

# Synergistic Ethnopedagogy for Energy Conservation: Cultivating Character and Culture through Cempluk Dance in Elementary School

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## Article History

Received: 8 April 2026;

Revised : 22 April 2026;

Accepted: 16 May 2026.

## Keywords

Synergistic Ethnopedagogy;  
Cultivating Character Values;  
Local Culture;  
Cempluk Dance;  
Elementary School.



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## Abstract

The erosion of local culture in the digital age challenges character education in elementary schools. Research on traditional dance rooted in energy conservation philosophy, such as the Cempluk Dance, remains scarce. This explanatory case study analyzes the internalization of character values through Cempluk Dance ethnopedagogy at Kalisongo Elementary School 3, involving two key informants (a classroom teacher and a dance instructor). Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that the Cempluk Dance program, as a mandatory extracurricular activity, successfully integrates local wisdom into the Merdeka Curriculum. Internalized character values include self-confidence, cultural pride, energy conservation, and good manners. A key success factor is the strong synergy between the school and the community, which reflects social capital as a theoretical framework. The novelty lies in the energy-saving philosophy derived from the local history of “Kampung Cempluk” and the engagement of students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. This study proposes a Synergistic Ethnopedagogy model comprising three pillars: character value internalization rooted in local history, school–community synergy as social capital, and structured curriculum support. This model offers a replicable framework for integrating local wisdom into character education within the Merdeka Curriculum.

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**How to Cite :** Fissalma, N., Faizah, S. ., & Pristiani, R. . (2026). Synergistic Ethnopedagogy for Energy Conservation: Cultivating Character and Culture through Cempluk Dance in Elementary School. *Kognisi : Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Sekolah Dasar*, 6(1), 1–15.  
<https://doi.org/10.56393/kognisi.v6i1.4255>



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## Introduction

The crisis of character and the erosion of local culture due to globalization pose a serious threat to the younger generation. Easy access to foreign cultures not only broadens horizons but also has the potential to undermine the nation's noble values, especially when not balanced by a strong understanding of local wisdom. As a result, the younger generation is drifting further away from its own cultural identity Afandi et al. (2025). In fact, local cultural values play a strategic role in shaping character such as cooperation, simplicity, unity, and environmental stewardship which form the foundation of community life (Sakti et al., 2024).

To address these issues, Indonesia's education policy, through the Merdeka Curriculum, emphasizes the importance of balancing the mastery of cognitive competencies with character development. This curriculum integrates the 21st-century 4C skills (critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration), which must be balanced with strong character as the foundation of moral identity (Widiana et al., 2023). The Merdeka Curriculum explicitly positions the Pancasila Student Profile as a guideline for upholding noble values and morals while remaining open to other cultures (Ratri et al., 2025). This profile is designed to shape students who are faithful, of noble character, independent, critical thinkers, creative, and capable of interacting globally without losing their national cultural identity.

Globally, the integration of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) has been recognized as a critical strategy for addressing cultural erosion and fostering students' higher-order competencies. Recent international studies emphasize that CRT practices, which connect academic content to students' cultural backgrounds, significantly enhance social-emotional outcomes and engagement in diverse educational settings (Goodwin et al., 2025). Concurrently, the development of 4C skills has become a global education priority, with meta-analyses confirming the effectiveness of culturally grounded interventions in promoting these competencies across different national contexts (Tian & Zheng, 2025).

This culturally grounded approach aligns with the principles of Place-Based Education (PBE), an international educational model that connects learning to local environments, heritage, and community contexts (Swain, 2023). PBE utilizes the local physical environment and community as an educational tool, focusing lessons on the places, people, and things surrounding the community to bridge the gap between school and the real world (Swain, 2023). PBE has gained significant attention internationally, with research demonstrating its effectiveness in fostering student engagement, a sense of belonging, and social capital the networks of relationships that support student success (McClennen, 2024). Furthermore, place-based learning has been recognized as a powerful pedagogical approach that connects students to local contexts, cultures, and environments, with emerging scholarship exploring its implementation across diverse educational settings including K-12 schools (Rawlings Smith & Pike, 2023; Josen, 2022). While PBE emphasizes the physical and ecological aspects of place, ethnopedagogy in the Indonesian context specifically focuses on the integration of local wisdom, traditions, and cultural values into formal curricula. This study bridges these two approaches by demonstrating how the Cempluk Dance, rooted in the local history of Kampung Cempluk, serves as a place-based, culturally responsive ethnopedagogical practice.

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Beyond the 4C framework, this study also engages with the broader global agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, this research aligns with SDG 4: Quality Education, which emphasizes education for sustainable development and the appreciation of cultural diversity (United Nations, 2015; United Nations, 2024). Target 4.7 of SDG 4 explicitly calls for ensuring that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including through education for sustainable development and the appreciation of cultural diversity (United Nations, 2015; United Nations, 2024). In line with this, Sudarmin et al. (2026) demonstrated that integrating local wisdom with virtual reality (Ethno-VR) can enhance students' science and technology literacy while supporting SDG 4 in elementary education. Similarly, Pandikar et al. (2025) found that smart ethnopedagogy integrating local wisdom into social studies learning contributed to SDG 4.7 (education for sustainability) and SDG 11.4 (cultural heritage preservation). Furthermore, the energy conservation values embedded in the Cempluk Dance directly support SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy, by fostering awareness of responsible energy use from an early age. Research by García-Peralo et al. (2025) confirmed that integrating sustainability and energy efficiency awareness into educational programs significantly improves students' understanding of responsible energy use. Thus, this research contributes not only to local character education but also to global sustainability efforts.

The urgency of this approach is further underscored by the challenges of the digital era. The rapid expansion of digital technology has accelerated what is known as the “digital erosion of culture,” where younger generations are increasingly detached from their local cultural identities due to globalized digital content (Basalama et al., 2024). This condition highlights the urgency of integrating local wisdom into education as a response to global cultural challenges.

However, the implementation of this policy at the school level still faces various challenges. In practice, character building based on local wisdom has not been optimally integrated into learning. Many schools still focus on cognitive aspects, while local cultural values have not been systematically utilized as a learning resource (Sakti et al., 2024). This situation indicates a gap between ideal policies and actual learning practices, meaning that the goals of character building have not yet been fully achieved.

Furthermore, easy access to global culture has also led to cultural alienation among the younger generation, where students are more familiar with foreign cultures than their own local culture (Sulastuti, 2022). If this situation continues without appropriate intervention, the younger generation risks losing their cultural identity and the character values that define the nation. Therefore, an educational approach is needed that not only instills character values but is also rooted in students' local culture.

Several previous studies have shown that the ethnopedagogical approach is effective in integrating local culture into learning. Sugiarto et al. (2025) revealed that batik can be used as a medium for internalizing character values. Chung (2023) demonstrated that the integration of music can strengthen character education in Hong Kong, while Hart & Liddle (2024) utilized literature as a means of instilling virtues. In Indonesia, Fatmi (2023) and Yusnia (2024) also demonstrated that learning based on local wisdom has a positive impact on student engagement and character development. These findings confirm that local culture holds significant potential as a medium for character education.

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Nevertheless, these studies are still dominated by the use of static or textual cultural media, such as batik and literature, and have not extensively examined dance as a structured learning practice in elementary schools. Furthermore, no studies have been found that specifically integrate traditional dance with local philosophical values within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum. In fact, dance has distinct advantages because it simultaneously engages cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, making it potentially more effective in fostering students' holistic character development (Koentjaraningrat, 1984; Setiawan et al., 2019). Furthermore, there has been no study highlighting the Cempluk Dance and the philosophy of energy-saving consciousness from the history of Kampung Cempluk as a medium for character internalization, nor has there been much research exploring the synergy between schools and the community in supporting the implementation of ethnopedagogy in elementary schools.

Importantly, previous studies have not yet produced a theoretical model that explains how the synergy between curriculum, community social capital, and character values operates in the context of dance-based ethnopedagogy. Most studies remain at the descriptive level, documenting the integration of local culture without offering a replicable framework. This gap is particularly evident in the absence of models that explicitly address energy conservation as a character value derived from local history.

Given this gap, this study focuses on the implementation of ethnopedagogy through the Cempluk dance at Kalisongo Elementary School 3 as an effort to strengthen students' character within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum. The Cempluk dance, rooted in the history of Sumberjo Hamlet known as "Kampung Cempluk" embodies the values of adaptability, togetherness, and energy conservation, which are relevant to students' character development. This study aims to analyze the implementation of ethnopedagogy through the Cempluk dance, identify the character values internalized by students, and examine the factors influencing its success.

This study contributes to the literature by integrating traditional dance into ethnopedagogical practice within the Merdeka Curriculum, highlighting energy conservation as a locally grounded character value, and demonstrating the role of school–community synergy in supporting its implementation. These contributions provide a foundation for developing a more structured and context-sensitive model of culture-based character education.

Based on the above discussion, the research gaps, and the urgency and novelty that have been outlined, the research questions can be formulated as follows, RQ1: How is ethnopedagogy implemented through the Cempluk Dance at SDN 3 Kalisongo within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum? RQ2: What character values are internalized through the Cempluk Dance program as a mandatory extracurricular activity? RQ3: What factors determine the success of the implementation of Cempluk Dance ethnopedagogy at SDN 3 Kalisongo? In line with these research questions, this study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of the implementation of ethnopedagogy through the Cempluk Dance at SDN 3 Kalisongo as an effort to strengthen students' character while preserving local culture.

## **Method**

This study employed a qualitative approach using an instrumental case study design conducted at Kalisongo 3 Elementary School during the 2025/2026 academic year from

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September to November 2025. The research site was selected purposively based on two criteria, namely the implementation of the Cempluk Dance as a mandatory extracurricular activity for at least one academic year and its integration with local history and the philosophy of energy conservation. The informants consisted of one classroom teacher (T<sub>1</sub>) and one dance instructor (I<sub>1</sub>), both selected due to their direct and intensive involvement in the program for at least one year. Data were collected through non-participant observation during four practice sessions and two public performances, semi-structured interviews exploring the historical background of the dance and the character values embedded in its movements, and documentation in the form of photographs and activity records. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, involving data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The reduction process was conducted through open coding and axial coding to identify major themes such as self-confidence, cultural pride, energy conservation, politeness, and cooperation. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and member checking with informants. An audit trail consisting of interview transcripts, coding results, field notes, and analytical memos was maintained throughout the research process. The researcher acted as a non-participant observer and maintained reflexivity by continuously reflecting on potential biases related to personal interest in local culture preservation, while all interpretations were cross-validated through observational data and informant confirmation. Ethical considerations included obtaining permission from the school principal, informed consent from all informants, and maintaining the anonymity of students in the reporting of findings.

## Results and Discussion

### Result

The implementation of the Cempluk Dance program at Kalisongo Elementary School 3 cannot be separated from the historical roots and social identity of the residents of Sumberjo hamlet, where the school is located. This village is known by the community as “kampung cempluk” because it possesses a culture born from the collective experiences of the community up until 1992, when the area still relied on traditional oil-fueled lamps called “Cempluk” for lighting. However, this limitation has transformed into a cultural identity that has become ingrained as a symbol of the residents’ spirit of adaptation to the changing times.

This transformation was sparked by the initiative of an outsider who recognized the community’s potential to overcome its infrastructure-related underdevelopment, which later evolved into an arts- and culture-based social movement. The culmination was the birth of the Kampung Cempluk Festival as an annual event that attracted the attention of the local community and even the government at the ministerial level. Kalisongo Elementary School 3, as an integral part of the community, saw a strategic opportunity to connect local identity with the educational process. The synergy between teachers and the community sparked the creation of a dance program as the school’s mascot, as explained by Ms. Ari (one of the teachers at the school):

*“Every year there is a Cempluk Village Festival, and that’s where the idea came from to link the Cempluk icon with educational activities at the school.”*

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The Cempluk Dance Program officially launched in 2023. Initially performed by only three students, but after seeing the high level of enthusiasm and in line with the deep learning approach (8 Dimensions of Graduate Profile), the program transformed into a mass dance involving 80 students from grades 1 through 6. The Cempluk Dance has not only become an iconic welcome for guests but has also been designated as a mandatory extracurricular activity every Friday.

The Cempluk Dance Program at Kalisongo Elementary School 3 is a concrete example of the application of ethnopedagogy, which integrates local culture into the learning process to achieve character education goals. This implementation of ethnopedagogy is reflected in three key aspects of the merdeka curriculum.

First, phase-based learning, in which the Cempluk Dance training process is carried out in stages based on student development, starting with Phase A for grades 1–2, Phase B for grades 3–4, and Phase C for grades 5–6. This aligns with the deep learning approach comprising the 8 Dimensions of the Graduate Profile adopted by the school. Mass Cempluk Dance serves as a means to develop three of these eight competencies: citizenship, creativity, and collaboration. Second, curricular integration, where the Cempluk Dance program is a mandatory extracurricular activity held every Friday. The school provides full support in the form of facilities, costumes, instructors, and a practice space. Third, philosophy-based learning, where the agile movements in Cempluk Dance carry meanings that reflect the spirit of Kalisongo residents in community life.

According to an interview with Ms. Hesti (a dance instructor), every movement in the Cempluk Dance embodies a philosophy that reflects the community's journey from adversity to progress, as well as the spirit of mutual cooperation. Ms. Hesti explained:

*“Every movement the children make tells the story of how the people of Cempluk used to work together. These collective movements embody the spirit of mutual cooperation, just as our community demonstrates during community service events: when one person moves, everyone follows.”*

From a performing arts perspective, the Cempluk Dance has its own unique character. Its agile and energetic movements reflect the collective spirit of the Cempluk Village community. The floor patterns used tend to be circular and group-based, symbolizing togetherness and mutual cooperation. The musical accompaniment features a blend of the kendang, saron, and the distinctive East Javanese flute, creating a joyful yet sacred atmosphere. The dancers' costumes are dominated by green and yellow, symbolizing fertility and prosperity, and are complemented by miniature “cempluk” props held in hand as a reminder of the historical limitations of lighting in the past. Artistically, this dance successfully transforms a historical experience into meaningful, aesthetically rich movement.

Ms. Hesti also explained that every movement in the Cempluk Dance is rooted in the local wisdom and cultural identity of the Kalisongo community. She said:

*“There are movements we've drawn from people's daily activities, such as lighting a fire, planting, or playing. These movements reflect the life of our community and teach children that this is our culture, which we must preserve.”*

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**Table 1.** The Philosophical Meaning of the Cempluk Dance

<b>Movement</b>	<b>Philosophical Meaning</b>
feet wide open	An invitation to unity, welcome, or openness to the community
Hand raising or waving gesture	Greeting ancestors, nature, or village communities as a form of respect
Rotation or circular motion	The village life cycle, cultural sustainability, or community togetherness
Up-and-down or bending movements	Respect, or a symbol of hard work as a life value for the village community.

The Cempluk Dance is not merely a means of preserving the art form, but also a program designed to instill character values in students through hands-on experience. There are three main character values that are instilled. First, self-confidence and a sense of pride. When students perform at various events ranging from national holidays, report card distribution ceremonies, to the Kampung Cempluk Festival at the village level these experiences help build courage and self-confidence. As Ms. Ari noted:

*“There have been so many positive changes in the students, such as increased self-confidence, a sense of belonging to the school, and pride in the Kampung Cempluk culture.”*



**Figure 1.** Students from Kalisongo Elementary School 3 performing the Cempluk Dance

Second, conserve energy and respect history. The Cempluk Dance conveys a moral message about the wise use of energy. The dance’s origins stem from a community that faced limited lighting, serving as a lesson for students to value and use electrical resources wisely. Ms. Hesti explained:

*“The moral message in the Cempluk Dance is to conserve energy; whereas people used to rely on cempluk, we now have electricity, so we must conserve natural resources. We should appreciate the people of the past who still used cempluk, but since we now use lights, we must turn them off when they are not in use.”*

This energy conservation value directly contributes to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), a global framework promoted by UNESCO. By internalizing the philosophy of saving electricity derived from the history of Kampung Cempluk, students develop early awareness of responsible energy use, aligning with Target 4.7 of SDG 4 which emphasizes education for sustainable development.

Third, manners and religious devotion. In terms of attire and demeanor while dancing, values of hospitality and politeness are fostered, such as wearing modest clothing that covers the body, wearing a hijab, dressing appropriately, and welcoming guests warmly. A third-grade student shared:

*“I wear a hijab and modest clothing when I dance. That’s what my teacher said.”*

This aligns with the view of Aisyah et al. (2024) that polite behavior encompasses not only the way one speaks and acts but also reflects one’s character and personality.

Fourth, mutual cooperation and local wisdom. Every movement in this dance embodies character-building values rooted in the daily life of the Kalisongo community. A sixth-grade student explained:

*“When we dance together, we have to be in sync. We can't just do our own thing.”*

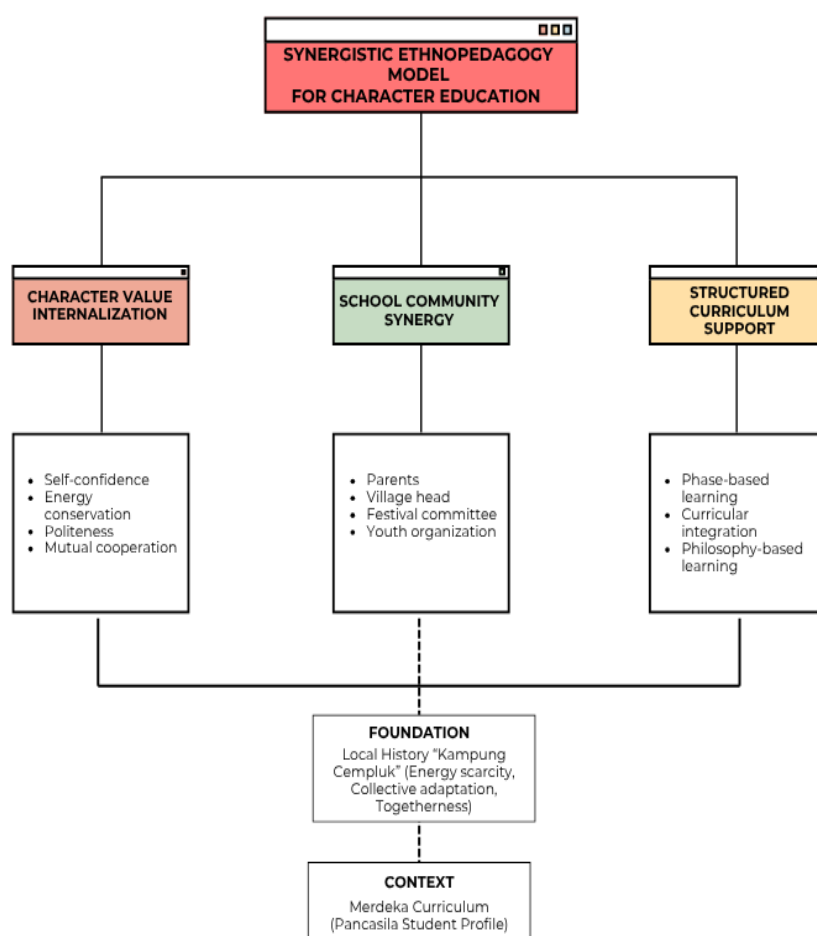
**Table 2.** Internalization of Character Values in the Cempluk Dance

Character Values	Forms of Implementation	Student Quote
Confident and proud of our culture	Students perform at various events and activities, such as the Cempluk Village Festival, major holidays, and report card distribution ceremonies	I used to be afraid to perform, but now I really enjoy dancing the Cempluk in front of a large audience. (5th-grade student)
Save energy and honor history	A dance philosophy rooted in the history of Cempluk Village, which once had limited electricity, and teaches students to appreciate electricity	I learned that lights used to have a switch. Now I turn off the lights when they're not in use. (4th-grade student)
Manners and religiosity	Reflected in the attire worn while dancing (modest clothing, covering the body, and wearing a hijab for women) as well as the manner in which guests are received	I wear a hijab and modest clothing when I dance. That’s what my teacher said. (3rd-grade student)
Mutual cooperation and local wisdom	Rooted in the daily life of the Kalisongo community, as reflected in the mass dance performances and spirit of collaboration	When we dance together, we have to be in sync. We can't just do our own thing. (6th-grade student)

The implementation of the mass Cempluk Dance program was not without challenges, such as the varying interests and talents of the students and teachers’ concerns about some students becoming exhausted from practice. However, these challenges were overcome through a collaborative effort between teachers, coaches, and parents. The success of the Cempluk Dance

program at Kalisongo Elementary School was made possible by the full support of various community groups, including parents, the village head, the Kampung Cempluk festival committee, and the youth organization. The primary factor in this success was the synergy between the school and the community. The strength of this synergy is a manifestation of the social capital that has been deeply rooted in the Kampung Cempluk community.

Based on the findings and discussion above, this study found that the successful implementation of the Cempluk Dance ethnopedagogy is determined by three main, mutually interacting pillars: (1) the internalization of character values rooted in local history (self-confidence, energy conservation, politeness, mutual cooperation), (2) school-community synergy as social capital, and (3) structured curriculum support (phase-based learning, curricular integration, philosophy-based learning). These three pillars reinforce one another to achieve the strengthening of students' character and the preservation of local culture.



**Figure 2.** Synergistic Ethnopedagogy Model for Character Education through Cempluk Dance

## Discussion

The history of the Cempluk dance in Sumberjo Village which has transformed from a symbol of limitation into a cultural identity demonstrates the collective adaptation of the local community. Within the framework of the three main forms of local wisdom proposed by Koentjaraningrat (1984), the Cempluk Dance serves as a cultural artifact successfully integrated

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into educational activities, ultimately instilling character values in students. This finding reinforces Koentjaraningrat's (1984) concept while expanding upon it by demonstrating that cultural artifacts do not merely function as static heritage but can transform into active agents of social change in character education. This alignment is also consistent with the view of Sugara & Sugito (2022) that ethnopedagogy is a strategic approach to integrating knowledge with cultural roots into learning. Liana et al. (2026) further support this by demonstrating that integrating local wisdom into elementary science education significantly enhanced students' ecological character, reinforcing the argument that culturally grounded pedagogy effectively supports character development in primary schools.

The integration of Cempluk dance as a required extracurricular activity demonstrates the school's commitment to implementing ethnopedagogy in a structured manner. The division into phases (A, B, C), which emphasizes the citizenship dimension in alignment with the Pancasila Student Profile, reinforces the conclusions of previous studies, such as those by Fatmi et al. (2023) and Yusnia (2024), which indicate that learning based on local wisdom yields positive outcomes and can be applied across subjects. However, unlike those two studies, which focused more on cognitive aspects, this study found that the Cempluk Dance simultaneously engages affective and psychomotor aspects, resulting in a more holistic impact on character development. This finding aligns with the culture-based learning model developed for ASEAN primary schools, which successfully integrated local wisdom into the SEA-PLM framework to support SDG 4 (Designing Culture-Based Learning, 2025). These findings reinforce the argument that education based on local culture is not only pedagogically relevant but also strategically important in shielding students from the influence of foreign cultures that are incompatible with local values.

The internalization of character values through the practice of dance has proven to be a concrete approach to implementing ethnopedagogy in elementary schools. The cultivation of character values through the Cempluk Dance effectively reflects the dimensions of independence, faith and piety toward the One and Only God, and noble character all in harmony with the Pancasila Student Profile and is reflected in the deep learning approach, particularly regarding citizenship. This aligns with the view of Aisyah et al. (2024) that polite behavior encompasses not only speech and conduct but also reflects one's character and personality. The instillation of the character value of energy conservation, taught through the history of Cempluk, contributes a novel perspective to this study, as it highlights the unique local wisdom stemming from the limited infrastructure in Sumberjo Hamlet and transforms it into contextual character education. While Sakti et al. (2024) emphasize the values of cooperation, simplicity, and unity, this study adds the value of energy conservation as a new dimension in character education based on local wisdom. This energy conservation finding aligns with the 'Energy Saving' program implemented in Vietnamese primary schools, where students committed to turning off lights when not in use after participating in energy conservation education (Nui Phao Mining, 2025). This confirms that early childhood energy education effectively builds sustainable habits across different cultural contexts. Thus, ethnopedagogy is not merely about preserving art, but also serves as a concrete and relevant means of teaching social and environmental responsibility, directly contributing to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as promoted by UNESCO.

The primary factor in the success of this program is the synergy between the school and the community, as evidenced by the active support of parents, teachers, the village head, and the

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youth group. The strength of this synergy can be seen as a manifestation of social capital that has been embedded in the Kampung Cempluk community. Suryani (2023) states that the success of the sustainable management of the Kampung Cempluk festival is related to social capital in the form of a strong tradition of collaboration. This finding reinforces Suryani (2023) concept of social capital by demonstrating that social capital not only contributes to the success of cultural festivals but can also be applied to the context of character education in schools. Lightner et al. (2025) found that community engagement experiences significantly enhanced preservice teachers' cultural consciousness and readiness to work with diverse communities, confirming that social capital plays a crucial role in the success of culture-based educational programs. Unlike previous studies that focused more on internal school factors, this research found that the success of ethnopedagogy is largely determined by an external support system involving active community participation. The school effectively leverages existing social capital, as support from various segments of society demonstrates that the school does not operate in isolation but is an integral part of the community.

These findings indicate that the success of ethnopedagogy implementation in this study cannot be explained solely by cultural integration, but rather by the interaction between multiple interconnected elements. Therefore, this study extends the concept of ethnopedagogy by proposing a Synergistic Ethnopedagogy Model, which emphasizes the dynamic interaction between cultural values, social capital, and curriculum structure. Unlike previous ethnopedagogy frameworks that primarily focus on cultural content integration (Sugara & Sugito, 2022; Sugiarto et al., 2025), this model highlights the importance of synergy between internal factors (curriculum and pedagogy) and external factors (community social capital) in achieving sustainable character education. Thus, ethnopedagogy is positioned not merely as a cultural integration approach, but as a systemic and collaborative educational framework.

Based on the findings, the success of the Cempluk Dance ethnopedagogy program is determined by three interconnected pillars: (1) the internalization of character values rooted in local history (self-confidence, energy conservation, politeness, and cooperation), (2) school-community synergy as social capital, and (3) structured curriculum support, including phase-based learning, curricular integration, and philosophy-based instruction. These three components interact dynamically and cannot function independently; their synergy is essential for achieving sustainable character education and cultural preservation. This model emphasizes that sustainable character education emerges from the synergy of these interconnected elements rather than from isolated interventions.

This study makes several theoretical contributions to the field of ethnopedagogy and character education. First, it extends the concept of ethnopedagogy beyond static cultural artifacts (such as batik and literature) to include dynamic, embodied practices like traditional dance. While previous studies by Sugiarto et al. (2025) and Chung (2023) focused on textual or auditory media, this study demonstrates that dance simultaneously engages students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, making it more effective for holistic character development.

Second, this study introduces energy conservation as a new character value dimension in ethnopedagogical practice. Prior research by Sakti et al. (2024) emphasized values such as cooperation, simplicity, and unity, but did not address environmental stewardship or energy awareness. This study fills that gap by showing how local history of energy scarcity can be

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transformed into a contemporary character value that supports Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) , aligning with global frameworks such as SDG 4.7 (UNESCO, 2017).

Third, this study proposes the Synergistic Ethnopedagogy Model, which integrates three interacting pillars: character value internalization rooted in local history, school-community synergy as social capital, and structured curriculum support. Unlike previous descriptive frameworks (Sugara & Sugito, 2022), this model offers a replicable and systemic approach for integrating local wisdom into the Merdeka Curriculum. This model complements the culture-based learning framework developed for ASEAN schools, which also emphasized regional contextualization using local wisdom indicators (Designing Culture-Based Learning, 2025).

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the single-site design (Kalisongo Elementary School 3) limits the generalizability of the Synergistic Ethnopedagogy Model to other schools with different cultural and social characteristics. Therefore, the model should be viewed as a provisional framework requiring validation across diverse contexts. Second, the qualitative approach prioritizes depth of understanding over measurement; consequently, the degree of character internalization cannot be statistically quantified. Third, the relatively short duration (three months) precluded observation of long-term retention of character values. Future research should employ mixed methods and longitudinal designs to address these limitations.

In a broader context, Kalisongo Elementary School 3 strives to preserve and sustain local wisdom amidst the challenges of digital transformation. These efforts align with the concept of local cultural preservation, which requires the active participation of schools, academics, the government, and the community (Basalama et al., 2024). Thus, integrating the Cempluk Dance into school curricula can serve as a strategy to shape students' character, ensure cultural regeneration, and simultaneously preserve the noble values embedded within it so they remain relevant and enduring. This synergy demonstrates that character building through local culture is an educational responsibility, while also emphasizing the importance of the cooperative dimension as an implementation of ethnopedagogy in elementary schools.

## Conclusion

The Cempluk Dance at Kalisongo Elementary School 3 demonstrates the successful implementation of ethnopedagogy within the Merdeka Curriculum, preserving local culture while instilling four core character values self-confidence, cultural pride, energy conservation, and good manners. The key success factor lies in the strong synergy between the school and the local community, which this study conceptualizes as a replicable Synergistic Ethnopedagogy Model comprising three interacting pillars: character value internalization rooted in local history, school-community synergy as social capital, and structured curriculum support. Theoretically, this study expands ethnopedagogy by introducing energy conservation as a new character dimension and demonstrating that community social capital can be systematically transferred to character education. At the policy level, this model offers a scalable framework for other elementary schools across Indonesia to integrate local wisdom into the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly through establishing mandatory extracurricular programs based on local history and building formal school-community partnerships. Future research should

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validate this model across diverse geographical and cultural contexts using mixed-methods and longitudinal designs.

### Acknowledgments

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the principal, teachers, and staff of Kalisongo Elementary School 3 for granting permission and providing support for the conduct of this study. Special thanks are extended to Ms. Ari and Ms. Hesti, instructors of the Cempluk dance, for their willingness to take the time to share their experiences and insights during the interview process. This research was conducted as part of academic activities at the State University of Malang.

### Authors' Note

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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