



STRATEGY FOR INTEGRATING SPIRITUALITY VALUES AND CHARACTER EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF LOCAL CULTURE FOR THE FORMATION OF A NOBLE-MORAL GENERATION

STRATEGI INTEGRASI NILAI SPIRITUALITAS DAN PENDIDIKAN KERAKTER DLM KONTES BUDAYA LOKAL UNTUK PEMBENTUKAN GENERASI BERAKHLAK MULIAH

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Abstract

This study examines strategies for integrating spiritual values and character education based on local wisdom in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), Indonesia. NTT has a unique socio-cultural characteristic in which Christian and Catholic values have been deeply inculturated into indigenous traditions and customary practices. This qualitative research aims to formulate a model of character education that remains firmly rooted in local cultural foundations (indigenous knowledge) rather than being detached from them. The findings indicate that local concepts such as Moat Gede (Sikka), Suu/Woe (Ngada/Ende), and Loke Nggerang (Manggarai) can function as effective instruments for cultivating noble moral character. The study concludes that the formation of youth character in NTT will achieve optimal outcomes when educational institutions are able to carry out a meaningful “reconciliation” between religious dogma, the formal curriculum, and customary ethical values.

Keywords : NTT Spirituality, Inculturation, Character Education, Local Wisdom, Noble Character.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji strategi integrasi nilai spiritualitas dan pendidikan karakter berbasis kearifan lokal di Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT). NTT memiliki karakteristik unik di mana nilai-nilai Kristiani dan Katolik telah berinkulturasi secara mendalam dengan tradisi adat. Penelitian kualitatif ini bertujuan merumuskan model pendidikan karakter yang tidak tercerabut dari akar budaya lokal (indigenous knowledge). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konsep-konsep seperti Moat Gede (Sikka), Suu/Woe (Ngada/Ende), dan Loke Nggerang (Manggarai) dapat menjadi instrumen efektif dalam penanaman akhlak mulia. Kesimpulan penelitian menekankan bahwa pembentukan karakter generasi muda di NTT akan mencapai hasil maksimal jika institusi pendidikan mampu melakukan “rekonsiliasi” antara dogma agama, kurikulum formal, dan etika adat.



Kata Kunci : Spiritualitas NTT, Inkulturasi, Pendidikan Karakter, Kearifan Lokal, Akhlak Mulia.

1. INTRODUCTION

East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) is often referred to as a “Laboratory of Harmony” in Indonesia. The distinctiveness of this region lies in the harmonious relationship between a high level of religiosity and strong adherence to traditional customs. Religious values are not merely practiced in formal worship but are embodied in everyday social life, rituals, and communal ethics. However, amid the rapid pressures of modernity and digitalization, concerns have emerged regarding the shifting values among the younger generation in NTT. Deviant behavior, the erosion of traditional manners (*tata krama*), and the weakening of work ethic have become serious challenges for the educational sector.

Character education in NTT should not merely adopt national models that often apply a “one size fits all” approach. Education in the land of Flobamora must be capable of capturing the spirit of *Loro Sa’e*, or the spirit of renewal and awakening, which is grounded in both transcendent divine values and the immanent values of local culture. This article explores how strategies for integrating spirituality and local wisdom can be implemented to shape a generation that is not only intellectually competent but also possesses a “Speaking Heart” (*Cor ad Cor Loquitur*), reflecting the spiritual depth and noble values of NTT society.

a. Inculturation Theory and Education

Inculturation theory, as developed by figures such as Bishop Hendrikus Leven in Flores, emphasizes that faith and spiritual values must “become flesh” within the local culture. From a postgraduate academic perspective, character education is viewed as a process of inculturating universal values into local symbols, narratives, and practices. When students learn values such as honesty, respect, and responsibility through their own folklore, customary philosophies, or tribal wisdom, these values are more deeply internalized at the emotional and spiritual levels.

b. The Ecology of Character Education in NTT

Drawing on ecological development theory, the character formation of children in NTT is strongly influenced by three interconnected pillars: Church/Mosque (Religion), Traditional House/Clan (Culture), and School (State). An effective integration strategy must enable these three pillars to communicate and reinforce values within a shared moral language, ensuring consistency between religious teachings, cultural ethics, and formal education.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a literature review and document analysis of local cultural traditions in NTT. Secondary data were collected from anthropological and sociocultural studies concerning communities in Flores, Timor, Sumba, and Alor. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key elements of local spirituality that can be translated into character education materials within the school curriculum.



3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

a. Synchronizing Local NTT Philosophy with Noble Moral Values

The analysis reveals several forms of local wisdom in NTT that substantively embody high spiritual values relevant to character education. The philosophy of Meko Gete, Gere Meze (Sikka/Flores) emphasizes the inherent dignity of human beings before God and fellow humans. In educational contexts, this philosophy can be integrated as a value of self-respect and respect for others, particularly in anti-bullying initiatives. The concept of Loke Nggerang (Manggarai) reflects unity between leaders and the people, or between teachers and students, forming the basis for values of integrity, loyalty, and commitment to truth. Meanwhile, the Pah Meto tradition (Timor) teaches profound respect for nature as God's creation, which can be incorporated into environmentally oriented character education.

b. Implementation Strategies in Schools

The integration strategy can be implemented through several concrete steps. First, curricular integration involves embedding local wisdom values into subjects such as Religious Education, Moral Education, and Pancasila Education. Second, cultural habituation is practiced through daily school routines, such as greeting one another using polite local languages, wearing traditional woven motifs on designated days to foster cultural pride, and beginning classes with brief spiritual reflections. Third, the involvement of traditional leaders (Tua Adat) is essential; inviting them to schools to share lived experiences of traditional ethics facilitates meaningful intergenerational dialogue.

c. Challenges and Solutions

The primary challenge in implementing this integration is the perception that local culture is “outdated” or irrelevant in modern contexts. The proposed solution is the digitalization of cultural narratives. Educators should creatively package NTT philosophies into modern learning media—such as videos, podcasts, and animations—while preserving their core spiritual essence. In this way, local wisdom remains relevant and engaging for contemporary students.

4. CONCLUSION

Character education in NTT reaches its highest level of effectiveness when it successfully unites the “power of prayer” (spirituality) with the “power of roots” (local culture). This integration strategy is not merely an effort to preserve cultural heritage but a strategic response to safeguarding future generations from moral crises. The ideal NTT generation is one that confidently advances into globalization while firmly carrying the spiritual identity and cultural values of its homeland.

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