



## Citizenship Learning Strategies Based on Local Values: A Qualitative Study in Elementary Schools

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### *Abstract*

Civic education at the elementary school level often encounters challenges in internalizing citizenship values in a contextual and meaningful manner. This study aims to explore strategies for teaching civic education based on local values and their impact on students' understanding and civic attitudes. Employing a qualitative approach with a case study design, data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation at a primary school in Kendari City. Data analysis was conducted using NVivo software to identify key emerging themes from field findings. The results reveal that the integration of local values—such as cooperation (gotong royong), deliberation (musyawarah), and social concern—into instructional strategies enhances student participation, fosters civic character, and strengthens the connection between learning materials and students' sociocultural realities. These findings offer significant implications for the development of contextual curricula and character education rooted in local wisdom. This strategy is considered effective in cultivating inclusive, participatory, and culturally grounded civic understanding from an early age.

**Keywords:** *Character Education, Civic Education, Instructional Strategies, Local Values, Primary School.*

### PRELIMINARY

Civics Education (PKn) is a key pillar in shaping the character, national identity, and democratic awareness of students starting from elementary school (Korompis, 2025). In this context, elementary schools have a strategic role as the initial foundation for instilling sustainable civic values (Novilasari, 2019). However, the dynamics of globalization, technological developments, and shifts in social values have presented serious challenges to the sustainability of local values and cultural wisdom that have long been an integral part of national identity (Yurika & Rahmat, 2024). Civics learning strategies that are solely oriented towards knowledge transfer tend to fail to meaningfully internalize these values. Therefore, the integration of local values into civics learning strategies in elementary schools is an urgent need to create an educational process that is relevant, contextual, and rooted in the culture of the community where students live (Wati & Anggriani, 2024).

Although various civics learning approaches have been developed, most remain generic and have not explicitly adopted local values as the basis for learning strategies, particularly at the elementary school level (Totok, 2018; Assingkily, 2021). This study aims to explore civics learning strategies based on local values implemented by elementary school teachers in actual classroom learning practices (Ridwanulloh, et.al., 2024). This study addresses the lack of in-depth qualitative studies on contextual pedagogical practices that combine the national curriculum with local wisdom. By highlighting best practices and challenges faced in their implementation, this research is expected to provide conceptual and practical contributions to the development of adaptive, character-based civics learning models that are relevant to the local socio-cultural context (Narimo, et.al., 2019).

## METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study. This approach was chosen to gain a deep understanding of local values-based citizenship learning strategies as implemented by teachers in elementary schools. Case studies allow for detailed exploration of the context, processes, and pedagogical dynamics that occur in real-life school settings, uncovering authentic practices that cannot be captured through quantitative methods. This approach enables the research to capture the complexity of the non-linear reality of education.

The research was conducted at a public elementary school in Kendari City, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. This city was chosen as the research location because of its vibrant and thriving local cultural diversity, providing a rich landscape for exploring the integration of local values into civic education practices. The school is committed to strengthening character education and has implemented various initiatives based on local wisdom, making it a relevant context for this study. This creates a significant opportunity to explore the interaction between local culture and formal education.

Informants in this study were selected purposively, taking into account their involvement and understanding of civics learning and the integration of local values into the learning. Primary informants consisted of class teachers teaching Civics, the principal, and upper-grade students (grades IV–VI) who had participated in the learning. Supporting informants included parents and local community leaders who understood the local cultural values developing within the school environment. The informant selection criteria were based on the principle of information-rich cases to obtain in-depth and relevant data.

Data collection techniques included participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation (Assingkily, 2021). Observations were conducted throughout the learning process to capture interactions, learning strategies, and student responses to the material presented. Interviews were semi-structured to provide space to explore the subjective experiences of informants, particularly teachers and students, regarding the integration of local values into civics learning. Documentation included lesson plans (RPP), teacher reflection notes, and teaching materials used during the learning process.

The data obtained were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction was carried out by sorting, grouping, and simplifying information relevant to the research focus. Data presentation was carried out in the form of descriptive narratives and thematic matrices, thus facilitating interpretation and pattern identification. Conclusion drawing was carried out iteratively, along with a continuous process of verification and reflection on the collected data.

To support systematic and in-depth data analysis, this study utilized NVivo 12 Plus software. NVivo enabled efficient and structured coding, assisting in the development of thematic categories and the visualization of relationships between themes. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were analyzed using node coding, query, and matrix coding features to identify key themes related to local values-based citizenship learning strategies. This software enabled data analysis to be more transparent, well-documented, and easily traceable for validation or replication purposes.

Data validity was maintained through source and method triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail. Triangulation was conducted by comparing information from various informants and data collection techniques to ensure consistency and accuracy. Member checking was conducted by requesting confirmation from key informants regarding the transcripts and the researcher's initial interpretations to avoid distortion of meaning. An audit trail was developed to document the analysis process in detail, allowing for replication and re-evaluation by others if necessary.

Overall, the design of this research methodology aims to explore in-depth citizenship learning strategies that not only meet the demands of the national curriculum but are also rooted in the values of local wisdom that exist in the communities where students live. Using a qualitative approach supported by advanced data analysis technology, this research is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of contextual citizenship pedagogy in elementary schools. This strategy is positioned as a bridge between national education policy and the local cultural realities that students face every day. With this approach, the learning process can touch the cognitive, affective, and social aspects of students in a balanced manner. This is expected to create a more contextual, participatory, and culturally relevant citizenship learning model.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Qualitative data analysis conducted with the help of NVivo software revealed several key themes reflecting how local values-based civic learning strategies are implemented in elementary schools, as well as their impact on strengthening students' civic understanding and attitudes. The coding process resulted in four major themes: (1) integration of local values into teaching materials, (2) increasing student participation and engagement, (3) shaping civic character through cultural context, and (4) teacher reflections on the effectiveness of learning strategies. Each of these themes is reflected in field practice and makes an important contribution to the development of culturally and socially relevant pedagogical approaches.

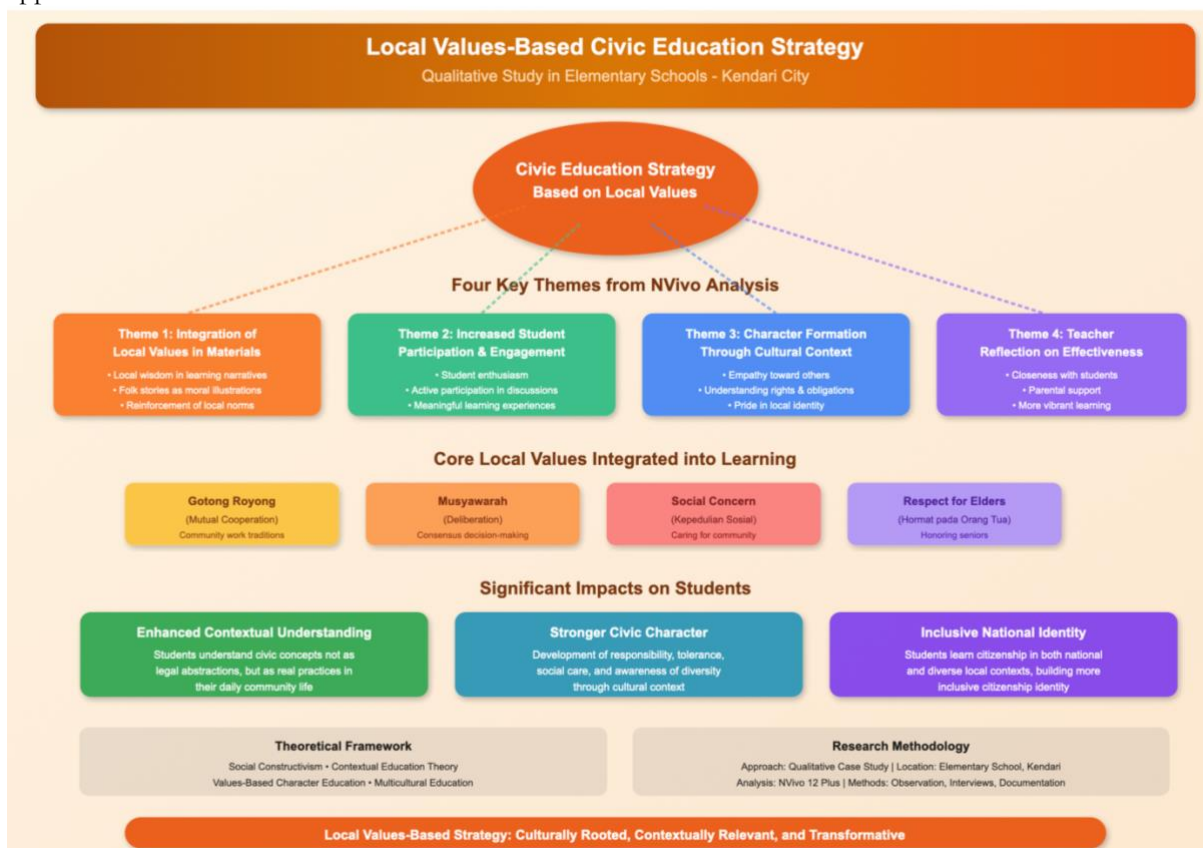


Figure 1. Local Values-Based Civic Education Strategy

### *Integration of Local Values in Teaching Materials*

The first finding shows that teachers actively integrate local values into the civics learning process, through contextual examples, folktales, customs, and activities that reflect local social norms. During the NVivo coding process, dominant nodes emerged, such as "local wisdom in learning narratives," "the use of folktales as moral illustrations," and "strengthening local norms in classroom discussions." A concrete example of this practice is when teachers link the themes of mutual cooperation and social responsibility to the tradition of *mosonggito* (community service) still practiced by the Kendari community. This helps students understand the concept of citizenship not as a legal abstraction, but as a concrete practice in their daily lives.

This integration aligns with the social constructivist approach, which emphasizes the importance of the social and cultural environment in shaping students' knowledge and attitudes. When students see that the values they learn in class are part of their community life, the internalization process is more effective. This also serves as the antithesis of conventional learning models, which tend to be memorization-oriented and fail to connect material to local realities. Therefore, the connection between teaching content and students' real-life experiences is key to shaping transformative and deeply rooted learning.

### ***Increasing Student Participation and Engagement***

The second theme that emerged strongly in the analysis was increased student participation and engagement in the learning process. Nodes such as "student enthusiasm," "active participation in discussions," and "meaningful learning experiences" dominated the NVivo coding results. Teachers reported that when local values were used as learning media, students became more enthusiastic, bolder in expressing their opinions, and felt a sense of ownership over the topics discussed. This was due to students' emotional and cognitive closeness to these values, as they experienced them directly in their daily lives.

These results reinforce the argument from contextual education theory that the meaningfulness of learning increases when material is linked to students' personal experiences. This strategy fosters a participatory and democratic learning environment—a crucial element in civic education. Furthermore, active student engagement demonstrates the transformative potential of local values-based learning, where students become not merely recipients of information but also active participants in shaping their own understanding. Thus, student engagement in the learning process significantly increases.

### ***Formation of Civic Character through Cultural Context***

Further findings indicate that local values-based learning strategies have a significant impact on the formation of students' civic character, particularly in terms of responsibility, tolerance, social awareness, and awareness of diversity. NVivo nodes relevant to this theme include "student empathy for others," "understanding of citizens' rights and obligations," and "pride in local identity." Through interaction with local values, students are able to develop deeper empathy for others and have a better understanding of the importance of respecting differences and working together within a framework of social diversity. Students also demonstrate a deeper understanding of civic concepts, such as social justice and active participation, through exposure to local practices such as customary deliberations or ancestor-honoring ceremonies, which enrich their perspectives on their rights and obligations as citizens.

This approach not only shapes students' cognitive understanding but also their affective and moral aspects. By positioning local culture as a source of civic values, this learning strategy helps counter the dominance of homogenous national narratives and opens up space for cultural pluralism in basic education. This contributes to the formation of a more inclusive civic identity, where students learn about citizenship not only within the context of the nation-state in general but also within diverse local contexts. This local values-based approach supports findings in previous literature that emphasize the importance of multicultural and local education in strengthening social cohesion from an early age, as well as teaching students to be part of the broader community without forgetting their cultural roots.

### ***Teacher Reflection on Strategy Effectiveness***

Interviewed teachers reflected positively on the effectiveness of this strategy. They felt that the local values-based approach not only enriched the learning materials but also built strong emotional connections between teachers, students, and the community. Key themes such as "closeness to students," "parental support," and "more lively learning" emerged as dominant themes in the teacher interviews. However, they also acknowledged challenges, particularly in terms of the availability of learning resources that support the systematic integration of local values.

Teachers expressed the need for institutional support, including adequate training and the development of standardized contextual learning guides. This reflection is crucial in assessing the feasibility and sustainability of this learning strategy for broader implementation in the primary education system. Furthermore, the development of standardized contextual learning guides is crucial for the strategy's consistent implementation across schools. This reflection is crucial for assessing the feasibility and sustainability of this learning strategy and ensuring its broader and more effective implementation in the primary education system.

### *Synthesis and Implications*

Overall, the analysis indicates that a local values-based civics learning strategy is not only effective in enhancing students' understanding of civic concepts but also in shaping their national character and identity. This approach enables students to understand their rights and obligations as citizens in a context more relevant to their daily lives. It also helps students see the direct relevance of the values they learn to their social and cultural lives. This strategy bridges the gap between the demands of the national curriculum and students' social realities, creating an inclusive, contextual, and culturally relevant learning space, allowing students to experience the deeper meaning of each concept taught.

Furthermore, these findings contribute to the development of values-based citizenship education theory, by reinforcing the idea that local values are not merely complementary, but central to the character education process. Civic education based on local values provides students with the opportunity to experience and internalize values that are more personal and directly relevant to their lives. In practice, this strategy has the potential to strengthen social cohesion, build intercultural tolerance, and foster a sense of national identity through pathways rooted in students' local cultures. This approach also supports learning that prioritizes not only cognitive aspects but also social and emotional aspects of students, enabling them to grow as individuals who are more aware of diversity and more open to differences.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study reveals that a local values-based civics learning strategy implemented in elementary schools has a significant impact on improving students' civic understanding, attitudes, and character. Through a qualitative approach and data analysis assisted by NVivo software, it was found that the integration of local values such as mutual cooperation, deliberation, respect for elders, and social concern into the learning process makes students more actively and meaningfully involved in understanding civic concepts. Learning contextualized with local culture and traditions not only strengthens the connection between the material and students' realities but also encourages the formation of an inclusive, participatory, and locally-based civic identity. These findings emphasize the importance of education rooted in cultural context as a foundation for developing citizens with strong character and social concern.

The findings of this study provide important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, these results reinforce the social constructivist approach and contextual education, which places cultural experiences as the foundation for effective learning. This strategy also contributes to the development of local values-based character education as a pillar of citizenship education in elementary schools. Practically, these findings highlight the urgency of designing curricula and learning methods that are responsive to local cultural richness, so that learning is inseparable from students' social contexts. Furthermore, the results of this study demonstrate that incorporating local values can build stronger relationships between schools, families, and communities.

Based on these findings and implications, this study recommends several things. First, there is a need to develop curriculum guidelines or civics learning modules based on local values that can be widely applied in various regions, while still considering the uniqueness of each culture. Second, teachers need to be provided with training and mentoring in designing contextual learning that explores and revitalizes local cultural values in the educational process. Third, further research is recommended to be conducted with a broader regional scope and using a mixed methods approach to quantitatively measure the effectiveness of this strategy. Furthermore, it is also necessary to explore the perceptions of other stakeholders, such as parents, principals, and policymakers, to strengthen the synergy in implementing a learning strategy based on local values.

Thus, a civics learning strategy based on local values is not only culturally relevant but also strategic in strengthening character education and developing a young generation with civic awareness from an early age. This approach deserves further development as an inclusive learning model, rooted in culture, and oriented toward the formation of active and ethical citizens. Beyond its pedagogical approach, this strategy also serves as a means of preserving local culture, which is being eroded by globalization. By prioritizing values that live within the community, civics education becomes more meaningful and contextual for students.

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