke. This integration can encourage more reflective, contextual learning that is rooted in local culture, while preparing students to face global challenges. Thus, deep learning can serve as a bridge between modern educational innovation and the strengthening of local cultural identity.

Local Wisdom of Merauke

The local wisdom of the Merauke community, especially the Marind-Anim and Kanum tribes, plays a fundamental role in maintaining social harmony, environmental sustainability, and strengthening cultural identity. Local wisdom values are reflected in social systems, customs, and cultural practices that have been passed down from generation to generation. Some of the main forms of local wisdom in Merauke include totemism, adat sasi, yur practices, religious moderation values, and traditional leadership systems.

Totemism in Marind-Anim society is not only a spiritual symbol, but also a value system that binds social life, fosters tolerance, brotherhood, and a sense of unity across ethnicities and religions. The concept of “Izakod Bekai Izakod Kai” (one heart, one goal) reflects a harmonious way of life that is in line with the principle of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (unity in diversity). These values have proven to strengthen religious moderation, with the Marind-Anim community demonstrating mutual respect, openness, and cooperation in their interactions with various community groups (Gamu & Pranyoto, 2023).

In the environmental sector, the Marind, Yei, and Kanum communities implement Adat Sasi as a traditional conservation mechanism. Sasi serves to protect ecosystems, regulate resource use, and act as a religious and social value system that is strictly adhered to. This practice has proven effective in maintaining ecological balance and is an important tool in conservation based on local wisdom (Lestari et al., 2025). In addition, the Kanum tribe has a tradition called yur, which prohibits harvesting crops during certain periods. Yur trains communities to maintain the sustainability of natural processes, from pollination to harvest, which can be explained through the principles of biological, physical, and chemical ethnoscience (Palittin & Hallatu, 2023).

Local wisdom is also an instrument in solving social problems. Traditional rituals such as Yamu and Api Sep in the Marind-Anim tradition serve to resolve conflicts, create a sense of security, and strengthen bonds of brotherhood. The traditional leadership system known as Big Men emphasizes courage, generosity, organizational skills, and wisdom. This value makes traditional leaders strategic figures in maintaining social and political stability (Manik, 2022).

From an educational perspective, Merauke's local wisdom has great potential to be passed on to the younger generation. The Marind tradition related to sasi and

totemism can be modeled as a form of ecoliteracy in elementary schools, training students to be sensitive to the environment while instilling a sense of ecological responsibility (Sormin, Fredy, et al., 2021). Education innovation based on local wisdom is also carried out through the development of teaching media, such as educational videos that showcase the cultural diversity of Merauke, so that students can understand and preserve their regional cultural identity (Ranggitia et al., 2025).

Equally important, the local wisdom of the Marind, Kanume, Marori, and Yeinan communities living in Wasur National Park also contributes to conservation management. The traditions of *sasi*, respect for sacred sites, ethical hunting practices, and traditional education systems form an informal foundation that can be adopted into modern conservation area management policies (Basuni & Soekmadi, 2013).

Merauke's local wisdom is not only a cultural heritage, but also an ecological, social, and educational tool that is relevant to addressing modern challenges. These values serve as a bridge between tradition and innovation, as well as social capital that can be integrated with deep learning to strengthen students' character, cultural literacy, and ecological awareness.

Integration of Merauke Local Wisdom in Deep Learning

A review of the literature shows that deep learning in the context of education is primarily oriented toward creating mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning. This approach requires students to not only memorize knowledge, but also construct a deep understanding, develop critical thinking skills, and apply concepts contextually in real life (Yunita, 2025). In line with this, Merauke's local wisdom offers cultural practices, social values, and ecological mechanisms that are highly relevant as a basis for in-depth learning. The integration of the two will result in a learning model that is not only oriented towards academic achievement, but also the strengthening of cultural identity and ecological sustainability.

First, the local wisdom values of Merauke, manifested in totemism, *adat sasi*, and *yur* traditions, are in harmony with the principle of meaningful learning. Totemism, for example, teaches the importance of spiritual and social relationships between individuals and with their environment, which can be contextualized in cross-subject project-based learning (Gamu & Pranyoto, 2023). Meanwhile, the customs of *sasi* and *yur* teach sustainable resource management, which is in line with environmental literacy and education for sustainable development (Palittin & Hallatu, 2023). When integrated into a deep learning framework, students not only understand ecological concepts theoretically, but also internalize conservation practices rooted in their own culture.

Second, from a social perspective, the local wisdom of the Marind-Anim tribe emphasizes the value of “*Izakod Bekai Izakod Kai*” (one heart, one goal), as well as conflict resolution mechanisms through the *Yamu* and *Api Sep* rituals, which are in line with the deep learning orientation that emphasizes collaboration, reflection, and the strengthening of human values (Manik, 2022). Deep learning-based learning can

adapt these values as case studies in Pancasila and Civics Education subjects, or be developed into problem-solving simulations based on local culture. Thus, students not only learn about the concepts of democracy and peace in the abstract, but also see real examples from their ancestors' traditions of maintaining social harmony.

Third, the integration of Merauke's local wisdom into deep learning also provides a dimension of joyful learning. Traditional celebrations such as the sago worm festival or ndambu in Marind-Anim culture are not only ritual activities, but also a form of recreation, togetherness, and cultural expression (Lestari et al., 2025). When incorporated into learning practices, this tradition can be packaged as a creative medium, for example through the creation of culture-based educational videos or collaborative arts and crafts projects. This not only increases students' motivation to learn, but also fosters a sense of pride in their local cultural identity.

Fourth, this integration has a strategic impact on strengthening ecoliteracy among students. Previous research confirms that the local wisdom of the Marind-Anim and Kanum peoples is effective as a model for instilling ecological awareness in elementary schools through the traditional practices of sasi and yur (Lestari et al., 2025). By utilizing a deep learning approach, ecological material can be taught not only through modern scientific theory, but also through an ethnoscientific perspective born from the experiences of local communities. This approach builds an epistemological bridge between global science and traditional knowledge, while training students to think critically, reflectively, and solution-oriented in facing contemporary environmental issues.

Fifth, the integration of local wisdom into deep learning also contributes to character building in students. The traditional Big Men leadership system in Marind-Anim society emphasizes the values of courage, generosity, and the ability to organize the community (Sormin, Tembang, et al., 2021). These values can be adapted into the curriculum to train students' leadership skills through collaborative projects, reflective discussions, and social simulations. Thus, students not only master 21st-century skills, but also internalize leadership values rooted in their own culture.

Conceptually, the integration of deep learning and local wisdom in Merauke serves as a form of contextualized pedagogy that responds to the challenges of educational globalization without neglecting local cultural roots. This is consistent with the paradigm of multicultural education and glocalization, which combines global knowledge with local practices. This integration also reinforces the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes project-based learning, the Pancasila student profile, and the instilling of character values. By making local wisdom the basis for in-depth learning, schools in Merauke can produce students who are not only academically intelligent, but also have strong character and identity, as well as a commitment to environmental sustainability and social harmony.

In addition to conceptual analysis, a number of empirical studies show that the application of local wisdom-based learning can increase depth of conceptual understanding and 21st century skills. Based on Sormin's research, it was found that

integrating sasi values into ecoliteracy activities in elementary schools can improve students' reflective thinking skills and environmental awareness (Sormin, Fredy, et al., 2021). This finding is in line with the principle of meaningful learning in the deep learning approach, where learning experiences are linked to cultural contexts and local ecological realities. Similarly, Yunita's research on social studies subjects also shows that the use of a deep learning approach based on local wisdom values can improve students' critical thinking skills and the relevance of their learning experiences (Yunita, 2025). In addition, a study conducted by Ranggitia in Merauke found that the development of locally-based teaching media through educational videos had a positive impact on student engagement and increased pride in regional cultural identity (Ranggitia et al., 2025). This study can serve as an empirical example showing that integrating local wisdom into real learning practices can encourage more meaningful, enjoyable, and contextual learning in accordance with the principles of deep learning.

Challenges and Solutions

1. Infrastructure and Technology Challenges

One of the main obstacles in integrating deep learning with Merauke's local wisdom is the limited educational infrastructure, both in terms of technological facilities and internet access in remote areas (Wika, 2025). In fact, deep learning in the modern context often involves the use of digital technology to support collaboration, exploration of learning resources, and visualization of cultural content. These limitations can hinder the implementation of video-based media, digital platforms, or interactive learning resources that showcase local cultural values.

Local governments and educational institutions need to develop locally-based blended learning strategies, combining simple technology with traditional practices. For example, the use of Merauke cultural videos that can be downloaded and used offline in remote schools, or utilizing traditional media such as folk tales, totem symbols, and traditional rituals as a means of in-depth learning simulation without relying entirely on the internet.

2. Pedagogical Challenges and Teacher Competencies

Practical challenges in implementing deep learning are also a crucial issue. Many teachers may not have the training or access to adequate resources to develop their pedagogical skills within the framework of deep learning (Tang, 2024). Integration with local wisdom adds to the complexity because teachers are required to understand not only reflective, collaborative, and critical learning methods (Chen, 2024), but also be able to contextualize it with cultural values such as adat sasi, yur traditions, or Yamu rituals. Without adequate training, this integration has the potential to become merely a formality without substantive meaning.

In this case, a teacher professional development program based on cultural pedagogy is needed. Cultural pedagogy emphasizes the importance of integrating cultural context into the learning process. This approach enables teachers to create more

contextual and engaging learning experiences for students, while supporting them in developing stronger cultural identities and understanding (Bilal et al., 2019). Collaboration with traditional leaders, cultural communities, and local academics can enrich teachers' competence in implementing value-based learning. This collaboration also provides opportunities for mainstreaming local values in the learning process. This is in line with the principle of culturally sustaining pedagogy, which emphasizes the importance of integrating students' cultural values into teaching as a way to increase their engagement and motivation to learn (Archer et al., 2024).

3. Epistemological Challenges and Scientific Validation

Local wisdom is often considered traditional knowledge that is difficult to integrate into modern academic frameworks. On the other hand, there is still skepticism about local wisdom as a valid source of knowledge. This can lead to the marginalization of this knowledge in the education curriculum. Research shows that instructors often face challenges in adopting culturally responsive pedagogy, especially when they are unfamiliar with existing local values (Jia & Nasri, 2019).

As a mitigation effort, integration can be carried out through an ethnoscience and ethnomathematics approach (Sormin, Tembang, et al., 2021), who interprets local knowledge within a modern scientific framework. For example, the sasi custom can be explained by the concept of conservation ecology (Lestari et al., 2025), while the yur tradition is associated with the principles of photosynthesis and the plant cycle (Palittin & Hallatu, 2023). With this approach, local wisdom is not only preserved as cultural heritage, but also strengthened with scientific legitimacy so that it can be accepted in global academic discourse.

4. Socio-Cultural Challenges

Globalization facilitates the spread of popular culture from around the world, which often shifts the attention of the younger generation away from traditional practices. For example, research by Nurhasanah et al. (2021) reveals that modern elements, such as social media, have been used by local artists to promote traditional culture at a global level, however, this also creates challenges when the younger generation is more interested in global cultural production than local traditions (Merung et al., 2024). Students tend to be more interested in global popular culture than in traditional practices such as the sago worm festival, ndambu, or the Api Sep ritual (Manik, 2022). This condition can weaken their motivation in participating in learning based on local wisdom.

Deep learning must be packaged creatively and be relevant to the world of children. For example, local traditions can be integrated in the form of interactive digital media, educational games, or creative videos that showcase cultural values in an interesting way. In addition, linking local traditions to global issues such as climate change or sustainable development can increase the relevance and pride of the younger generation in their culture.

5. Challenges in Curriculum and Policy Implementation

The main obstacle to integrating local wisdom often stems from conventional approaches to education, which place greater emphasis on universal competency standards. Integrating local wisdom into the Merdeka Belajar curriculum can enrich students' learning experiences and create a holistic and inclusive learning environment. However, without adequate regulatory support from the government, this initiative is likely to be hampered (Annisha, 2024).

To that end, policies are needed that give schools in Merauke greater flexibility to adapt the curriculum to the local context (Pranyoto & Berangka, 2025). The principle of Independent Learning can serve as an umbrella policy to accommodate this integration. Schools can develop local content that explicitly promotes traditional values, or integrate local wisdom into project-based interdisciplinary learning (Maharani & Muhtar, 2022).

CONCLUSION

A literature review shows that deep learning as a pedagogical approach has great potential in shaping reflective, contextual learning that is oriented towards the development of 21st-century skills. The principles of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning are in line with the local wisdom values of Merauke, which are rooted in cultural, social, and ecological practices. Traditions such as totemism, sasi, yur, and the motto “Izakod Bekai Izakod Kai” can be used as a basis for enriching in-depth learning. The integration of both enables the creation of a learning model that not only improves academic achievement but also strengthens cultural identity, ecological literacy, and student character.

However, this integration is not without challenges, such as limited educational infrastructure, low digital literacy among teachers, and a lack of empirical research testing the effectiveness of applying local wisdom in the context of deep learning. Therefore, this integration requires policy support, strengthening of teacher capacity, and innovation in ethnosience-based learning media so that it can be implemented optimally and sustainably.

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