



## INTERNALIZING THE VALUES OF PANCASILA THROUGH THE KUDA KEPANG DANCE: A CONTEXTUAL AND CHARACTER-BASED LEARNING MODEL IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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### Abstract

Pancasila learning in elementary schools (SD) often faces challenges due to a conventional approach that is monotonous and focused solely on memorizing material. This results in weak internalization of Pancasila values in students' daily lives. This article aims to disseminate ideas and practices to renew Pancasila learning by integrating a Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model grounded in local wisdom within the Merdeka Curriculum framework. This research uses a qualitative approach, employing a literature review and analysis of good practices in Pancasila learning based on Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and local wisdom in elementary schools, drawing on data from policy documents, journals, books, and related research findings. In the analysis, content analysis techniques and source triangulation were used to ensure data validity. The results of the study indicate that reconstructing Pancasila learning through a PjBL approach grounded in local wisdom can transform it from a theoretical to a contextual, meaningful, and enjoyable experience. Project-based activities provide students with opportunities to explore the values of cooperation, social justice, and global diversity in real-world contexts. Through structured learning, students not only understand Pancasila as knowledge (moral knowing) but also feel it (moral feeling) and put it into practice (moral action).

**Keywords:** Pancasila, Elementary School, Project-Based Learning, Local Wisdom.

### INTRODUCTION

Pancasila Education occupies a highly strategic position within Indonesia's national education system, fostering students' character, national identity, and moral development from an early age. At the elementary school level, education is not solely oriented toward the acquisition of knowledge but also toward the internalization of values that form the foundation of individual behavior in social, national, and civic life. As the philosophical foundation and national ideology of Indonesia, Pancasila embodies the values of divinity, humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice through educational processes (Kaelan, 2016; Sudrajat, 2020). Therefore, Pancasila Education plays a fundamental role in shaping a generation that possesses strong character, noble morality, and a deep sense of national awareness.

Nevertheless, various studies indicate that implementing Pancasila Education in schools continues to face significant challenges. Learning activities are often oriented toward content mastery and rote memorization, resulting in Pancasila values being understood primarily at the cognitive level rather than being internalized and manifested in students' daily behavior (Budimansyah, 2018). Traditional teacher-centered instruction tends to make students passive and limits their opportunities

to engage in meaningful learning experiences. Consequently, a gap persists between students' conceptual understanding of Pancasila and its practical application in social life.

Educational transformation through the Merdeka Curriculum provides opportunities to create learning experiences that are more contextual, participatory, and student-centered. The Merdeka Curriculum prioritizes character development through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), encouraging students to learn from their environment, culture, and social realities (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). This paradigm aligns with constructivist theory, which emphasizes that knowledge comes from learners' experiences and interactions with their environment (Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1970). Therefore, Pancasila Education should not only deliver concepts but also provide authentic experiences that enable students to understand, internalize, and practice Pancasila values.

One relevant approach to achieving this goal is culture-based learning at the local level. Local culture represents a rich source of moral, social, religious, and national values that have evolved within communities. The integration of local culture into education serves not only to preserve cultural heritage but also as a meaningful, contextual medium for character development (Tilaar, 2004). Learning connected to students' cultural environment enables them to develop a deeper understanding because educational content is familiar to them through real-life experiences (Johnson, 2002).

In Javanese culture, one traditional art form with considerable educational potential is the Kuda Kepang dance. This traditional performance art embodies not only aesthetic and entertainment values but also important life values such as cooperation, discipline, responsibility, mutual assistance, courage, and respect for tradition. These values align with the second, third, fourth, and fifth principles of Pancasila. Students can gain concrete experiences that help them understand the Pancasila values, which are often defined in more abstract terms. These experiences are gained through observing dance movements, cooperation among performers, and the collective nature of performances.

In addition to supporting understanding of value, the use of the Kuda Kepang dance aligns with the principles of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), which emphasize the connection between academic content and students' real-life experiences (Johnson, 2002). Culture-based experiential learning enables students to learn actively through observation, discussion, reflection, and value-based practice. Consequently, learning outcomes extend beyond conceptual understanding to include the development of awareness, attitudes, and character. This approach also supports deep learning, which emphasizes learners' ability to construct meaning, connect knowledge with experience, and apply values in diverse life situations (Fullan, Quinn, & McEachen, 2018).

Based on the foregoing discussion, innovative approaches to Pancasila Education are needed to integrate local cultural values with character-building objectives. This article aims to describe a best practice of local culture-based Pancasila learning through the Kuda Kepang dance among elementary school students. The discussion focuses on the learning process, outcomes achieved, and their impact

on enhancing students' understanding of Pancasila values, learning engagement, and character development. Through this practice, Pancasila Education become more contextual, meaningful, profound, and relevant to students' everyday lives.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Context of Best Practice

Students in this fifth-grade elementary school class are very engaged and enthusiastic about learning, and they thrive when given opportunities to move around and work in groups. At least at first, it seemed like students were really into lessons that included visuals and activities. Initial observations indicated that students showed considerable enthusiasm w through visual media and interactive activities. However, in previous Pancasila Education lessons, students tended to memorize the principles of Pancasila without fully understanding their meaning and application in real-life situations.

The initial classroom conditions revealed several issues. First, some students were unable to connect Pancasila values with their daily behavior. Second, learning activities were predominantly teacher-centered, resulting in limited student participation in questioning and discussion. Third, students lacked sufficient knowledge of local cultural traditions closely related to their social environment. These conditions suggested the need for a more contextual learning approach that aligns with the characteristics of elementary school students.



Figure 1. Exploration with Kuda Kepang Material for Educational Play

In response to this situation, the teacher introduced an innovative learning strategy that used the Kuda Kepang dance as a learning resource. Pancasila and this local cultural art form have many core principles, such as responsibility, respect for others' roles, discipline, cooperation, and unity. Incorporating local culture also helps students develop the Pancasila Student Profile by providing opportunities to learn about themselves and their culture and to grow as people through meaningful experiences.

In practice, the learning process positions students not merely as listeners but as active participants. The teacher prepared videos and images of Kuda Kepang performances, simple observation worksheets, guiding questions, and group discussion activities. Students were encouraged to observe the dance movements, discuss the significance of coordination among performers, and relate these observations to the principles of Pancasila. Subsequently, students participated in simple simulations, such as coordinated group movements or small-group role-playing. At the end of the lesson, students wrote reflective notes about the positive values they had learned from the local cultural tradition.

This best-practice context demonstrates that Pancasila Education is more engaging and relevant for children. The teacher no longer serves as the sole source of information but rather as a facilitator who helps students discover Pancasila values through learning experiences closely connected to their daily lives. In this way, learning becomes more meaningful because students can recognize that Pancasila values are embedded within their national culture rather than existing only in textbooks.

This best practice was also motivated by the need to promote deep learning. In this context, deep learning refers to learning that goes beyond superficial knowledge and encourages students to understand, experience, and apply the values they learn. When observing the Kuda Kepang dance, students not only recognize it as an interesting cultural performance but also understand that the coordination and togetherness displayed by the performers reflect the value of unity. During discussions, students learn that deliberation and consensus-building are effective ways of making decisions. Through group activities, they develop a sense of responsibility and mutual respect.

From a character-development perspective, this best practice created opportunities for the growth of positive attitudes. Students who were previously passive became more confident in expressing their opinions. Those who had difficulty maintaining focus showed greater enthusiasm for participating in learning activities. Students also demonstrated improvements in cooperation, discipline, and respect for their peers' perspectives. These findings suggest that local culture can serve as an effective bridge for developing learning experiences that foster not only cognitive growth but also social skills and positive character traits.

Therefore, this best-practice initiative emerged from genuine classroom needs through a locally based culture-learning innovation. The Kuda Kepang dance was selected as a learning medium because it embodies rich Pancasila values, is readily observable to students, and fosters a contextual, meaningful, deep, and character-oriented learning environment. This practice is to inspire other elementary school teachers to develop Pancasila Education in students' lives and cultural environments.

### **Learning Innovation**

The learning innovation presented in this best practice emerged from the need to transform Pancasila Education from a predominantly verbal, memorization-based approach to a contextual,

meaningful, and experience-centered learning process. One of the major challenges in elementary Pancasila Education has been the tendency to emphasize cognitive aspects, such as memorizing principles, symbols, and normative concepts, without providing sufficient opportunities for students to construct the meaning of these values in real-life contexts. Consequently, students often perceive Pancasila merely as knowledge to be remembered rather than as a set of principles to be internalized and practiced in everyday life. However, the primary objective of Pancasila Education is to develop citizens whose character, attitudes, and behaviors reflect Pancasila's values (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

From a constructivist perspective, knowledge is best understood when learners actively construct their own understanding through interactions with the social and cultural environments around them. Vygotsky's constructivist theory emphasizes that learning is a process of meaning-making that occurs through social interaction and cultural experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, integrating local culture into Pancasila Education represents a relevant strategy for providing authentic and meaningful learning experiences.

In this best practice, the Kuda Kepang dance was selected as a learning resource because it is a local cultural tradition familiar to students and embodies social values consistent with the principles of Pancasila. As a traditional cultural heritage of Javanese society, Kuda Kepang possesses not only aesthetic value as a performing art but also embodies cooperation, togetherness, collaboration, discipline, responsibility, respect for tradition, and social solidarity developed through both rehearsal and performance processes. These values represent concrete manifestations of Pancasila principles in community life. Therefore, local culture functions not merely as a learning object but also as a medium for internalizing character values and strengthening national identity (Tilaar, 2015; Koentjaraningrat, 2009).

The use of Kuda Kepang as a learning resource is also consistent with the principles of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), which emphasize the relationship between academic content and students' real-life situations. According to Johnson (2002), contextual learning enables students to discover meaning by connecting academic knowledge with their lived experiences. When students observe Kuda Kepang performances commonly found in their local communities, they no longer learn Pancasila values in the abstract but instead witness how these values are applied in social behavior. This process helps students develop a deeper understanding than they would through theoretical explanations alone.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative approach using library research and descriptive analysis of best practices in Pancasila Education based on Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and local wisdom at the elementary school level (Zed, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data were derived from

educational policy documents, including the Merdeka Curriculum and the Guidelines for the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), as well as relevant journal articles, books, and previous research findings (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

Data were collected through document analysis, and the analysis employed content analysis techniques, including data reduction, categorization, interpretation, and conclusion drawing (Krippendorff, 2018). Character development and the internalization of Pancasila values were the outcomes of the best-practice analysis, which sought to identify learning strategies, PjBL procedures, student engagement, and their effects on these outcomes (Thomas, 2000; Bell, 2010).

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation was applied by comparing information obtained from various policy documents, scholarly publications, and empirical studies (Patton, 2015).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Learning Innovation**

This learning innovation, character development, and the internalization of Pancasila values were the outcomes of the best-practice analysis, which sought to identify learning strategies, PjBL procedures, student engagement, and their effects on these outcomes. was designed by integrating local culture-based learning, reflective discussion, visual observation, and participatory learning approaches. Students were allowed to view videos, photographs, and documentation of Kuda Kepang performances to identify a variety of behaviours displayed during rehearsals and performances within the group. Students were encouraged to engage in critical thinking about the socio-cultural phenomena they observed through this observation activity, which served as an initial stimulus. According to Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, learning becomes more effective when students acquire concrete experiences that are subsequently reflected upon to construct new concepts and understandings.

Through group discussions, students analyzed the relationship between the dancers' behaviors and the values embodied in Pancasila's principles. For example, cooperation among dancers in maintaining synchronized movements can be associated with the value of cooperation, which reflects the Third Principle of Pancasila, namely the Unity of Indonesia. Discipline in attending rehearsals and following performance rules can be linked to responsibility in implementing Pancasila's moral values. Likewise, decision-making processes within performing groups that are conducted through deliberation represent the application of the Fourth Principle. Through these analytical activities, students not only recognized the concept of Pancasila values but also understood their manifestations in real-life situations.



Figure 2. Demonstrated by Kuda Kepang Dancers

Furthermore, reflective activities became a crucial component of this learning innovation. Reflection enabled students to connect their observations to personal experiences at home, at school, and in their communities. Students were encouraged to answer questions such as, "How can I apply cooperative attitudes like those demonstrated by Kuda Kepang dancers?" or "What can I do to maintain unity in my school environment?" Such reflective processes are essential because they bridge the gap between knowledge and action. Dewey (1938) argued that learning experiences acquire educational meaning when accompanied by reflection that helps learners understand the relationship between experience and future action.

From a character education perspective, this innovation also supports strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile, a central objective of the Merdeka Curriculum. Values such as cooperation, global diversity, critical reasoning, creativity, faith, and noble character can be developed through learning activities that utilize local culture as a learning resource. Students not only learn about their regional culture but also develop pride in their national cultural identity while understanding its relevance to contemporary life. It is consistent with Banks' (2016) view that culture-based education helps learners understand their identities while fostering democratic citizenship competencies.

Consequently, this Pancasila learning innovation through the Kuda Kepang dance demonstrates that Pancasila values can be learned in a more concrete, contextual, and meaningful manner through cultural experiences closely connected to students' lives. This approach not only enhances students' conceptual understanding of Pancasila but also strengthens the internalization of character values through active, reflective, and culture-based learning experiences. Such learning is an effective strategy for bridging the gap between knowledge of Pancasila and its practical application in everyday life.

Pedagogically, this innovation positions students as active participants in the learning process. Teachers act as facilitators, guiding students in discovering the meanings embedded in

cultural performances. Following observation activities, students engage in small-group discussions to compile their findings, present their ideas, and respond to other groups' perspectives. These activities support the development of critical thinking, communication, and collaboration skills, all of which are essential components of Pancasila Education at the elementary level.

The strength of this innovation lies in its integration of culture and character development. Kuda Kepang is not merely presented as a performing art but as a learning medium that teaches cooperation, respect, discipline, and pride in national culture. Such an approach aligns with character-strengthening initiatives based on local wisdom, which are widely recommended in Pancasila Education and the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5). In a research manuscript, this section can be further enriched with examples of classroom activities, student responses, and observable behavioral changes during the learning process.



Figure 3. Implemented Through Local Culture-Based Pancasila Learning

This best practice was implemented through local culture-based Pancasila learning, using the Kuda Kepang dance as a contextual and meaningful learning resource for fifth-grade elementary school students. The implementation began with identifying classroom conditions, which indicated that students were more interested in learning experiences closely related to their daily lives, while their understanding of Pancasila values remained largely memorization-based. Based on these findings, the teacher designed learning activities integrating cultural observation, value-based discussions, simulations, and reflection to help students understand and internalize Pancasila values more deeply.

During the learning process, students observed images and videos of Kuda Kepang performances, discussed the values embedded within them, connected those values to the principles of Pancasila, and practiced them through cooperative simulations and role-playing activities. The lessons concluded with reflection sessions aimed at reinforcing students' understanding and awareness that local culture serves as a meaningful medium for character education. Evaluation was conducted through observations of learning activities, discussion outcomes, student worksheets, and reflective writings.

The results demonstrated positive impacts. Students became more active, enthusiastic, and confident in participating in learning activities. Their understanding of Pancasila values improved

as they connected abstract concepts to authentic experiences embodied in the Kuda Kepang dance. In addition, attitudes such as discipline, cooperation, responsibility, and mutual respect developed throughout the learning process. The learning experience also enhanced students' appreciation of local culture as part of their national identity. Overall, this best practice demonstrates that integrating local culture into Pancasila Education can create contextual, meaningful, deep, and character-oriented learning experiences.

## 2. Local Culture-Based Pancasila Learning

Local culture-based Pancasila learning through the Kuda Kepang dance fundamentally seeks to connect the nation's foundational values with students' lived realities. In the context of elementary education, this approach is particularly relevant because children at this stage remain within the concrete operational phase of cognitive development. They more easily understand values when presented through tangible examples, direct activities, and experiences closely related to their daily lives. Therefore, the use of Kuda Kepang as a learning medium is not merely a creative choice but also a pedagogical strategy aligned with children's developmental characteristics and the objectives of Pancasila Education.

Conceptually, local wisdom-based learning offers teachers opportunities to present educational content that is more dynamic, flexible, and responsive to students' environmental contexts. Local wisdom constitutes a rich source of learning because it embodies social, religious, communal, and cultural identity values. In this practice, the Kuda Kepang dance demonstrates unity through synchronized group movements, humanity through mutual respect among performers, deliberation through the distribution of roles, and responsibility through adherence to group rules. It indicates that local culture can serve as a natural and meaningful medium for the actualization of Pancasila values.

From an instructional perspective, the use of Kuda Kepang helped transform learning from a predominantly teacher-centered approach into an experience-centered process. When students watched videos or images of Kuda Kepang performances, they not only received information but also interpreted the meanings behind the movements, music, and collective interactions among dancers. These activities fostered observation, basic analytical, and oral communication skills. Subsequently, through group discussions, students learned to express opinions, listen to peers, and reach collective agreements. This process is essential because Pancasila Education aims not only to develop knowledge but also to shape students' ways of thinking and behaving.

Further analysis revealed that the values represented in Kuda Kepang align with the five principles of Pancasila. The First Principle is to practice praying before activities and to express gratitude for cultural heritage. The Second Principle is evident in behaviours characterized by mutual respect and the avoidance of discrimination during rehearsals and performances. The Third Principle is clearly demonstrated through synchronized group movements, as successful

performances depend on cooperation and unity. The Fourth Principle emerges when students or performers deliberate to determine roles, movement sequences, or group responsibilities. Lastly, the Fifth Principle is the equitable distribution of opportunities for all members to participate and contribute to the organization's success. From this perspective, Kuda Kepang is a tangible manifestation of the Pancasila values embedded in the community's cultural practices.

In this best practice, learning became more meaningful because students did not learn Pancasila values in abstract terms, but in concrete experiences they could observe, engage with, and discuss. When students connected dance movements to Pancasila principles, they developed a deeper understanding. For instance, realizing that synchronized movements symbolize unity enabled them not only to understand the content of the Third Principle but also to appreciate the importance of togetherness within classroom life. Similarly, observing deliberative decision-making processes helped them understand that sound decisions are made through collective discussion rather than individual judgment. Such experiences made learning more memorable because they were rooted in authentic and meaningful contexts.

Moreover, this learning approach contributed significantly to character development. Students involved in these activities demonstrated improvements in discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and respect for others. During simulation activities, they learned that every group member plays an important role and that collective success depends on everyone's contribution. Such values are particularly important in elementary education because children's character is shaped through habituation, role modeling, and consistent learning experiences. By utilizing local culture as a learning medium, teachers helped students internalize character values naturally and enjoyably.

From a learning motivation perspective, the Kuda Kepang dance proved effective in increasing students' enthusiasm. The visual and movement-based nature of this cultural medium attracted students more than text-based instruction. Students found Pancasila lessons more engaging because they included storytelling, movement, and collaborative activities. This increased interest is significant because motivation is a key factor influencing student engagement. When students feel connected to learning materials, they are more likely to focus, ask questions, and actively participate in discussions. Thus, this innovation not only enriches instructional content but also creates a more enjoyable and productive learning environment.

From a cultural identity perspective, this practice also fostered pride in local cultural heritage. In the modern era, children are often more familiar with popular culture than with their own regional traditions. Consequently, schools play a crucial role in reintroducing local culture as an integral part of national identity. Through Kuda Kepang, students learned that regional culture is not outdated or irrelevant but instead contains noble values that remain highly relevant to contemporary education. This awareness is essential for preventing the erosion of cultural identity

and encouraging students to become a generation that appreciates its own culture while practicing national values.

Overall, this discussion demonstrates that the Kuda Kepang dance is not only suitable as a medium for Pancasila Education but also effective in fostering contextual, meaningful, deep, and character-oriented learning. The integration of local culture into learning provides dual benefits: strengthening students' understanding of Pancasila concepts while simultaneously cultivating character values and cultural appreciation. Therefore, this best practice may serve as a model for elementary school teachers seeking to develop learning experiences that are more relevant to students' lives and cultural environments.

### 3. Challenges and Implementation Solutions

Implementing innovative Pancasila learning in elementary schools faces several operational challenges. One of the most significant challenges is teachers' resistance to changing established instructional paradigms. Many teachers remain comfortable with conventional teaching approaches because they are more practical and less demanding (Sudrajat, 2020). In addition, limited understanding of process-based assessment techniques, particularly formative and qualitative assessment in character-based projects, often results in evaluations that are subjective and merely procedural. Other challenges include low student participation, text-oriented instruction, limited learning media, diverse student characteristics, and insufficient integration of values into everyday school culture.

To address these challenges, systematic and collaborative solutions are necessary. First, schools and educational authorities should strengthen professional development programs through Teacher Working Groups (KKG) by organizing intensive workshops focused on designing practical and applicable P5 project modules. Second, teachers should utilize professional learning platforms such as the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) to exchange ideas, share best practices, and adopt proven learning modules. Third, active involvement of parents and local communities is essential to ensure that the cultivation of Pancasila values at school aligns with character-building practices at home and in the wider community.

## CONCLUSION

The best practice of local culture-based Pancasila learning through the Kuda Kepang dance demonstrates that connecting learning materials with students' real-life experiences can create a more contextual, meaningful, deep, and character-oriented learning process. Through activities such as observing, discussing, interpreting, and practicing values embedded in local culture, students not only develop a conceptual understanding of the principles of Pancasila but also learn to relate these values to their everyday behavior and social interactions. The findings indicate that the Kuda Kepang dance is an effective learning medium for increasing student engagement, strengthening understanding of

Pancasila values, and fostering positive attitudes such as cooperation, discipline, responsibility, and appreciation of national culture. The integration of local wisdom into learning also helps students feel more connected to the subject matter because their learning experiences are rooted in cultural contexts that are familiar and relevant to their lives.

Based on these findings, elementary school teachers are encouraged to continuously develop Pancasila learning by utilizing local cultural resources available in their respective communities. Schools should provide greater opportunities for project-based learning, value-oriented discussions, and reflective activities so that students not only learn about Pancasila but also internalize and practice its values in their daily lives. Furthermore, support from school principals, collaboration among teachers, and partnerships with parents and local cultural communities are essential for sustaining educational innovation. Educators should be encouraged to explore and integrate the cultural heritage and local wisdom of their regions as meaningful stimuli for Pancasila learning projects.

The renewal of Pancasila learning practices in elementary schools is a crucial necessity for developing future generations who are not only intellectually competent but also possess a noble character consistent with the nation's identity. The integration of local wisdom-based Project-Based Learning (PjBL) within the Merdeka Curriculum framework has proven effective in transforming the learning environment into one that is more dynamic, contextual, and meaningful. This approach supports holistic moral development by facilitating students' progression from conceptual understanding and emotional engagement to the practical application of values in real-life situations.

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