



THE ROLE OF LOCAL WISDOM IN ETHNOMUSICOLOGICAL EDUCATION FOR CULTURAL IDENTITY FORMATION: A LITERATURE-BASED CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Amidst the pressures of globalization, schools often struggle to balance the demand for global competencies with the preservation of local culture. In music education, the dominance of a Western-centric curriculum can alienate students from their own musical traditions. This paper utilizes a literature review method to analyze how an ethnomusicological approach, grounded in local wisdom, can serve as a pedagogical alternative to strengthen students' cultural identity. By synthesizing various studies, we argue that local wisdom (which includes the social context, function, and philosophy of music) should be the core of learning, not just supplementary material. The analysis suggests that engaging students with music from their own cultural environment has the potential to support identity formation in three aspects: personal (connecting with heritage), collective (strengthening a sense of community), and intercultural (understanding other cultures through the lens of one's own). We conclude that applying this approach could shift the function of the music classroom from a mere technical training space to one of cultural dialogue. The practical implication points to the need to review curriculum design and teacher training to be more oriented towards local cultural contexts, in order to foster students who have a deep understanding of their own roots while being open to the world.

Keywords: Ethnomusicology, Local Wisdom, Cultural Identity, Music Education, , Critical Pedagogy.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the midst of an unstoppable wave of globalization, educational institutions worldwide face the crucial task of balancing the preparation of students for participation in a global community with the preservation of their unique cultural identities. Cultural identity, which includes inherited values, beliefs, and expressions, serves as a psychological foundation that provides individuals with a sense of belonging and meaning (Nabilatunnisa & Salsabilah, 2022). The loss of this foundation can lead to alienation and identity crises, especially among younger generations exposed to dominant global popular cultures. In this context, arts education, particularly music, holds a strategic role as a potent medium for cultural transmission (Wattimena, 2025).

However, music education practices in many countries, including Indonesia, have often historically adopted curricula and methodologies centered on European classical music. Despite its high artistic value, this approach risks creating a distance between students and their own cultural environments (Reizabal, 2022). Local and traditional music are often positioned as supplementary material or mere exotic showcases, rather than as the core of the musical learning experience. Consequently, the potential of music as a tool for cultural affirmation and identity formation is not optimally realized.

To address this gap, the ethnomusicological approach offers an alternative paradigm. Ethnomusicology, as the study of music in its cultural context, views all musical traditions as equal and worthy of study (Curran & Radhakrishnan, 2021). When applied in education, this approach encourages learning centered on the music that is alive in students' communities. This paper argues that the effectiveness of the ethnomusicological approach reaches its peak when it explicitly centers

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on the exploration of "local wisdom" that is, the knowledge, values, and philosophies embedded within these musical traditions.

Although much research has highlighted the importance of local music in schools, a conceptual analysis that systematically links the ethnomusicological framework, the content of local wisdom, and the psychological mechanisms of cultural identity formation remains limited. This paper aims to fill that gap by conducting a literature-based analysis to build a conceptual model. The central question is: How can the role of local wisdom within an ethnomusicological education framework be theoretically explained as the foundation for students' cultural identity formation?

2. IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

This study is built upon a qualitative approach, employing an integrative literature review method to develop a conceptual argument. The process began by identifying and gathering a range of relevant scholarly sources (journal articles, books, and research reports) from academic databases using keywords focused on the intersection of ethnomusicological education, local wisdom, and identity formation. All collected literature was then critically evaluated to filter for the most significant sources, which were subsequently analyzed thematically to draw connections, identify patterns, and synthesize diverse ideas into a coherent framework (Abdussamad, 2021). As such, this methodology does not aim to test hypotheses with field data but rather to construct a solid theoretical model based on existing findings within a multidisciplinary research landscape.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The literature analysis resulted in a conceptual framework that explains how local wisdom becomes a central element in ethnomusicological education for forming cultural identity. This framework is built on three main pillars: the redefinition of music education through the ethnomusicological paradigm, the positioning of local wisdom as the pedagogical core, and the psychological mechanisms of identity formation.

3.1 Redefining Music Education: The Ethnomusicological Paradigm

Traditionally, music education is often defined as the process of learning to read notation, play an instrument (typically a Western one), and appreciate the works of great composers. The ethnomusicological approach fundamentally challenges this view. It proposes that music is a cultural phenomenon (music as culture) before it is merely an artistic one (Pudjasworo, et al., 2017). This means the primary goal of music education is not just to produce technically skilled musicians, but also culturally literate individuals through music.

In this paradigm, the music classroom becomes a cultural laboratory. The focus shifts from "learning about music" to "learning through music." Students are encouraged not only to play a folk song but also to understand why that song exists, how it is used in ceremonies, who performs it, and what values it contains. Thus, music becomes a gateway to understanding a community's worldview (Hidayatullah, 2023).

3.2 Local Wisdom as the Pedagogical Core Content

If ethnomusicology is the vehicle, then local wisdom is its fuel. Local wisdom in the context of music extends beyond mere melody or rhythm. It includes:

- **Philosophical Values:** Many traditional musics contain teachings about harmony with nature, cooperation (e.g., in ensemble music like Gamelan), or the life cycle.



- Social Context: Music as an accompaniment to rituals, celebrations, or even as a means of conflict resolution.
- Local Knowledge: Techniques for making instruments from natural materials, unique tuning systems, and oral traditions passed down through song lyrics.

When local wisdom becomes the center of the curriculum, the learning process becomes authentic and relevant to students. For example, learning Batak Gondang music is not just about striking the taganing correctly, but also understanding its role in the dalihaan na tolu kinship system. This transforms the learning experience from a mere motor activity into an intellectual and emotional journey of understanding one's self (Sunarto, et al., 2024).

3.3 The Mechanism of Cultural Identity Formation through Music

The integration of local wisdom through an ethnomusicological approach triggers the process of identity formation at several levels:

- The Personal Level: When students learn music familiar to their family or community environment, that music becomes part of their life narrative. This strengthens their emotional connection to their ancestral heritage, builds pride, and answers the fundamental question, "Who am I?".
- The Collective Level: Communal music-making (e.g., singing together in a folk song choir or playing in a traditional music ensemble) inherently fosters a sense of community and solidarity. Students feel they are part of something larger than themselves, strengthening their social identity and sense of belonging to their cultural group.
- The Intercultural Level: By deeply understanding the richness and complexity of their own culture, students acquire a framework for appreciating other cultures. They learn that every culture possesses equally valid systems of knowledge and artistic expression. This is the foundation of intercultural competence, where a strong cultural identity does not lead to chauvinism, but to openness and respect.

3.4 Implications and Challenges in Implementation

This conceptual framework has significant practical implications. It demands a change in curriculum design, the development of teaching materials based on local contexts, and, most importantly, teacher training. Music teachers need to be equipped not only with musical skills but also with anthropological competencies the ability to research, document, and translate local wisdom into meaningful learning experiences.

The challenges are also considerable. The standardization of national curricula, a lack of resources (recordings, instruments, local experts), and the perception that local music is "less prestigious" than global popular music are some of the obstacles that need to be overcome through culturally conscious educational policies.

4. CONCLUSION

This paper has presented a conceptual analysis affirming that the role of local wisdom in ethnomusicological education is central and transformative for students' cultural identity formation. By positioning music as a living cultural practice and local wisdom as its core pedagogical content, this approach turns the music classroom into an identity incubator. This process allows students to forge a deep connection with their heritage, build a sense of community, and develop authentic intercultural understanding.

The proposed model suggests that effective music education in the global era is not one that imitates foreign models, but one that dares to draw from its own internal richness. It not only teaches

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students how to play music but also gives them strong cultural roots to stand on the world stage. Future research is recommended to test this conceptual framework through empirical case studies or action research in various school contexts to validate and refine this model in actual practice.

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