

Integrating local wisdom and multicultural values into cultural literacy activities: A case study of two primary schools in Tanjungpinang, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The integration of local wisdom and multicultural values into elementary school literacy activities warrants empirical study within the context of Malay culture. This study describes this integration in cultural literacy activities at two primary schools in Tanjungpinang City, Indonesia. A qualitative case study involved interviews with two principals, five teachers, and ten students, supported by observations, document analysis, and an eight-item questionnaire completed by 255 Grade IV–VI students as supporting data. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Trustworthiness was examined through source and technique triangulation and re-examination of records. Findings show that local wisdom and multicultural values were integrated through the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the Pensil Budaya and Terbang Negeri programs, using *pantun*, *Gurindam Dua Belas*, folktales, traditional games, and dances. Interviews and observations indicated that communication was the most prominent dimension, while independence and creativity needed further strengthening. Questionnaire responses showed a similar pattern. The schools differed in formal program documentation and support networks. Because each questionnaire dimension was measured by a single item, the questionnaire served only as descriptive, perception-based supporting data. The findings describe integration practices but do not demonstrate changes in students' character.

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INTRODUCTION

Character education at the elementary school level serves as the primary foundation for instilling essential life values. Character building aims to produce individuals who are not only academically excellent, but also possess strong morality, critical reasoning, and ethical behavior (Yaumi, 2016). Good character itself is understood as a reliable inner disposition to respond to situations in a morally good way, encompassing three interconnected domains: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action (Lickona, 1991). Seven essential character elements to be instilled include honesty, compassion, courage, kindness, self-control, cooperation, and hard work (Lickona, 1991). In the context of primary education in Indonesia, character building explicitly aligns with the Eight Dimensions of Graduate Profile, namely faith and piety, citizenship, collaboration, independence, critical reasoning, creativity, health, and communication (Kemendikdasmen, 2025a).

Character education at the elementary school level will be more effective when implemented through synergy among teachers, parents, and the school environment. Teachers act as role models and facilitators of students' development at school, whereas parents accompany children in the family environment; together, teacher role modeling and parental support have been linked to students' learning motivation (Darmawan & Pernaningtik, 2026).

One contextual strategy for internalizing these values is through literacy activities integrated with local wisdom and multicultural values. Literacy is not merely the mechanical ability to read and write, but rather the mastery of social practices that involve the use of texts in real life (Gee, 2015). A multicultural education perspective positions cultural diversity, knowledge, values, and social experiences as essential components of the educational process (Banks, 2014). In the midst of Indonesia's pluralistic society, culture-based literacy serves as a tangible means to introduce social norms, foster tolerance, and act as a primary indicator of the nation's educational quality. Various empirical studies also confirm that integrating local wisdom into a literacy-based curriculum is capable of strengthening cultural identity while cultivating an inclusive attitude within the school environment (Hikmah et al., 2026).

The urgency of this research stems from reading literacy challenges and the importance of local wisdom and multiculturalism in primary school students' character education. Based on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, Indonesian students' reading literacy score remains below the OECD average, recorded at 371 in 2018 and 359 in 2022 (Suprayitno, 2019; Kemendikbudristek, 2023). This condition indicates students' persistent weakness in critical reasoning and contextually reflecting on textual meaning. In the context of Malay culture in Tanjungpinang, pantun, Gurindam Dua Belas, folktales, and traditional games can serve as literacy resources that connect reading comprehension with the internalization of character and multicultural values. This local tradition-based literacy approach aligns with recent research showing that learning enriched with local wisdom

effectively builds an inclusive character and strengthens students' national identity (Annisha, 2024).

Locally, the Education Report data from SD Negeri 016 Tanjungpinang Timur shows changes in the achievement of the Character indicator, recording a score of 53.96 in 2023, rising to 58.96 in 2024, but declining back to 54.35 in 2025 (Kemendikdasmen, 2023; Kemendikdasmen, 2024; Kemendikdasmen, 2025b). These data are used to illustrate the context of the school's conditions relevant to the research focus, rather than as direct evidence regarding the effectiveness of cultural literacy activities. Fluctuation in this character indicator score underscores the need for sustainable reinforcement of value internalization through local culture-based literacy programs, ensuring that student character development is not merely temporary, but consistently internalized (Fatmala et al., 2023). Meanwhile, SD Negeri 001 Tanjungpinang Barat was selected as a comparison school because it implements a similar cultural literacy activity, namely Terbang Negeri, which is relevant to the Pensil Budaya program at SD Negeri 016 Tanjungpinang Timur. Therefore, the selection of both schools was based on the alignment of their programs with the research focus, rather than on similarities in their Education Report achievements.

Amidst the growth of globalization and changing patterns of social interaction, which has been argued to erode or homogenize local cultural practices and identities (Tomlinson, 1999; Vez-López, 2017), introducing local culture and fostering respect for diversity require serious attention in primary education. These efforts align with the School Literacy Movement (GLS) and the National Literacy Movement (GLN), which provide space to integrate reading activities and cultural appreciation with student character development. Such an in-depth study is crucial given that previous research emphasizes how the effectiveness of a cultural literacy program strongly depends on alignment across curricular planning, instructional execution, and integrative evaluative assessment (Amaliyah et al., 2025). However, how local wisdom and multicultural values are integrated into the planning, implementation, and evaluation of literacy activities in primary schools—particularly within the context of Malay culture in Tanjungpinang—warrants further empirical investigation. On that basis, this study was conducted to describe the pattern of integrating local wisdom and multicultural values into literacy activities across both schools.

The state of the art indicates that the integration of local values into education is part of the development of international scholarship on culturally responsive pedagogy. Within the framework of *culturally relevant pedagogy*, learning should connect academic achievement with the development of students' cultural competence and critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014). Similarly, *culturally responsive teaching* positions students' cultural backgrounds, lived experiences, community knowledge, and learning approaches as key resources in instructional design (Gay, 2018). This perspective is further extended through *culturally sustaining pedagogy*, which not only adapts learning to students' cultural backgrounds but also

seeks to preserve and develop diverse languages, literacies, and cultural practices (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014). A synthesis of research across content areas indicates that culturally relevant education is most effective when cultural knowledge is translated into curriculum, classroom tasks, and teacher practice (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Thus, integrating the values of local cultural heritage into elementary education serves not merely as local content but also as a pedagogical strategy for creating contextualized and inclusive learning while supporting cultural sustainability.

Local wisdom-based education has been found to contribute to character development (M. F. Darmawan, 2024), while local culture-based literacy can improve language skills and understanding of traditional values (Sutawan & Winangun, 2024). At the primary level, Fikri et al. (2025) examined the role of local wisdom in shaping students' multicultural character in an elementary madrasah, and a systematic review by Parhan and Dwiputra (2023) concluded that local wisdom-based character education can be implemented in schools, families, and communities. The positive contributions of multicultural education to the development of politeness and humanity, as well as the reduction of discrimination, were also reported by Wanti et al. (2024) at SMPS Sultan Iskandar Muda Medan. Furthermore, Fa'idah et al. (2024) highlighted the key role of teachers in instilling local wisdom through elementary school activities, while Anton et al. (2024) emphasized that multicultural education prepares students to interact positively in diverse settings. In the context of literacy, Widyantari and Winangun (2024), in their study at SDN Titab Bali, found that local folktales based on *Tri Hita Karana* supported the development of both academic abilities and positive character traits. Maesaroh et al. (2025) also emphasized the importance of local wisdom in developing multicultural identity, although challenges remain, including limited teacher training and learning materials.

Although previous studies have examined the integration of local wisdom with literacy and multicultural identity (e.g., Maesaroh et al., 2025; Widyantari & Winangun, 2024), much of this research remains broad in scope and has not mapped such integration onto the latest curriculum framework. Specifically, to the best of the authors' knowledge, no study has systematically mapped Malay local wisdom from the Riau Islands, including *pantun*, *gurindam*, traditional dances, and folk games, onto the Eight Dimensions of the Graduate Profile through cultural literacy activities in elementary schools.

Accordingly, integrating local wisdom and multicultural values into cultural literacy activities can provide a concrete learning environment for fostering students' character holistically through cultural awareness, respect for differences, social interaction, decision-making, and active participation in communal life, since character development cannot be separated from students' sociocultural contexts.

Literacy activities in elementary schools can serve as a means of introducing and integrating local wisdom and multicultural values into learning. Through the use of *pantun*,

Gurindam Dua Belas, and Malay folktales and traditional games, students have opportunities to become familiar with their regional cultural heritage, understand moral values, and develop attitudes of respect for diversity. Therefore, this study focuses on describing the forms and patterns of integration of local wisdom and multicultural values into literacy activities at SD Negeri 016 Tanjungpinang Timur and SD Negeri 001 Tanjungpinang Barat.

Based on the background, significance, theoretical foundations, and position of this study within the existing literature, the research problem is formulated into three main questions: (1) How are local wisdom and multicultural values integrated into literacy activities through planning, implementation, and evaluation? (2) What character values are demonstrated by students, based on observations, interviews, and questionnaire data? and (3) What challenges and opportunities arise in implementing literacy activities based on local wisdom and multicultural values? In line with these research questions, this study aims to describe how local wisdom and multicultural values are integrated into literacy activities at two elementary schools in Tanjungpinang, Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design and Setting

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of character values based on local wisdom and multicultural principles in school literacy activities. The researcher served as the primary research instrument throughout the field data collection process to maintain consistency in interpretation and data trustworthiness. Data collection was conducted over four months, from April to July 2026. The preliminary research phase took place in April and involved coordination with the schools, obtaining research permissions, and preparing the research instruments. The main data collection phase was conducted from May to June, followed by data verification in July 2026 to establish the trustworthiness of the findings before drawing conclusions.

The study was conducted at two elementary schools in Tanjungpinang, Riau Islands, Indonesia: SD Negeri 016 Tanjungpinang Timur (SDN 016) and SD Negeri 001 Tanjungpinang Barat (SDN 001). These schools were selected because they actively implemented literacy programs and consistently integrated local wisdom and multicultural values into learning activities. The selection of these sites also took into account the researcher's accessibility in conducting observations and gathering in-depth information in the field.

The diversity context of the two schools is presented in Table 1. The ethnic and religious composition is important for interpreting the multicultural and citizenship findings reported below; claims about multicultural values are therefore interpreted in light of this profile.

Table 1. Profile of the Two Schools

Characteristic	SDN 016 Tanjungpinang Timur	SDN 001 Tanjungpinang Barat
Total number of students (academic year 2025/2026)	368	115
Number of students in Grades IV–VI	197	70
Ethnic composition of students	Malay (58.70%), Javanese (24.46%), Minangkabau (14.95%), Batak (1.63%), Chinese (0.27%)	Malay (73.91%), Javanese (13.04%), Minangkabau (8.70%), Batak (4.35%)
Religious composition of students	Islam (98.10%), Protestantism (1.63%), Buddhism (0.27%)	Islam (100%)
Home language / community language	Indonesian	Indonesian
Number of teachers; school accreditation	20 teachers; C	9 teachers; A
Cultural literacy program and frequency	Pensil Budaya, weekly (Wednesday)	Terbang Negeri, weekly (Tuesday)
Data source	Dapodik, accessed April 30, 2026	Dapodik, accessed April 30, 2026

Participants and Data Sources

The identities, numbers, and characteristics of the research informants and questionnaire respondents are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Research Participants, Numbers, and Data Sources

Method	Instrument	Subjects / Sources	Number
In-depth interview	Student interview guide (9 questions per dimension)	Students from SDN 016 (7 students) and SDN 001 (4 students), Grades IV–VI	10 students
In-depth interview	Principal interview guide (9 questions per dimension)	Principals of SDN 016 and SDN 001	2 principals
In-depth interview	Teacher interview guide (14 questions per dimension)	Teachers from SDN 016 (3 teachers) and SDN 001 (2 teachers)	5 teachers
Field notes from observations and interviews	Observation sheet and field notes	1 teacher and 4 students from SDN 016; 1 teacher and 2 students from SDN 001	2 teachers, 6 students
Student questionnaire	8-item questionnaire as supporting data	Grade IV–VI students from SDN 016 and SDN 001	267 distributed; 255 analyzed (12 excluded)
Documentation study	Analysis of written and audiovisual documents	School curriculum (KSP), literacy schedules, program reports, and activity documentation (photographs and videos)	Documents held in the research archive; student images are not shared publicly

The research participants were selected systematically to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the data. The key informants consisted of two principals and five teachers,

including three teachers from SDN 016 and two teachers from SDN 001. Each participant was selected using *purposive sampling* based on their direct involvement in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of literacy activities. In addition, ten students from Grades IV, V, and VI were selected purposively based on their experience participating in cultural literacy activities. These students comprised six students from SDN 016 and four students from SDN 001. Their participation was intended to provide relevant information about their experiences and understanding of local wisdom, multicultural values, and character values explored through these activities.

Field observations and interviews were conducted to obtain information about the implementation of cultural literacy activities at both schools. These activities involved two teachers and six students, consisting of one teacher and four students from SDN 016 and one teacher and two students from SDN 001. The data were recorded using observation sheets and field notes to support the research analysis.

As supporting data, questionnaires were distributed to 267 students in Grades IV, V, and VI from both schools. Of the questionnaires distributed, 255 were returned fully completed: 195 from SDN 016 and 60 from SDN 001. These questionnaires met the criteria for analysis, while the remaining 12 were excluded because they were incomplete. Table 3 presents the number of questionnaires distributed, the number of complete questionnaires analyzed, and the corresponding return percentages.

Table 3. Number of Questionnaires Distributed and Analyzed

School	Questionnaires distributed	Complete questionnaires analyzed	Return rate
SDN 016 Tanjungpinang Timur	197	195	98.98%
SDN 001 Tanjungpinang Barat	70	60	85.71%
Total	267	255	95.51%

Instruments and Data Collection

Primary and secondary data were collected through a combination of several techniques, including in-depth interviews, structured observations, questionnaire distribution, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore the perceptions and experiences of principals, teachers, and students regarding policies and strategies for integrating local wisdom and multicultural values into literacy activities, as well as their relationship to student character development.

The interview and observation guides were developed based on the eight dimensions of the Graduate Profile and adapted to the seven character traits applied within Lickona's character education framework in this study. The interview guide focused on the informants' perspectives and experiences, while the observation guide was used to examine the implementation of cultural literacy activities, interactions, and student and teacher behaviors relevant to the research focus. The observation instrument was supplemented with field notes to record activities and interactions during cultural literacy activities and cultural arts

performances. Before data collection, the interview and observation guides were reviewed by both academic supervisors to assess their alignment with the research objectives and conceptual framework, and were subsequently refined based on the feedback provided. Document analysis was conducted by collecting relevant documents, such as curriculum documents, literacy activity schedules, school profiles, and photographs documenting the activities.

Questionnaire development. The questionnaire was developed by the authors to obtain supporting information on students' perceptions of behaviors related to the eight Graduate Profile dimensions. One behavioral statement was written for each dimension (Table 4), and responses were recorded on a four-point scale (strongly agree, agree, somewhat disagree, disagree). No statistical validity or reliability testing was conducted. Because each dimension was measured by only one item, dimension-level reliability cannot be estimated and the item may not capture the full construct. The questionnaire results are therefore treated as descriptive, self-reported supporting data and are not used to infer levels of character.

Table 4. Questionnaire Items by Graduate Profile Dimension

Dimension	Item statement	Remark
Faith and devotion to God Almighty	I participate in group prayers in an orderly manner before literacy activities begin.	Routine participation
Citizenship	I respect friends who have different opinions or backgrounds.	Self-reported attitude
Collaboration	I cooperate with and help my peers before and during literacy activities.	Self-reported behavior
Independence	I complete literacy tasks diligently.	Closer to diligence than to independence
Critical reasoning	I have the confidence to express my own opinions honestly.	Confidence in expressing opinions; not a measure of reasoning
Creativity	I have the confidence to present cultural works or stories that I have created.	Confidence in presenting own work
Health	I actively participate in traditional dance activities or traditional games at school.	Measures participation in physically active cultural activities, not health knowledge, status, or healthy-living behavior
Communication	I express my opinions in polite and easy-to-understand language.	Self-reported communication manner

Data verification. Questionnaire responses were tabulated by school and response category, and all counts in Tables 5–12 were re-checked against the raw data in October 2026. The raw-data recap is provided as Supplementary File 1 in OJS.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Data analysis was conducted interactively and continuously, following the Miles and Huberman model, which comprises three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During the data reduction stage, interview transcripts, observation notes, and relevant documents were reviewed to identify information relevant to the research focus. The coding process was carried out manually by the researcher, with the assistance of NVivo software to organize and manage the qualitative data. A deductive coding approach was employed, referring to the eight dimensions of the Graduate Profile and the seven character traits applied within Lickona's framework in this study. The coded data were then presented in descriptive narratives and matrix tables to identify patterns, similarities, and differences in findings across various data sources. Conclusions were drawn and verified by reviewing the coding results and comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation. Questionnaire data were analyzed descriptively as frequencies and percentages per school.

Trustworthiness. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from principals, teachers, and students regarding the implementation of cultural literacy activities. Technique triangulation involved comparing interview data, observations of cultural literacy activities, questionnaire responses, and documentation.

The main data collection was conducted from May to June 2026. At SDN 016 Tanjungpinang Timur, an interview was conducted on 19 May 2026, before the observation of the Pensil Budaya activity on 20 May 2026, and a follow-up interview was conducted after the observation. At SDN 001 Tanjungpinang Barat, an interview was conducted on 25 May 2026, before the observation of cultural literacy activities on 26 May 2026, and a follow-up interview was also conducted afterward. Questionnaires were distributed and documentation was collected during the data collection period.

In July 2026, the researcher verified the data by re-examining the observation notes, the interview records from before and after the observations, the questionnaire responses, and the collected documentation. These data were compared to examine the consistency of information concerning the implementation of cultural literacy activities, student involvement, and the character values reflected in the activities. Member checking was not conducted in this study; data verification therefore relied on the re-examination and comparison of the collected data (see Limitations).

Research Ethics

This study involved elementary school students and therefore followed ethical principles for research with children. Research permission was obtained from the principals of both schools, who gave written permission. The teachers gave verbal consent to participate. The students gave verbal assent after receiving an age-appropriate explanation of the research activities, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to stop participating at

any time. Written parental consent was not obtained, which is acknowledged as a limitation of the ethical procedures in this study. To protect confidentiality, informant codes were used instead of real names, and no real names of students or teachers appear in the manuscript. The codes consist of the record type (W = interview or field record), the informant role (KS = principal, GR = teacher, SW = student, the school (016 or 001), and a sequence number; for example, W.KS.016 refers to the interview with the principal of SD Negeri 016 Tanjungpinang Timur, and W.GR.001.01 refers to the interview with Teacher 01 at SD Negeri 001 Tanjungpinang Barat. Audiovisual documentation showing students is kept in the research archive and is not shared publicly.

RESULTS

Implementation of Literacy Based on Local Wisdom and Multicultural Values

Planning of the Cultural Literacy Programs

The research findings at SDN 016 and SDN 001 indicate that the integration of local wisdom and multicultural values into literacy activities was planned through school programs, the involvement of school community members, the development of learning strategies, and the provision of supporting documents. Both schools developed cultural literacy programs that combined the development of literacy skills with the cultivation of character values.

At SDN 016, this integration was implemented through the Pensil Budaya (Cultural Literacy Arts Performance) program, which is held every Wednesday. The program includes recitations of Gurindam Dua Belas, advice-giving pantun (traditional Malay rhymes), folktales, traditional dances, and folk games. The principal explained that the activities were not solely focused on academic skills but were also intended to instill character values in accordance with the eight dimensions of the Graduate Profile (W.KS.016.01).

Meanwhile, SDN 001 developed the Terbang Negeri (Literacy for Nation Building) program. This program integrates literacy with cultural activities and character education through folktales, pantun, Gurindam Dua Belas, regional songs, traditional games, and dances. The implementation of this program demonstrates the school's efforts to introduce regional culture through literacy activities (W.KS.001).

Document analysis showed differences in how the two schools formally documented their cultural literacy programs. At SDN 016 Tanjungpinang Timur, the Pensil Budaya program was included in the School Education Curriculum (Kurikulum Satuan Pendidikan, KSP), along with activity schedules and supporting documents. The program was explicitly stated in the school's mission, which includes organizing Pensil Budaya activities, and it aligns with the school's vision: "To develop students who demonstrate faith and devotion to God Almighty, creativity, independence, cultural awareness, and achievement." It is also consistent with the school's objectives, particularly Objective 9, which emphasizes fostering

mutual respect and strengthening national identity, and Objective 10, which provides students with opportunities to build self-confidence and express their talents and interests in the cultural arts. These documents indicate that Pensil Budaya is integrated into the school's formal educational direction. In contrast, at SDN 001 Tanjungpinang Barat, Terbang Negeri was listed as a co-curricular activity in the KSP; however, the program was not specifically elaborated in the school's vision and mission statements and had not been formalized through a separate decree.

Program planning also involved teachers, students, parents, and the community. Parental involvement was evident in their assistance with practice sessions, support in composing pantun, and contributions to introducing cultural arts. Teachers designed activities by considering students' characteristics and abilities. Students with public-speaking skills were given opportunities to serve as masters of ceremonies or storytellers, while other students were assigned roles according to their interests and abilities. Thus, cultural literacy planning at both schools involved program development, activity preparation, role allocation, and the participation of various stakeholders; the main difference concerned the completeness of formal program documentation.

Implementation of the Cultural Literacy Programs

The cultural literacy programs at both schools were conducted regularly before the start of lessons, with a duration of approximately 30 minutes each week. Although the implementation time was relatively limited, the activities extended beyond the performances themselves to include planning and preparation carried out one to two weeks in advance. During this process, students participated in preparing materials, rehearsing, developing creativity, and fulfilling responsibilities according to their respective roles. Teachers guided and facilitated the activities, while parents also supported performance preparation. Character development through these literacy programs should therefore be understood as a process expected to emerge through students' sustained involvement, rather than solely as an outcome of performances lasting 30 minutes each week.

Based on observations conducted on May 20, 2026, at SDN 016, the Pensil Budaya activity was held in the schoolyard and involved students from Grade V. During the activity, student W.SW.016.07 served as the master of ceremonies, student W.SW.016.03 led the prayer, and student W.SW.016.04 told the Betawi folktale of Si Pitung. Unlike Gurindam Dua Belas and advice-giving pantun, which represent Malay local wisdom, Si Pitung is a Betawi folktale. The inclusion of this story reflects an effort to introduce cultural traditions beyond Malay culture and can therefore be understood as one form of cultural diversity awareness within the multicultural dimension.

After the storytelling session, the teacher (W.GR.016.01) opened a question-and-answer session about the moral of the story. A student (W.SW.016.01) asked what lessons could be learned from Si Pitung, and a subsequent question connected the character's struggle in the

story with contemporary life. The teacher then guided the discussion toward the importance of self-control, avoiding negative influences, and using technology wisely. This event illustrates students' engagement in cultural literacy discussions, although it is insufficient to conclude that a similar pattern of engagement occurred consistently in every activity.

At SDN 001, observations conducted on May 26, 2026, showed the implementation of literacy activities through the recitation of Gurindam Dua Belas. A student (W.SW.001.02) recited the gurindam in front of the school community, after which the teacher (W.GR.001.01) facilitated a discussion about its meaning and message. Students were given opportunities to express their opinions, respond to their peers' answers, and understand the messages conveyed in the gurindam.

Interviews with students indicated that these activities provided them with opportunities to gain public-speaking experience. Students W.SW.016.02 and W.SW.016.07 stated that performing in front of others helped them become more confident. Student W.SW.001.02 also explained that they initially felt nervous but gradually became more confident when reciting Gurindam Dua Belas. Overall, the observation and interview findings indicate that cultural literacy provided students with opportunities to read, tell stories, ask questions, participate in discussions, and perform cultural presentations.

Evaluation of the Cultural Literacy Program

The evaluation of cultural literacy activities was conducted through student reflection as part of the learning process and the school's evaluation of program implementation. Reflection took place through question-and-answer sessions after the performances. Teachers encouraged students to recall the activities, explain the moral lessons they had learned, and share their experiences while participating in the activities.

At SDN 016, reflection involved discussing the character values learned and identifying aspects that could be improved in subsequent activities. Program reports also documented reflection activities as part of the implementation evaluation and follow-up planning. At SDN 001, reflection was conducted after the recitation of Gurindam Dua Belas. Students were asked to explain the messages conveyed in the gurindam, after which the teacher reinforced their responses. During one activity, students expressed messages about doing good deeds, justice, deliberation, and the importance of being faithful.

The evaluation of program implementation needs to be distinguished from the assessment of changes in students' character development. The schools did not use specific instruments to measure changes in students' character after participating in the programs. Therefore, these findings describe the schools' efforts to integrate and reinforce character values through cultural literacy, rather than direct evidence that the programs had produced changes in students' character.

Students' Character Values in Literacy Activities

The research findings indicate that literacy activities based on local wisdom and multicultural values provided learning experiences related to the eight dimensions of the Graduate Profile. Findings for each dimension were obtained through observations, interviews, documentation, and student questionnaires. The evidence from the four sources is brought together in Table 13 at the end of this section; the subsections below present the main coded excerpts and the questionnaire data. Questionnaire results are descriptive and are based on a single item per dimension (Table 4).

Faith and Devotion to God Almighty

Literacy activities at both schools fostered the dimension of faith and devotion through the practices of praying, exchanging greetings, respecting others, and understanding the religious messages conveyed in Gurindam Dua Belas, advice-giving pantun, and folktales. The principal of SDN 016 explained that cultural literacy activities were intended not only to improve reading skills but also to develop students' religious character.

"The school strongly supports the Pensil Budaya Program, which is held every Wednesday. This activity is not only academic in nature but also instills the values of faith and devotion through the recitation of Gurindam, advice-giving pantun, and Islamic stories containing moral messages." (W.KS.016)

"Every activity begins with a prayer and ends with reflection so that children not only gain knowledge but also understand values that can be applied in everyday life." (W.KS.016)

These statements were reinforced by the principal of SDN 001, who explained that religious character education had become part of the Terbang Negeri program, and by a teacher at SDN 016.

"Literacy activities are always integrated with the practices of praying, exchanging greetings, and conveying moral messages so that religious character develops naturally through cultural activities." (W.KS.001)

"Before we begin the cultural literacy activity, we start by exchanging greetings, getting the children ready, asking how they are, or praying." (W.GR.016.02)

During the Pensil Budaya program, a student who led the prayer explained:

"I have practiced reading the prayer with the teacher, Ma'am, so that I can recite it fluently, the activity runs smoothly, and we are all given ease in carrying out our duties." (W.SW.016.03)

A supervising teacher recorded in the field notes also stated: "Equally important, be a person of faith, because a person of faith will always be aware that the afterlife is the ultimate destination" (W.GR.001.01).

Table 5. Questionnaire Data for the Dimension of Faith and Devotion to God Almighty

No.	Response category	SDN 016 (n = 195)	%	SDN 001 (n = 60)	%
1	Strongly agree	121	62%	42	70%
2	Agree	67	34%	17	28%
3	Somewhat disagree	7	4%	1	2%
4	Disagree	0	0%	0	0%
Total		195	100%	60	100%

Item: "I participate in group prayers in an orderly manner before literacy activities begin."

Most students strongly agreed or agreed (96.4% at SDN 016 and 98.3% at SDN 001), indicating that group prayer before literacy activities has become a routine; the few students who selected somewhat disagree suggest that not all students participate with the same consistency.

Citizenship

Cultural literacy activities at both schools also fostered the dimension of citizenship, particularly in the forms of tolerance, caring attitudes, appreciation of cultural diversity, and the ability to coexist in a diverse environment. These findings are interpreted in light of the school profiles in Table 1. Malay students formed the majority at both SDN 016 (58.70%) and SDN 001 (73.91%); the remaining students were of Javanese, Minangkabau, Batak, and at SDN 016 Chinese backgrounds. Most students at SDN 016 were Muslim (98.10%), and all students at SDN 001 were Muslim (100%). The evidence below therefore reflects students' exposure to Malay traditions and to a non-Malay folktale, rather than direct evidence of interaction among students from different ethnic or religious backgrounds.

"In literacy activities, the aim is to foster an attitude of respect for diversity and tolerance among students. The Pensil Budaya Program is related to this because when children read pantun or Gurindam, the texts can convey moral messages that encourage tolerance among their peers and fellow students." (W.KS.016)

"The school implements a policy for literacy activities in which literacy is integrated with cultural activities. The school has been implementing the Terbang Negeri literacy program, which aims to build the nation through literacy. The activities include reading short stories, exchanging pantun, and reciting Gurindam. There are also regional songs to sing and traditional dances to perform." (W.KS.001)

"Alhamdulillah, whenever we conduct these literacy activities, we reflect on them afterward. For example, during the gurindam activity, there are many pieces of advice and wise words in the gurindam." (W.GR.016.02)

Observations showed that students listened attentively and orderly to the recitation of Gurindam Dua Belas and responded to one another respectfully. Student W.SW.016.04 stated that they learned to appreciate their peers when performing in front of the class.

Table 6. Questionnaire Data for the Dimension of Citizenship

No.	Response category	SDN 016 (n = 195)	%	SDN 001 (n = 60)	%
1	Strongly agree	112	57%	38	63%
2	Agree	74	38%	22	37%
3	Somewhat disagree	9	5%	0	0%
4	Disagree	0	0%	0	0%
Total		195	100%	60	100%

Item: "I respect friends who have different opinions or backgrounds."

Most students strongly agreed or agreed (95.4% and 100%), which is consistent with the attitudes of tolerance observed in the interviews and observations. Because 5% of students at SDN 016 selected somewhat disagree, respect for differences is not yet experienced or practiced by all students and needs continued reinforcement. Because the item refers to respecting "different opinions or backgrounds" in general, and because the students are predominantly Malay and Muslim (Table 1), the result does not by itself show how students engage with ethnic or religious differences.

Collaboration

Cultural literacy activities provided opportunities to develop collaboration, reflected in the distribution of roles in each activity, cooperation during rehearsals, mutual assistance during performances, and completing group tasks responsibly. The principals explained that the success of the programs depended on the involvement of the school community.

"The school involves all members of the school community, including teachers and students, as well as parents, who help compose pantun and contribute to other activities." (W.KS.016)

"For these literacy activities, we involve all school stakeholders, starting with the principal, teachers, and educational staff, as well as the school committee and the community." (W.KS.001)

"To develop literacy activities, we provide guidance to the children. In addition to the morning sessions, we also provide guidance to certain children in the afternoon after lessons have finished. We conduct rehearsals to help them perform at their best. Of course, we also cooperate with parents." (W.KS.001)

Teachers at SDN 016 explained that parents and other parties assisted students during rehearsals.

"We collaborate with external parties and parents, as well as teachers and all members of the school community." (W.GR.016.01)

"Yes, we work together with students' parents, fellow teachers, the library, community leaders, and people with expertise in their respective fields." (W.GR.016.02)

Observations revealed similar behaviors. During preparations for the Pensil Budaya activity, students worked together to prepare equipment, arrange their positions, and remind one another of the sequence of events. When one student forgot part of the story, another offered help without being asked, and after the activity students applauded each performer. Student W.SW.016.07 explained that, while serving as master of ceremonies, they received

help from peers in preparing the program schedule, and student W.SW.016.04 stated that practicing together made it easier to understand the material. Activity documentation of teacher–parent collaboration is held in the research archive and is not shared publicly because it shows students.

Table 7. Questionnaire Data for the Dimension of Collaboration

No.	Response category	SDN 016 (n = 195)	%	SDN 001 (n = 60)	%
1	Strongly agree	88	45%	35	58%
2	Agree	97	50%	24	40%
3	Somewhat disagree	8	4%	1	2%
4	Disagree	2	1%	0	0%
Total		195	100%	60	100%

Item: "I cooperate with and help my peers before and during literacy activities."

Most students strongly agreed or agreed (94.9% and 98.3%); the small proportion of other responses indicates that some students had not yet fully demonstrated the described behavior.

Independence

Literacy activities also contributed to independence, although the level of development varied among students. Independence was reflected in students' willingness to prepare for performances, memorize materials independently, manage rehearsal time, and complete tasks without always relying on teachers. The principal and teachers at SDN 001 explained that teachers acted primarily as facilitators.

"So far, teachers have acted as guides and facilitators. They provide direction to the children, who then collaborate with their parents so that they can develop the habit of being responsible for their assigned tasks and completing them on time." (W.KS.001)

"We encourage the children to find information independently about Gurindam, pantun, and folktales before the activities take place." (W.GR.001.01)

"Students were given time to practice independently at home before performing." (W.GR.016.03)

Observations showed that, before the activities began, several students reviewed their story scripts and pantun without waiting for instructions. However, some students still appeared hesitant, lacked confidence, and needed teacher guidance when performing, indicating that independence was not yet consistent among all students. Student W.SW.016.04 practiced again at home to feel more confident, student W.SW.016.07 tried to memorize the sequence of events independently, and student W.SW.001.02 reread Gurindam Dua Belas at home to avoid making mistakes when performing in front of the school community.

Table 8. Questionnaire Data for the Dimension of Independence

No.	Response category	SDN 016 (n = 195)	%	SDN 001 (n = 60)	%
1	Strongly agree	76	39%	39	65%
2	Agree	96	49%	20	33%
3	Somewhat disagree	22	11%	1	2%
4	Disagree	1	1%	0	0%

Total	195	100%	60	100%
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Item: "I complete literacy tasks diligently."

Most students strongly agreed or agreed (88.2% at SDN 016 and 98.3% at SDN 001), but 12% of students at SDN 016 selected somewhat disagree or disagree. This is consistent with the observation and interview findings that some students still required teacher guidance; the dimension needs more consistent practice.

Critical Reasoning

Cultural literacy activities provided opportunities to develop critical reasoning, reflected in students' questions, responses to folktales, Gurindam Dua Belas, and pantun, and their ability to relate moral messages to everyday life. Principals and teachers described reflection sessions as the main strategy.

"The school instructs teachers to conduct reflection sessions after students' performances to explore their potential to develop tolerance and unity through the Pensil Budaya activities." (W.KS.016)

"As for the strategy, we use a reflection method. This means that after each activity, we hold a question-and-answer session with the students about the benefits of the activity and what it conveys. For example, when students tell a folktale, they discuss the message conveyed in the story." (W.KS.001)

"Usually, after performing a musical drama or dance, the children share their personal experiences, Ma'am, and explain how they felt. In a drama, there is usually a message, Ma'am, and they relate it to real life, saying things like, 'Oh, so if we behave this way, this is what might happen.' They ask and answer questions with one another." (W.GR.016.01)

"We want to ensure that students do not merely listen to gurindam but also understand its content and message. Through discussion, they learn to think critically, express their opinions confidently, and respect their friends' opinions." (W.GR.001.01)

During the Pensil Budaya activity, after the Si Pitung story, a student (W.SW.016.06) asked, "Since there are no colonizers anymore, what should we fight against today?" The teacher expanded on the question by explaining that struggles today can take the form of self-control and avoiding negative influences. At SDN 001, after the recitation of Gurindam Dua Belas, several students expressed different opinions and the teacher facilitated discussion until they reached a shared understanding of the message. In interviews, student (W.SW.016.04) explained that discussing folktales with the teacher and peers helped them understand their meaning, and student (W.SW.001.02) stated that discussions taught them to understand the content of the gurindam rather than simply memorize it.

Table 9. Questionnaire Data for the Dimension of Critical Reasoning

No.	Response category	SDN 016 (n = 195)	%	SDN 001 (n = 60)	%
1	Strongly agree	79	41%	38	63%
2	Agree	99	51%	20	33%
3	Somewhat disagree	12	6%	2	3%
4	Disagree	5	3%	0	0%

Total	195	100%	60	100%
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Item: "I have the confidence to express my own opinions honestly."

Most students strongly agreed or agreed (91.3% and 96.7%). At SDN 016, 12 students (6%) selected somewhat disagree and 5 students (3%) disagree, whereas at SDN 001 only 2 students (3%) selected somewhat disagree and none disagreed; a small proportion of students therefore still need encouragement to express their views. Because the item measures confidence in expressing opinions rather than reasoning, it supports the interview and observation findings only indirectly.

Creativity

Creativity was reflected in students' ability to compose pantun, develop story ideas, perform cultural arts, choose forms of performance, and express themselves through cultural literacy activities.

"The school provides students with opportunities to express their creativity, for example, through rehearsals, art performances, or the school wall magazine." (W.KS.016)

"The school facilitates students, for example, by organizing competitions between classes, to motivate them to become more enthusiastic and more confident." (W.KS.001)

"Yes, Ma'am, they are very capable of telling stories. Through their work or performances, students demonstrate creativity, confidence, and the courage to express themselves." (W.GR.016.01)

"I give them the freedom to decide what they want to perform, what theme to choose, and when to practice." (W.GR.016.01)

"We give the children the freedom to choose how they present the material so that they can demonstrate their creativity." (W.GR.001.01)

Observations showed that students used intonation, facial expressions, and body movements when telling stories, and some combined pantun recitations with simple movements. At SDN 001, each class presented a different type of activity (Gurindam Dua Belas, pantun, or traditional dances). Student (W.SW.016.07) enjoyed serving as master of ceremonies because it allowed them to speak in their own style; student (W.SW.016.04) tried to use different expressions when telling stories; and student (W.SW.001.02) enjoyed choosing which parts of Gurindam Dua Belas to study with their group. Informants added that creativity developed gradually and that some students still required teacher guidance to develop their ideas.

Table 10. Questionnaire Data for the Dimension of Creativity

No.	Response category	SDN 016 (n = 195)	%	SDN 001 (n = 60)	%
1	Strongly agree	57	29%	27	45%
2	Agree	106	54%	28	47%
3	Somewhat disagree	28	14%	3	5%
4	Disagree	4	2%	2	3%
Total		195	100%	60	100%

Item: "I have the confidence to present cultural works or stories that I have created."

Most students strongly agreed or agreed (83.6% at SDN 016 and 91.7% at SDN 001), but this was the lowest agreement of the eight items at both schools; 16% of students at SDN 016 and 8% at SDN 001 selected somewhat disagree or disagree. This is consistent with the interview finding that some students still needed encouragement and more opportunities to present their own work.

Health

Traditional games, regional dances, orderly behavior during activities, and an emphasis on physical and mental well-being through positive social interaction were linked to the dimension of health in the interviews. The principals and teachers connected the activities with physical movement and happiness.

"The school connects physical activities with an understanding of healthy living, as practiced at school. We relate these activities to traditional games. Traditional games are closely related to health." (W.KS.016)

"Yes, for example, playing belon involves running. This is also a physical activity that helps keep children healthy." (W.KS.001)

"They are closely related because the children keep moving while playing, and they do so happily. Therefore, the activities are closely related to health. Happiness is also part of being healthy." (W.GR.016.02)

"For example, when they play jump rope, it not only keeps their bodies healthy but also makes them more active and enthusiastic and strengthens their muscles, especially their leg muscles. This may be why traditional games are among the activities children enjoy most." (W.GR.001.01)

The games mentioned by students at SDN 016 included jump rope, jengket (a traditional hopping game), yeye (a traditional elastic-rope jumping game), and gobak sodor (a traditional team-based movement game). One student explained that "Jengket helps me practice my balance and concentration" (W.SW.016.06). A student at SDN 001 (W.SW.001.01) explained that bamboo stilts benefited leg muscle strength and balance, and mentioned having demonstrated the coconut-shell stilt game about a week earlier. Students thus identified benefits of traditional games for physical fitness, balance, and concentration, while the games also preserve local culture.

Table 11. Questionnaire Data on Participation in Physically Active Cultural Activities (Proxy for the Health Dimension)

No.	Response category	SDN 016 (n = 195)	%	SDN 001 (n = 60)	%
1	Strongly agree	81	42%	21	35%
2	Agree	88	45%	38	63%
3	Somewhat disagree	22	11%	1	2%
4	Disagree	4	2%	0	0%
Total		195	100%	60	100%

Item: "I actively participate in traditional dance activities or traditional games at school."

Most students strongly agreed or agreed (86.7% and 98.3%) that they actively participate in traditional dance or games. This item measures participation in physically active cultural activities; it does not measure health knowledge, health status, or healthy-living behavior, so it is a proxy only and is interpreted together with the interview data.

Communication

Cultural literacy activities provided opportunities to develop communication skills, reflected in serving as master of ceremonies, leading prayers, reciting Gurindam Dua Belas and pantun, telling stories, and expressing opinions during reflection and discussion.

"The school trains students' skills through activities such as writing pantun and poetry. These activities involve both oral and written communication. After writing, students can present their work directly." (W.KS.016)

"I think that having students tell stories, read books, and then retell what they have read is one way to develop their communication skills. Interacting with their peers also involves communication." (W.KS.001)

"In my opinion, they express their opinions clearly and honestly, based on what they see and observe." (W.GR.001.02)

"Yes, Ma'am, they demonstrate this by raising their hands and asking permission when they want to express an opinion. They also say thank you when their opinions are accepted." (W.GR.016.01)

Student (W.SW.016.07) explained that after serving as master of ceremonies several times, they became more confident speaking in public, and student (W.SW.001.02) stated that they no longer felt nervous when reciting Gurindam Dua Belas in front of the entire school community.

Table 12. Questionnaire Data for the Dimension of Communication

No.	Response category	SDN 016 (n = 195)	%	SDN 001 (n = 60)	%
1	Strongly agree	130	67%	44	73%
2	Agree	61	31%	15	25%
3	Somewhat disagree	3	2%	1	2%
4	Disagree	1	1%	0	0%
Total		195	100%	60	100%

Item: "I express my opinions in polite and easy-to-understand language."

Most students strongly agreed or agreed (97.9% and 98.3%), the highest agreement among the eight items at SDN 016, consistent with the interview and observation findings that students were given many opportunities to speak, ask questions, and respond respectfully.

Table 13. Evidence Matrix by Graduate Profile Dimension

Dimension	Observation	Interview	Documents	Questionnaire: % agree + strongly agree (SDN 016 / SDN 001)
Faith and devotion	Prayer led by a student before the activity	Prayer, greetings, religious messages in	—	96.4 / 98.3

		gurindam (W.KS.016; W.KS.001)		
Citizenship	Attentive listening, respectful responses; Betawi folktale included	Tolerance and respect for diversity through texts (W.KS.016; W.GR.016.02)	—	95.4 / 100.0
Collaboration	Role sharing, peers helping, applause	Parents, committee, community involved (W.KS.016; W.KS.001; W.GR.016.01–02)	Program activity documentation	94.9 / 98.3
Independence	Students reviewed scripts unprompted; some hesitant and needed guidance	Practice at home; teachers as facilitators (W.KS.001; W.GR.001.01; W.GR.016.03)	—	88.2 / 98.3
Critical reasoning	Questions after the Si Pitung story; discussion of gurindam meaning	Reflection linking messages to real life (W.KS.016; W.KS.001; W.GR.016.01)	Program reports record reflection	91.3 / 96.7
Creativity	Intonation, gesture, movement with pantun; varied class presentations	Freedom to choose theme and form (W.GR.016.01; W.GR.001.01); guidance still needed	Program documentation notes students' arts interests	83.6 / 91.7
Health	—	Games linked to fitness, balance, happiness (W.KS.016; W.KS.001; W.SW.016.06)	—	86.7 / 98.3 (proxy item)
Communication	Master of ceremonies, prayer, recitation, storytelling	Growing confidence in public speaking (W.SW.016.07; W.SW.001.02)	—	97.9 / 98.3

“—” = no evidence of this type reported for this dimension. Questionnaire percentages are descriptive and based on one item per dimension.

Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing the Cultural Literacy Program

Implementation Challenges

The interviews, observations, and documentation indicate that the implementation of literacy activities still faces several challenges, including limited learning resources, differences in students' abilities, time constraints, and less-than-optimal parental involvement. Limited learning resources have encouraged teachers to seek materials from the internet, libraries, the Language Office, and colleagues. Differences in students' characteristics also pose challenges: some students perform confidently, while others feel shy, nervous, or require guidance. Program documentation shows that rehearsal schedules sometimes conflict with academic activities, and parents' work commitments mean that their involvement is not yet optimal in every activity.

Implementation Opportunities

The study identified several opportunities that support the sustainability of the programs: school principals' commitment, collaboration among school community members, parental and community involvement, and the potential of local culture in Tanjungpinang City. The principals at both schools supported program implementation through activity planning, scheduling, and teacher guidance. Collaboration with parents, libraries, community leaders, and individuals with cultural knowledge also enriched the learning materials. Program documentation also revealed that some students have interests and talents in the arts, which can be developed through performances, competitions, and cultural festivals.

Comparison of the Two Schools

Table 14 compares planning, implementation, evaluation, character integration, support and partnerships, and challenges at the two schools, based on the findings reported in Sections 3.1–3.3.

Table 14. Comparison of Cultural Literacy Implementation at SDN 016 Tanjungpinang Timur and SDN 001 Tanjungpinang Barat

Aspect	SDN 016 Tanjungpinang Timur	SDN 001 Tanjungpinang Barat
Planning	The program is more structured, involving the principal, teachers, school committee, and parents. It is included in the School Curriculum (KSP), explicitly mentioned in the school's mission, and consistent with its vision and objectives (cultural awareness, respect for others, national identity, and students' confidence in expressing artistic interests and talents).	The program is included in the KSP as a co-curricular activity or morning routine; it is not elaborated in the vision and mission or formalized by a separate decree. The principal reported involving the school committee, community, and parents (W.KS.001), but this is not documented in program documents.
Implementation	Students are involved, with support from parents with cultural expertise and relevant stakeholders.	Students are involved through the Terbang Negeri program.
Evaluation	Observation, reflection, coordination, and activity documentation.	Observation, reflection, coordination, and activity documentation.
Character integration	Activities are integrated with the eight dimensions of the Graduate Profile.	Activities are integrated with the eight dimensions of the Graduate Profile.
Support and partnerships	The support network includes parents, the school committee, cultural experts, and arts groups, providing guidance and cultural performance accessories.	Parental and community collaboration is reported in interviews (W.KS.001) but is not documented in program documents.
Challenges	Limited learning resources, differences in students' abilities, and time constraints.	Limited learning resources, differences in students' abilities, and time constraints.

DISCUSSION

Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation of the Integration

The findings indicate that the integration of local wisdom and multicultural values at both schools takes place through planning, implementation, and evaluation, although the level of

formal program documentation differs. The Pensil Budaya and Terbang Negeri programs integrate literacy with Malay culture, moral values, and appreciation of diversity. Planning includes setting objectives, selecting materials, preparing schedules, assigning responsibilities, and providing program documents; implementation takes the form of reading Gurindam Dua Belas, pantun, folktales, traditional games, cultural arts activities, and reflection; and evaluation is conducted through observation, reflection, coordination, and documentation.

From Lickona's perspective, character education comprises moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Students' understanding of the moral messages conveyed through pantun, Gurindam Dua Belas, and folktales can be associated with moral knowing, while cooperating with others and respecting differences during literacy activities may reflect moral action. Moral feeling, including empathy and concern for others, requires specific evidence from students' statements or observations, which was limited in this study. These three components are therefore used as a theoretical perspective, without assuming that all of them were directly demonstrated by the data. Evaluation at both schools took the form of reflection and documentation rather than assessment of character change; this explains why the findings can describe how values are integrated and reinforced, but cannot show that character changed.

Why Communication Was More Prominent than Independence and Creativity

Communication was the most prominent dimension in the interviews, observations, and questionnaire, whereas independence and creativity were described as needing further strengthening. Three features of the program design offer a plausible explanation, which should be treated as an interpretation rather than a tested causal claim. First, the activities are built around repeated, role-based oral performance (master of ceremonies, prayer leader, gurindam reciter, storyteller), so students rehearse public speaking weekly and receive immediate teacher and peer feedback; students themselves linked their growing confidence to repeated performance (W.SW.016.07; W.SW.001.02). Second, the core texts—*Gurindam Dua Belas* and advice-giving *pantun*—are established forms whose recitation prioritizes accuracy and meaning, which favors memorization and faithful delivery over generating new content; this fits the observation that some students hesitated and needed guidance. Third, the 30-minute weekly slot leaves little time for open-ended tasks such as composing, deciding, and revising, so teachers tend to retain control of the sequence even when they allow choice of theme or form (W.GR.016.01; W.GR.001.01).

These mechanisms relate directly to the literature on culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy. Aronson and Laughter (2016) show that culturally relevant education works when cultural knowledge is translated into curriculum, classroom tasks, and teacher practice, not only into content. Here, culture entered the content (texts and games) and the performance routine, but less clearly the task design that would require students to create and decide. Paris and Alim (2014) argue that culturally sustaining pedagogy should treat culture as dynamic

and student-shaped rather than as a fixed heritage to be transmitted; composing new pantun on contemporary topics, adapting folktales, or letting students plan a session would move the programs in that direction and may strengthen creativity and independence. The student question in the Si Pitung discussion (“what should we fight against today?”) illustrates what Ladson-Billings (1995, 2014) calls critical consciousness, and shows that reflection sessions can connect cultural texts to students’ present lives when teachers open that space.

Character Values Observed in the Eight Dimensions

Faith and devotion are reflected in the habit of praying and in interpreting the moral messages of Gurindam Dua Belas and advice-giving pantun. Similar integration of local wisdom with religious and moral values has been reported in elementary settings (Fa’idah et al., 2024; Parhan & Dwiputra, 2023); the mechanism here is that prayer opens and reflection closes every session, so religious values are tied to the routine rather than taught as a separate topic.

Citizenship is reflected in respect for differences and in the introduction of other regional cultures, such as the Betawi folktale of Si Pitung. This is related to the multicultural education reported by Wanti et al. (2024) and Widyantari and Winangun (2024). However, without detailed data on the ethnic, religious, and cultural composition of students (Table 1), the findings cannot show that students practiced tolerance across real differences; they show that the programs expose students to Malay and non-Malay cultural texts and that students endorsed respect for differences on a single self-report item. The multicultural claims are therefore limited accordingly.

Collaboration and independence develop when students share tasks, practice together, and take responsibility for their roles, which is in line with the role of teachers and school activities described by Fa’idah et al. (2024). Independence developed alongside collaboration, although some students still required guidance. Critical reasoning is reflected in discussions of the messages of stories or Gurindam Dua Belas and is consistent with the reading, discussion, and reflection activities in Widyantari and Winangun (2024); the present study adds that reflection can link moral messages to everyday life. Creativity is evident in composing pantun, developing stories, and performing cultural arts, but opportunities to be creative were not always accompanied by the ability to create independently (Section 4.2).

The health dimension emerged through traditional games involving physical activity and social interaction. Because the questionnaire item measured participation in physically active cultural activities, and not health, this dimension is supported mainly by interview data and should be interpreted cautiously. Communication developed through serving as master of ceremonies, reciting Gurindam Dua Belas, storytelling, exchanging pantun, and participating in discussions (Section 4.2).

Overall, the findings are in line with studies that position local wisdom and multicultural education as means of character development. The distinctive contribution of this study is

mapping cultural literacy experiences onto the eight dimensions of the Graduate Profile in two Malay-context schools, while describing practices rather than demonstrating character change.

Challenges and Opportunities

The challenges, limited learning resources, differences in students' characteristics and self-confidence, time constraints, and less-than-optimal parental involvement are consistent with Maesaroh et al. (2025), who highlighted limited teacher training and learning materials as challenges in implementing local wisdom in elementary schools. The present study describes these challenges from actual implementation at two schools. Opportunities arise from principals' support, collaboration among teachers and the school community, parental and community involvement, and the richness of Tanjungpinang's local culture, indicating that sustainability depends not only on cultural materials but also on school management and environmental support.

Comparison of the Two Schools

Table 14 (Section 3.4) shows that the two schools differ less in the types of cultural activities than in program management and support. At SDN 016, the program is formalized in the school's mission, vision, objectives, and curriculum and is supported by a wider network of parents, the school committee, cultural experts, and arts groups. At SDN 001, the program is a co-curricular activity in the KSP, and parent and community involvement was reported in interviews but not documented. A plausible interpretation is that a program embedded in the school's formal direction is easier to coordinate and to sustain across teachers and years, whereas a program that depends mainly on routine and individual initiative is more vulnerable to changes in staff and priorities; this interpretation was not tested here. Culturally responsive teaching also relies on community knowledge and cultural experts as resources (Gay, 2018), so the breadth of the support network matters. Development of cultural literacy therefore needs to align planning, resources, and forms of collaboration with each school's circumstances.

Overall, integrating local wisdom into cultural literacy can give students opportunities to understand cultural values through pantun, Gurindam Dua Belas, folktales, traditional dances, and traditional games. The main contribution of this study is an empirical account of how this integration is implemented in two primary school contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that SDN 016 Tanjungpinang Timur and SDN 001 Tanjungpinang Barat integrate local wisdom and multicultural values into cultural literacy activities through program planning, implementation, evaluation, and follow-up, using Gurindam Dua Belas, pantun, folktales, traditional games, and cultural arts as learning resources. Both schools share the same general orientation but differ in planning structure, documentation, partner involvement, and resource support. SDN 016 has more structured planning and partnership

networks, whereas SDN 001 documents its program less formally, and the parent, committee, and community involvement it reported was not documented in program documents.

The activities provided learning experiences related to the eight dimensions of the Graduate Profile, with communication most prominent and independence and creativity needing strengthening. Implementation challenges identified in the data were limited learning resources and time, differences in students' abilities and self-confidence, and less-than-optimal parental involvement. School commitment, community support, and the richness of local culture provide opportunities to address these challenges. The findings describe integration practices and do not show that the programs changed students' character.

Theoretically, this study contributes to research on character education by showing how local wisdom and multicultural values can be incorporated into cultural literacy activities. Practically, schools can strengthen documentation of cultural literacy programs, involve school committees and parents, expand partnerships with cultural figures, arts groups, and libraries, and give students more opportunities to create, decide, and plan. Policy support is needed for partnership facilitation and the provision of learning resources.

Limitations

First, the study was conducted in only two elementary schools in Tanjungpinang City, so the findings may not represent cultural literacy implementation more broadly. *Second*, the data collection period was relatively short, and no longitudinal data were used to track changes in students' character. *Third*, the questionnaire was developed by the researchers, used one statement per dimension, and was not subjected to statistical validity or reliability testing; it relied on self-reported perceptions, and the independence, critical reasoning, and health items capture diligence, confidence in expressing opinions, and participation in physically active cultural activities, respectively, rather than the full constructs. *Fourth*, the student bodies were predominantly Malay and Muslim (Table 1), which restricts claims about multicultural values and interreligious tolerance. *Fifth*, the qualitative data were coded by a single researcher without independent comparison, and member checking was not conducted. *Sixth*, written parental consent was not obtained. These limitations may serve as a basis for future research involving more schools, longer observation periods, validated multi-item instruments, more than one coder, member checking, and fuller consent procedures. Future research is recommended to involve more schools with different characteristics and cultural environments and to examine the process of value internalization and student character development over the long term.

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