

Application of Ethnopedagogy in Education, Especially Learning in School

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ABSTRACT

Ethnopedagogy is a form of learning actualization that focuses on instilling local wisdom values in the educational process. This study aims to explore the concept, implementation, and barriers of *ethnopedagogy*. As a pedagogical approach, *ethnopedagogy* in elementary schools needs to be implemented through innovative learning strategies and media in order to attract students' attention and foster a love for local culture. This study used a mixed methods approach with a concurrent triangulation strategy to obtain comprehensive data. The results show that the application of *ethnopedagogy* through learning media based on local wisdom is proven to be more effective in increasing student engagement and understanding of cultural values. Learning activities packaged in the form of traditional games and contextual media are able to create an active, creative, effective, and enjoyable learning atmosphere. Thus, *ethnopedagogy* can be optimally implemented when presented through innovative learning activities rooted in local potential. The research implies that for *ethnopedagogy* to be optimized, a more mature conceptual framework and collaborative efforts between universities, schools, and the government are necessary to strengthen its application and distinguish it from similar educational approaches.

Keywords: Ethnopedagogy; Local Wisdom; Learning Media; Elementary School; Educational Innovation.

INTRODUCTION

Although the education curriculum in Indonesia has undergone several changes, learning is expected to include ethnopedagogical content, where learning activities must emphasize the local wisdom of students. According to Zulkarnain and Febriamansyah (2008: 72), local wisdom refers to certain principles and methods that are embraced, understood, and applied by local communities in interacting and relating with their environment and transformed into a system of values and customs (Knorr & Augustin, 2025; Mudijono, Halimahturraffiah, Muslikah, & Mutathahirin, 2025).

Ethnopedagogy in the 2013 curriculum is based on the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 79 of 2014, which explains that learning at the elementary school/madrasah ibtidaiyah level up to the senior high school/vocational high school level must have local content, which is a subject of study or subject in educational units that contain content and learning processes about the potential and uniqueness of the region. This is intended to shape students' understanding of the excellence and wisdom in the area where they live (Roqai, Allouani, Aboumehdi, & Ennida, 2025; Tsarkos, 2025). Ethnopedagogical-oriented learning is very important to implement, considering that Indonesia is a pluralistic country consisting of various tribes and ethnic groups that certainly have different cultures.

Second, globalization and technological developments can cause cultural changes in Indonesian society (Mialiawati, 2020). Sularso (2016) states that the educational process of

promoting local wisdom is important to realize because local wisdom has begun to be neglected, as seen in daily behaviors that do not embody local wisdom values and localities eroded by lifestyles that contain pragmatic-capitalistic values.

Meanwhile, Syaifulloh and Wibowo (2017) state that Syair Gulung, as the local wisdom of the Malay community in Ketapang Regency, West Kalimantan, has educational value in terms of disaster management. In Indonesia, a nation renowned for its profound cultural diversity, this challenge is particularly acute (Fatmawati, 2021; Mazya, Ridho, & Irfani, 2024). Previous studies have highlighted the critical role of local wisdom in education as a buffer against cultural erosion. For instance, research by Sularso (2016) and Ridwan (2014) underscores that pragmatic-capitalistic values are increasingly overshadowing local wisdom, necessitating its integration into the curriculum to fortify national character. Internationally, scholars like Banks (2008) have long advocated for multicultural education to foster inclusivity and cultural awareness. These works collectively establish that embedding local cultural values in schooling is not merely beneficial but essential for holistic student development in a pluralistic world (Fitrianto & Farisi, 2025; Tibbitts, 2020).

Despite the regulatory mandate and scholarly advocacy, a significant gap persists between policy and practice. Ridwan (2014) aptly notes that education and local wisdom values in Indonesia have not yet merged into a powerful, unified force. Existing literature, including the work of Syaifulloh and Wibowo (2017), often focuses on identifying specific local wisdoms and their potential educational values, such as in disaster management. However, there is a scarcity of research that critically examines the foundational concept of ethnopedagogy itself within the Indonesian context and the practical barriers teachers face in its implementation. The prevailing assumption is that recognizing local wisdom's value is sufficient for its application, leaving a gap in understanding the operational and conceptual frameworks required for effective classroom integration (Jonassen & Slavin, 2025; Rasidi, Istiningbih, Masithoh, & Rosyidi, 2025).

The urgency of this research is underscored by the accelerating pace of cultural homogenization. Without deliberate and effective pedagogical strategies, the rich tapestry of local knowledge, languages, and traditions risks being marginalized within its own educational systems (Malgoubri, 2025; Tariq, 2025). This is not just a cultural loss but a pedagogical one, as disconnecting learning from a student's immediate socio-cultural environment can diminish engagement and relevance (Gonzales, 2025; Zajda, 2025). The imperative, therefore, is to move beyond theoretical discussions and address the practical void in how ethnopedagogy can be consistently and meaningfully enacted (Gonzales, 2025; Rexhepi & Bajrami, 2025). This study addresses the urgent need to equip educators with a clear conceptual and practical roadmap to ensure that local wisdom becomes a living, dynamic part of the learning experience, rather than a static curriculum component (Firmansyah, Ramadhan, & Wiyono, 2025; Homsombat, 2025).

The novelty of this research lies in its focused investigation into the conceptual ambiguities and implementation hurdles of ethnopedagogy in Indonesia. While many studies promote its benefits, this research delves into the often-overlooked "how" and "why not." It posits that a primary obstacle is the underdeveloped theoretical construct of ethnopedagogy, which often leads to its conflation with broader multicultural education, thereby diluting its unique pedagogical identity. Furthermore, the study innovatively shifts the focus from student

outcomes alone to the crucial role of teacher competency and readiness, identifying the lack of a specific teacher competency design for ethnopedagogical practices as a critical bottleneck.

To address these issues, this study aims to comprehensively explore the concept, implementation models, and inherent barriers of ethnopedagogy in Indonesian schools. The purpose is to generate a nuanced understanding that can inform the development of a more robust and contextually appropriate ethnopedagogical framework. The ultimate benefit of this research is twofold: firstly, it contributes to scholarly discourse by clarifying and refining the concept of ethnopedagogy. Secondly, it provides practical insights for curriculum developers, teacher training institutions, and policymakers to design more effective support systems, strategies, and professional development programs, thereby enabling a more authentic and impactful integration of local wisdom into education.

METHOD

This research used a qualitative research approach, employing in-depth focus interviews to gather information. The researcher applied this strategy with the aim of producing substantive and validated findings. The stages of this research were the determination of the problem formulation, namely: 1) What was the concept of ethnopedagogy; 2) How was ethnopedagogy implemented in the world of education; 3) What were the obstacles. This produced a description of the situation being studied and the meaning contained in the data from the observations. A qualitative approach was appropriate for this study because it allowed researchers to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied. In this context, a qualitative approach allowed researchers to reveal how ethnopedagogy was applied in character learning and how students responded to this application in their daily lives. This approach also provided space to explore the perceptions and experiences of teachers and students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ethnopedagogy is a reflection of local content in learning, better known as local wisdom-based learning. Local wisdom developed in learning uses four principles, namely 1) suitability with the development of students, 2) competency requirements, 3) flexibility in type, form, and timing of implementation, and 4) usefulness for national interests in facing global challenges. Ethnopedagogy, as reflected in local wisdom, was applied in this study to introduce and preserve local culture among students, with the hope that they would understand and grow to love their local wisdom.

This expectation is in line with Sartini's (2010: 19) study, which states that local wisdom is a local idea that is wise, full of insight, and has a value-, which is embedded in and followed by members of the community. The study of local wisdom needs to be instilled from an early age so that students are able to face global challenges. To realize this hope, the study of learning must relate to the material on the values of local wisdom of the participants. Ridwan (2014: 102) explains that the 2013 curriculum and local wisdom values must become the spirit of improvement and make them an inevitable part of the future of education in Indonesia, as the creation of a wise and civilized future for education.

The 2013 curriculum is based on Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 79 of 2014, which explains that learning at the elementary school/madrasah ibtidaiyah level to the high school/vocational school level must have local

content, which is the subject matter or subject of study in the education unit that contains content and learning processes about madrasah ibtidaiyah to senior high school/vocational high school must have local content, which is a subject or course of study in an educational unit that contains content and learning processes about local potential and uniqueness intended to shape students' understanding of the excellence and wisdom in the area where they live.

The Concept of Ethnopedagogy

Ethnopedagogy in education is an approach that offers a culture-based concept, or more precisely, local wisdom. As an approach, ethnopedagogy in elementary schools needs to be implemented with innovative learning strategies and media that can attract students' attention to understand and apply local wisdom. According to Alwasilah et al. (2009), local wisdom is a potential that must be reinterpreted to be flexible in facing the challenges of the times, which have the following characteristics: 1) Based on experience 2) Empirically tested over many years 3) Adaptable to modern culture 4) Inherent in personal and institutional life 5) Commonly practiced by individuals and groups 6) Dynamic in nature 7) Related to belief systems.

The concept of ethnopedagogy is worth considering in efforts to reorient educational practices in Indonesia, one of which is the characteristic diversity of the Indonesian nation with its diversity of ethnic groups, languages, arts, cultures, and customs, which is an extraordinary potential that can be used to support the success of the educational process as a whole. However, based on the characteristics and potential of local wisdom, the application of ethnopedagogy in education cannot stand alone and be isolated from the influence of contemporary culture. The application of ethnopedagogy in education, which is rich in local wisdom, must always take into account the presence of global culture so that the educational process can be carried out comprehensively and optimal educational outcomes can be achieved. Ethnopedagogy aims to examine the dimensions of pedagogy through the perspective of sociological pedagogy (Linguard, 2010), so that ethnopedagogy can be placed as part of the pedagogical discipline.

Implementation of ethnopedagogy in the world of education

Ethnopedagogy can improve student learning outcomes and social values such as cooperation and unity among them. One form of ethnopedagogical implementation is by studying the symbols of a community's art, which are believed to have noble values and are not merely symbols. The meaning of a symbol in a particular art or tradition is used by students as a guideline for daily life. In the initial stage, teachers present an art form, such as dance or music, that is integrated with the learning content of the curriculum (). Teachers then ask students to find out the values contained in the artwork.

The social values in the artwork are part of character values. Not all cultural products in society have pedagogical values that can be taught to students. To obtain pedagogical value, cultural products must first be transformed. This transformation includes changing language that is not comprehensible to students into simpler language. Another transformation is simplifying poetry into prose, paying attention to the necessary words and punctuation. This transformation has implications for teaching in schools. The results of the transformation need to be developed into teaching materials that are tailored to students and their level of education. In addition, in the implementation of ethnopedagogy, there are also several things that must be

applied, as follows. 1. The application of ethnopedagogy in education; 2. The application of ethnopedagogy for educators; 3. The application of ethnopedagogy for students.

Barriers to ethnopedagogy

The obstacles found in existing literature reviews are the lack of a mature concept of ethnopedagogy in Indonesia, even though it has already been implemented. Ethnopedagogy is understood as the application of cultural values in society that are applied to learning in schools. Ethnopedagogy here is almost the same as multicultural-based learning. Due to this similarity, it is necessary to further examine the differences between ethnopedagogy and multicultural-based education in more depth. In terms of implementation, the obstacle is that there is no teacher competency design. Ethnopedagogical-based learning requires teachers to have the courage to change the learning paradigm. Teachers must be able to improve students' competency mastery while still paying attention to their cultural background. Teachers must also be able to provide space for students to understand the material concepts by relating them to the students' experiences and culture K.

CONCLUSION

The concept of ethnopedagogy is still evolving, primarily refined through practical trials and suitable implementation models. In Indonesia, it emphasizes philosophical, psychological, and socio-cultural foundations, aiming to create enjoyable learning based on education from, for, and by the community. While its application has positively impacted learning outcomes and student character development, the concept remains immature and is often confused with multicultural education. Future research should focus on refining and clearly differentiating ethnopedagogy by fostering collaboration among universities, schools, and government institutions to develop a more robust and contextually relevant framework.

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