



Innovative Curriculum Design Based on Local Wisdom: Integrating Bengkalis Folktales into Language and Character Education in High Schools

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Abstract: This study aims to develop an innovative curriculum model based on local wisdom in Bengkalis by integrating Malay cultural values into Indonesian language learning at the senior high school level. The research employed a Research and Development (R&D) method adapted from the ADDIE model, encompassing the stages of needs analysis, design, development, expert validation, and limited implementation. The implementation was conducted at SMAS IT Mutiara Pinggir and SMAS Alam Duri in Bengkalis Regency. Data were collected through expert validation instruments, observation guidelines, questionnaires, and interviews. Data analysis involved descriptive quantitative techniques to assess the feasibility of the curriculum model and qualitative thematic analysis to explore teachers' and students' learning experiences. The validation results indicate that the developed model demonstrates a very high level of feasibility, with an average score of 4.43. Findings from the limited implementation reveal increased student engagement and the strengthening of character values through learning activities based on local folklore, including Bujang Ikal, Lancang Kuning, and Laksamana Raja di Laut. The integration of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) principles with character education contributes to Indonesian language learning that is more contextual, reflective, and meaningful. Furthermore, the proposed curriculum model aligns with the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum and the Pancasila Student Profile policy, and it can be replicated in other regions with appropriate adaptations to local cultural contexts. Overall, the findings confirm that curriculum development grounded in local wisdom is an effective strategy for preserving cultural values while simultaneously strengthening character education in schools.

Article History

Received: 30-10-2025

Revised: 27-11-2025

Accepted: 22-12-2025

Published: 20-01-2026

Key Words:

Innovative
Curriculum; Local
Wisdom; Folklore;
Character Education.

How to Cite: Zulfa, M., Harjito, H., & Umaya, N. M. (2026). Innovative Curriculum Design Based on Local Wisdom: Integrating Bengkalis Folktales into Language and Character Education in High Schools. *Jurnal Paedagogy*, 13(1), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.33394/jp.v13i1.18219>



<https://doi.org/10.33394/jp.v13i1.18219>

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Introduction

The modern world of education requires a new paradigm in curriculum development that focuses not only on academic achievement but also on character building, cultural identity, and social competence of students. Futuristic curricula in various countries focus on the importance of contextual learning that is relevant to the realities of students. This is in line with Hutabarat et al., (2023), which states that education must be relevant to the daily lives of students and help them develop skills and knowledge that can be applied in real life. In a global context, approaches such as culturally responsive pedagogy and value-based education show that learning based on local culture can increase student engagement and foster awareness and identity among students (Siswanto et al., 2024). In Indonesia, the education program through the Merdeka Curriculum provides a new direction for learning practices that are more flexible, contextual, and learner-centered (Khiftiyah et al., 2023; Hafizah, 2023; Agung, 2025). The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the importance of developing Pancasila Student Profiles that are faithful, noble, independent, critical, creative,



and cooperative (Mujiburrohman et al., 2024). This principle indicates that the learning process needs to depart from the socio-cultural context in which students live. However, in practice, the application of value-based and local culture-based learning still faces many obstacles, especially in the concepts of curriculum design and classroom implementation.

Indonesian language learning is one of the potential means of integrating cultural values and character. According to Hatima (2025) Indonesian language learning has a strategic position because it not only functions as a means of communication but also as a vehicle for shaping values, attitudes, and culture. As a subject that does not only emphasize linguistic aspects, Indonesian language serves to build critical, communicative, and expressive skills through various forms of text. This is in line with the opinion of Silaswati et al., (2025) who states that strengthening contextual learning through Indonesian is not only a pedagogical strategy but also a form of support for national identity in a higher education world that is increasingly competitive globally. However, it is unfortunate that many high schools are still stuck in an approach that focuses only on text and content. Learning materials are often generic and do not adequately reflect the socio-cultural reality of students, resulting in learning that lacks contextual relevance and affective appeal for students.

One of the great potentials that can be harnessed in Indonesian language learning is folklore. Folklore is not only entertainment and has literary elements, but also contains values, namely moral, social, and spiritual values that reflect the outlook on life in society. The values contained in folk tales usually include honesty, politeness, loyalty, responsibility, and interaction with nature and fellow social beings, as well as values of faith (Sa'ida, 2020). Through folk tales, students can learn these values. The Bengkalis folk tale, for example, describes the values of mutual cooperation, harmony, and respect for the environment, values that are very relevant to the vision of character education in the current era. Thus, local folk tales can be a strategic means of connecting language learning with character education.

In reality, the use of folklore in education is still minimal and fragmented. Many educators use folklore texts only as supplementary reading material without linking them to learning outcomes or character assessment. Efforts to integrate cultural values into the curriculum are often carried out unevenly and without planning, so that local values have not become the main foundation of learning. This condition shows a gap between the view of local wisdom-based education policy and the reality in the field, which still tends to be textual and oriented towards knowledge alone.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of integrating local culture into learning. Research conducted by Nur et al., (2025) concludes that the integration of local wisdom in biology learning can strengthen students' understanding while fostering an attitude of caring for culture and the environment. Research conducted (Miranti et al., 2024) shows that the use of folklore, customs, and regional languages can improve students' understanding of cultural heritage while enriching their learning experiences. This integration also strengthens national identity and fosters pride in the nation's culture, demonstrating that education plays an important role in preserving and developing Indonesia's cultural diversity. Research conducted by Maula & Mukhlis (2025) found that Baturraden folklore contains values of national commitment, anti-violence, tolerance, and appreciation for local culture. These values are considered relevant to be instilled through literature learning because they can shape students' characters to be inclusive, tolerant, and respectful of cultural and religious diversity. Some of these studies have successfully demonstrated an increase in student interest in learning and understanding local culture. However, most of these studies are still at the micro level, namely the development of learning modules or media. Studies on curriculum design that systematically integrate local wisdom into the structure of



competencies, materials, methods, and assessment are still very limited. Thus, conceptual contributions at the curriculum design level remain a research gap that needs to be filled.

After discussing each study, it can be strongly asserted that none of the previous studies specifically and comprehensively focused on holistic and systematic curriculum design, which integrated competencies, learning materials, methods, and assessment based on the local wisdom of Bengkalis in Indonesian language learning. Most studies are still at a partial and micro level, such as the development of media, modules, or the use of folk tales as teaching materials, so they have not touched on the level of curriculum design as a structured, sustainable, and integrated framework for Indonesian language learning in secondary schools.

This research gap shows the need for an innovative curriculum model based on local wisdom that not only places regional culture as teaching material but also as a framework for thinking in designing learning experiences for students. Such a curriculum is expected to be able to integrate Indonesian language competency achievements with the holistic character building of students, while strengthening the link between national education policy and the socio-cultural life of the community. Without a contextual approach, learning materials tend to be textual and mechanical, resulting in low student engagement in learning and a lack of meaningful internalization of cultural values and character. Students find it difficult to relate the text to their life experiences, which ultimately weakens their reflective, empathetic, and critical abilities in Indonesian language learning.

Based on these conditions, this study aims to design and validate a local wisdom-based curriculum design through the integration of Bengkalis folk tales into Indonesian language learning at the high school level. This study also seeks to answer how local cultural values can be operationalized into learning objectives, strategies, materials, and character assessment. The Bengkalis region was chosen because it has a wealth of narratives and cultural values that are rich in social and ecological meaning, so that its folk tales not only serve as a means of language learning but also as a medium for cultural preservation and character education. Thus, Indonesian language learning that continues to focus on texts without the support of cultural context risks losing its relevance, meaning, and transformative power as a vehicle for shaping the character and identity of students.

Research Method

This study uses the Research and Development (R&D) method with the ADDIE model, which consists of five main stages, namely analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. The R&D model was chosen because it bridges the gap between theory and practice, between scientific ideas and real needs in the classroom (Sugiyono, 2017 in Sumiati et al., 2024). Through this approach, the research process does not stop at the analysis stage but continues with creative actions in the form of design, testing, and refinement of the curriculum model to make it more systematic and factual. The ADDIE model was used and modified to be more relevant to the focus of local wisdom-based curriculum research (Setiawan et al., 2021), with an emphasis on three main stages, namely analysis, design, and development. Furthermore, the implementation and evaluation stages are carried out on a limited scale to ensure that the developed curriculum model is not only conceptually feasible, but also relevant and practical so that it can be realistically applied by teachers.

This research was conducted in two high schools located in Bengkalis Regency, Riau Province, namely SMAS IT Mutiara Pinggir and SMAS Alam Duri. Both schools were selected purposively because they have strong socio-cultural characteristics that are relevant to the research objectives. SMAS IT Mutiara Pinggir is an integrated Islamic school that



integrates religious and moral values into all subjects. This school is committed to shaping students with noble character and Malay cultural identity. Meanwhile, SMAS Alam Duri is known as a school that implements a contextual learning approach based on the local environment and culture. These two schools represent the Bengkalis educational context, which emphasizes a balance between academic education, character, and the preservation of local wisdom values. The selection of these locations aimed to ensure that the innovative local wisdom-based curriculum model developed could be tested realistically in schools founded on religious values and coastal Malay culture.

The analysis stage began by observing the reality in the field regarding the Indonesian language curriculum, which did not fully reflect the lives of the students. The researchers then examined curriculum documents, interviewed teachers, and analyzed the content of Bengkalis folk tales with the aim of discovering the values that live within the community. These findings were the first step in designing a more deeply rooted curriculum. The design stage produced a preliminary integrative curriculum design aimed at combining elements of language competence, cultural values, and character building. The implementation stage was limited to two high schools in Bengkalis Regency. Indonesian language teachers used the model design for one learning theme based on local folk tales. In a lively classroom atmosphere, the researcher observed how students wrote, discussed, and reflected on the values of their own folk tales. Data were collected through observation, questionnaires, and brief interviews with teachers and students.

The final stage, evaluation, not only assesses the feasibility of the curriculum model, but also aims to examine its cultural relevance and determine the extent to which teachers find it easier to instill character values without being patronizing. The feasibility and validity of the model are determined based on expert validation results with a minimum average score of 4.0 on a 5-point Likert scale, indicating that the model is in the feasible to highly feasible category. Quantitative data from the validation instrument were analyzed descriptively to assess the feasibility of the model. Meanwhile, thematic analysis was used to identify the cultural values contained in Bengkalis folk tales and to understand the experiences of teachers and students in implementing the curriculum model, as stated by Braun & Clarke (2006) in Irianti et al., (2025). The entire research process was carried out in accordance with research ethics principles. Each participant was involved voluntarily and had given their consent after receiving an explanation (informed consent), and their involvement was seen as a joint contribution to efforts to improve the quality of education.

Results and Discussion

The innovative curriculum model based on Bengkalis local wisdom was developed by integrating values from three main folk tales: The Legend of Bujang Ikal, Lancang Kuning, and Laksamana Raja di Laut. The feasibility of the model was assessed by three groups of experts, namely curriculum experts, character education experts, and local culture experts. The aspects assessed included (1) content suitability, (2) clarity of model structure, (3) cultural relevance, and (4) applicability in schools. The validation results showed that the model obtained an average score of 4.43 on a scale of 5, which is classified as very feasible. The strongest aspect was the relevance of cultural values (average 4.7), while the aspect with the lowest score was the clarity of the teacher implementation guidelines (average 4.1).



Table 1. Expert Validation Results for the Curriculum Model

| Aspects assessed | Average score | Category | Suggestions for improvement |
|------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|--|
| Content suitability | 4,4 | Very suitable | Add examples of mapping Indonesian language learning outcomes with local cultural values. |
| Clarity of model components | 4,1 | Suitable | Clarify implementation guidelines and reflection flow for teachers |
| Relevance of cultural values | 4,7 | Highly Feasible | Maintain the integration of distinctive Bengkalis Malay values, particularly in terms of leadership and social responsibility. |
| Classroom applicability | 4,5 | Highly Feasible | Adjust the timing of the reflection to make it more realistic within two meetings. |
| Overall average | 4,43 | Highly Feasible | - |

The validation results showed an overall average of 4.43, which falls into the very feasible category. These findings indicate that the developed curriculum model has high conceptual and practical quality for implementation in secondary schools. The aspect of cultural relevance received the highest score (4.7), followed by applicability in the classroom (4.5). These results show that the integration of Bengkalis local wisdom values into Indonesian language learning is considered appropriate, meaningful, and realistic by experts. The cultural values taken from the stories of Bujang Ikal, Lancang Kuning, and Laksamana Raja di Laut are considered capable of supporting character building in students while strengthening the local context of learning. Conversely, the aspect of clarity of model components received the lowest score (4.1), which means that improvements are still needed in technical guidelines and classroom implementation instructions. In an interview with one of the experts (AA) in the field of education, he stated that this model is in line with the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum because it facilitates contextual and flexible learning. He mentioned that the integration between learning outcomes and local cultural values is clear, but explicit examples mapping Indonesian language achievements to character indicators are needed. This is in line with what was stated by (Ferdin et al., 2025) regarding the independent curriculum, namely that the independent curriculum is a response to the need for contextual and flexible education with the main objective of developing students' potential holistically. One cultural observer (SA) highlighted the importance of maintaining the nuances of the Malay language and philosophy in learning texts so that cultural values are not reduced to mere moral slogans. He emphasized that the stories of Lancang Kuning and Laksamana Raja di Laut contain messages of leadership and social responsibility that are highly relevant to the character of today's students. Therefore, it can be concluded that the innovative curriculum model based on Bengkalis local wisdom is very feasible to implement. The high average score (4.43) is supported by positive feedback from experts who assess this model as academically relevant, culturally strong, and practically realistic. With minor improvements to the teacher guidance aspect, this model has the potential to become an example of a contextual curriculum based on cultural values that can be adapted in other regions in Indonesia.



Table 2. Mapping of Bengkulu Folktales to Indonesian Language Learning

| Folktales | Average score | Category | Character Indicators | Suggestions for Improvement |
|------------------------|----------------------------|--|-----------------------|---|
| Bujang Ikal | Loyalty, responsibility | Rewrite narrative texts and discuss moral values | Discipline, integrity | Reflective journal |
| Lancang Kuning | Wisdom, courage | Debate and poetry writing project | Leadership, empathy | Project portfolio |
| Laksamana Raja di Laut | Leadership, social justice | Mini drama or short video on leadership | Social awareness | Observation of attitudes and written reflection |

Based on the results of further validation, the aspect of cultural value integration in learning objectives received an average score of 4.6 (very feasible), while the applicability of value reflection activities in classroom practice received a score of 4.4 (feasible). This shows that the model meets the standards for value integration and meaningful learning activities. Experts stated that each component of the model, from the selection of cultural values to assessment activities, was logically and systematically connected. For example, the activity of rewriting the story of Bujang Ikal not only trained narrative writing skills but also fostered responsibility and loyalty, which were the core values of the story. In interviews, teachers also said that children were much more enthusiastic when lessons began with stories from their own region. They felt closer to the material and were more active when asked to rewrite the story from a new perspective. One of the students interviewed said, “I just realized that the story ‘Lancang Kuning’ is not only about ships, but also about the courage to make fair decisions.” The high score on the aspect of cultural value integration (4.6) is in line with the testimonies of teachers and students who stated that local story-based learning activities make learning more lively and meaningful. Meanwhile, teachers' input regarding the need for additional time for reflection is in line with the quantitative results of applicability (4.4), which indicate the need for minor improvements in learning time management. Conceptually, this curriculum product reflects the principles of contextual and value-based learning, in which language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a medium for shaping identity and life values. This model supports the direction of the Pancasila Student Profile policy by fostering critical thinking, noble character, and global diversity through the context of local culture.

Table 3. Results of Curriculum Model Implementation in Partner Schools

| Aspects Observed | Success Indicators | Results (%) | Category |
|-------------------------------------|--|-------------|-----------|
| Student engagement | Activity, collaboration, enthusiasm | 88 | High |
| Relevance of cultural values | Integration of values into learning activities | 91 | Very high |
| Ease of implementation for teachers | Time efficiency and clarity of guidelines | 84 | Very high |

The results of implementing the curriculum model in partner schools show generally very positive outcomes, marked by high student engagement (88%), very high cultural relevance (91%), and ease of implementation for teachers, which is also in the very high category (84%). These findings confirm that the Bengkulu local wisdom-based curriculum model is effective in creating contextual, meaningful, and easy-to-apply learning in classroom practice. However, the character reflection aspect shows a relatively lower achievement rate of 80%. This difference in achievement indicates that although the cognitive, participatory, and contextual components of learning can run well, the character



reflection process has a higher level of pedagogical complexity and requires a more in-depth approach. In addition to limited learning time, teachers face challenges in facilitating deep and continuous value reflection. Character reflection not only requires students to understand the moral values contained in folklore, but also requires the ability to relate these values to life experiences, attitudes, and daily behavior. This process requires intensive guidance, focused reflective questions, and a learning atmosphere that provides space for students' personal expression. In practice, teachers also experience difficulties in conducting systematic non-cognitive assessments, particularly in measuring aspects of value internalization, empathy, and moral awareness, which cannot be measured instantly or through conventional assessment instruments.

Another challenge relates to the limited duration of thematic learning. The implementation of character reflection, which is only carried out in one cycle of the learning theme, is considered insufficient to build a continuous reflection process. Character building is essentially a long-term process that requires repetition, reinforcement, and consistency. Therefore, reflections conducted in a short period of time tend to result in a superficial understanding of values that are not yet fully internalized in the attitudes and behaviors of students. Teachers also noted that students need more structured guidance (scaffolding) to be able to bridge the moral values in Bengkalis folk tales with their own realities. These findings indicate that although this local wisdom-based curriculum model is effective in increasing student engagement and learning relevance, its implementation still faces limitations in the reflection and character assessment stages. These limitations are mainly related to time allocation, teacher readiness in managing reflective learning, and the availability of practical and measurable non-cognitive assessment instruments. Therefore, further refinement is needed in the reflection and assessment stages of the curriculum model, including through the addition of time allocation for reflection, the development of more operational reflective guidelines, and the preparation of character assessment instruments that are able to capture the development of attitudes and values more comprehensively. These refinements are crucial so that the integration of cultural values in Indonesian language learning does not stop at the symbolic level, but truly contributes to the continuous formation of students' character and identity.

a) Curriculum as a Space for Cultural Values

Conceptually, these findings reinforce the view that the curriculum is not merely an administrative tool, but rather a living space for values and meaning. According to Posner (1992), in Ismail & Fata (2016) the curriculum can be understood as a cultural text, namely a social text where values, experiences, and cultural identities are reinterpreted in the learning process. The model developed in this study successfully operationalized this view: Bengkalis folk tales are not only taught as literary texts but also used as a pedagogical medium to shape character and cultural awareness. Values such as loyalty (Bujang Ikal), wisdom (Lancang Kuning), and justice (Laksamana Raja di Laut) become bridges between language competence and character building. This is in line with the spirit of the Pancasila Student Profile, which places literacy, mutual cooperation, and noble character as integrative learning outcomes, rather than separate ones.

b) The Integration of CTL Theory and Character Education

According to Johnson (2002), in Azis & Purnamasari (2017), Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) is a learning approach that helps students understand the meaning of subject matter by connecting it to their personal, social, and cultural contexts. CTL positions students not merely as recipients of information, but as active constructors of



meaning. In this study, CTL serves as the epistemological framework of the developed curriculum model. Learning activities such as reading, rewriting, and discussing Bengkulu folk tales enable students to experience directly the relationship between language, lived experiences, and cultural values. For instance, when students rewrite the story of *Lancang Kuning* from the perspective of common people, they not only practice narrative writing skills but also develop social empathy and the ability to critically evaluate issues of justice. This process reflects moral knowing, as conceptualized by Lickona (1991) in Sudrajat (2011) which in the context of the Pancasila Student Profile, is closely aligned with the dimension of critical thinking.

While CTL provides the methodological foundation, character education functions as the value orientation and moral purpose of the curriculum model. Lickona (1991) in Sudrajat (2011) emphasizes that effective character education integrates three core components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. In this model, moral feeling and moral action are cultivated through reflective and experiential learning, particularly when students engage emotionally with the moral dilemmas and values embodied in Bengkulu folk tales. Values such as loyalty, responsibility, wisdom, and justice are not transmitted verbally, but are lived and experienced through project-based learning, reflection journals, and collaborative activities. These processes foster the development of faithful and noble character, as well as cooperative attitudes, which directly correspond to key dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile.

The integration of CTL and character education in this curriculum model thus embodies the principles of the Pancasila Student Profile in a coherent and systematic manner. Moral knowing is realized through critical analysis of texts and moral conflicts, enabling students to think critically and reflectively. Moral feeling and moral action are manifested through empathy, responsibility, cooperation, and moral commitment, as students internalize values and translate them into concrete actions. For example, after engaging with the story of *Bujang Ikal*, students are encouraged to write personal commitments related to responsibility toward family and community, demonstrating the transition from moral understanding to moral action. Through group discussions, role-playing, and collaborative projects, students also practice cooperation, respect for differing perspectives, and social responsibility.

Therefore, the integration of CTL theory and character education in the Bengkulu Local Wisdom-Based Innovative Curriculum Model does not merely support the Merdeka Curriculum but inherently operationalizes the Pancasila Student Profile. CTL provides meaningful contexts and authentic learning experiences, while character education gives moral direction and value orientation. Together, they form a holistic learning process in which Indonesian language learning becomes not only a means of developing linguistic competence but also a transformative space for shaping critical thinkers who are faithful, noble, and cooperative members of society.

Conclusion

This study produced an Innovative Curriculum Model Based on Local Wisdom in Bengkulu that integrates Malay cultural values into Indonesian language learning in high schools. This model has been proven to be feasible and relevant both theoretically and practically, with an average validation score of 4.43 (very feasible category) and implementation results showing high student engagement (88%) and strong cultural relevance (91%). Theoretically, this model confirms that the curriculum can function as a living space



for cultural values, where language learning becomes a means of developing students' character and cultural identity. The integration of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) theory and character education proves that local cultural values can be operationalized in contextual, reflective, and meaningful learning. Practically, this model provides an alternative flexible curriculum design that can be replicated in various regions by adjusting to the local cultural context. Thus, the Bengkalis local wisdom-based curriculum not only preserves culture but also strengthens the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile in the Merdeka Curriculum.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, several follow-up recommendations can be proposed for teachers and future researchers. For teachers, this local wisdom-based curriculum model can be used as a reference in designing Indonesian language learning that is oriented towards strengthening cultural values and character building in students. Teachers are advised to expand value reflection sessions by providing more adequate time and using more structured reflective guidelines so that students are able to internalize values more deeply. In addition, teachers need to receive training and technical assistance, particularly related to reflective learning strategies and non-cognitive assessment, so that character assessment can be carried out more systematically, objectively, and sustainably in classroom practice.

For future researchers, this study opens up opportunities to test the model over a longer period of time and in more diverse regional contexts to examine the sustainability, effectiveness, and adaptability of the model in various socio-cultural settings. Further research can also develop and refine character assessment instruments that are more practical and sensitive to the development of students' values. In addition, comparative studies between regions based on different local wisdom can be conducted to enrich the understanding of the integration of local culture in the Indonesian language curriculum design. In terms of policy, the integration of local culture in learning needs to be facilitated more systematically in the national curriculum as a strategy for strengthening context-based character education. This policy support is important so that the implementation of a local wisdom-based curriculum is not sporadic, but becomes part of a continuous effort to realize the Pancasila Student Profile through Indonesian language learning.

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