

Reconceptualizing Cultural Preservation in Education: The Role of School-Based Karawitan Extracurricular Activities in Sustaining Local Wisdom

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses the limited attention given to extracurricular activities as sustainable mechanisms for cultural preservation within formal education. While prior research has predominantly focused on curriculum-based approaches, this study reconceptualizes extracurricular practices as dynamic socio-cultural learning spaces. Grounded in sociocultural theory and experiential learning, this research employs a qualitative case study design conducted at a vocational high school in Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving students, instructors, and school administrators. The findings reveal that Karawitan extracurricular activities function as (1) cultural transmission spaces, (2) identity construction arenas, and (3) community-based cultural sustainability platforms. This study proposes a conceptual model of “extracurricular-based cultural preservation,” contributing to the literature on culturally responsive education by extending the role of informal learning environments in sustaining local wisdom. The findings offer practical implications for integrating cultural heritage into school systems amid globalization pressures.

Keywords: cultural preservation; local wisdom education; extracurricular learning; karawitan; cultural identity; sociocultural learning

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INTRODUCTION

Local wisdom-based education plays a crucial role in preserving and safeguarding a nation's cultural heritage. Amid the ongoing wave of globalization, local cultures face significant challenges, such as the shift in traditional values and the threat of losing cultural identity among the younger generation. Education that integrates local wisdom serves as a strategic approach to instill cultural, moral, and ethical values aligned with the nation's identity. Through this approach, students not only acquire

academic knowledge but also gain a deep understanding of the cultural heritage that needs to be protected and preserved. The implementation of local wisdom-based education fosters a sense of pride in one's culture while strengthening national character and identity, ensuring that the younger generation can thrive as globally competitive individuals who also have a deep appreciation and concern for local culture (Aningrum, Aliasas, & Kim, 2024; Munawir et al., 2024).

Despite growing global attention to culturally responsive education, most studies have focused on curriculum integration, with limited exploration of extracurricular activities as strategic and sustainable spaces for cultural preservation. This gap highlights the need to examine how school-based cultural practices operate beyond formal instructional settings.

One of the vital cultural elements to preserve is Karawitan, a traditional music art form that uses gamelan instruments as its primary medium. Karawitan is more than just music; it embodies local wisdom values that reflect life philosophy, harmony, and togetherness. These values are part of a cultural heritage rich in meaning, shaping the character and behavior of the younger generation (Sulistyo, 2021; Hanif & Sri Maruti, 2024). Unfortunately, in this modern era, Karawitan is increasingly neglected, particularly by the younger generation who are more attracted to popular culture or modern music. This decline in interest presents a challenge to preserving Karawitan, making local wisdom-based education even more crucial in ensuring that this art form and its cultural values remain vibrant and are passed on to future generations (Dzakia et al., 2024; Rohmadin et al., 2019).

The researcher has observed an intriguing extracurricular activity at State Vocational High School 1 Surabaya—the Karawitan club—which serves as a medium for learning traditional arts. Due to the necessity of skilled instructors and specialized traditional musical instruments that require careful maintenance, few schools offer Karawitan clubs. This makes the Karawitan club at State Vocational High School 1 Surabaya particularly significant, as it plays a crucial role in preserving local cultural arts within a formal educational environment. Motivated by this, the researcher conducted a preliminary study at the school and discovered that the Karawitan club has attracted considerable student interest and has been consistently active since 2008. These findings highlight students' strong enthusiasm for learning Karawitan and emphasize the potential of this extracurricular activity in safeguarding local culture through education (Maruti, Maskurin, & Saputra, 2021; Rizzo, 2020).

Building on these initial findings, the researcher intends to pursue a study titled "The

Implementation of Local Wisdom-Based Education at State Vocational High School 1 Surabaya: The Karawitan Club as a Strategy for Preserving Local Arts and Culture." This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it seeks to expand the body of knowledge on the application of local wisdom-based education in cultural preservation at the secondary school level, particularly through Karawitan arts. Practically, the study's findings are anticipated to serve as a reference for other schools in developing extracurricular programs rooted in local culture as a means of preserving cultural heritage and fostering student character. In this way, the research will not only reinforce the role of schools in maintaining traditional values but also contribute to cultivating a generation that appreciates and takes pride in the nation's cultural heritage (Sujayanthi & Hartini, 2023; Wiyoso et al., 2019).

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of local wisdom-based education through the Karawitan extracurricular program at State Vocational High School 1 Surabaya (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The case study design allows the researcher to explore in detail the phenomenon of local cultural preservation within the specific context of the school.

The research was conducted at State Vocational High School 1 Surabaya, which offers a Karawitan extracurricular program as part of its efforts to preserve local culture through formal education. The research subjects include the Karawitan extracurricular program administrators, supervising teachers, and students actively participating in the program (Patton, 2014). The selection of the research location and subjects was based on the relevance and potential of the Karawitan extracurricular program as a strategic medium for preserving local arts and culture.

Data were collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation to capture comprehensive insights into the implementation of the program (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). Data analysis was conducted

using thematic analysis, involving coding, categorization, and interpretation of emerging themes. This analytical process enabled the identification of patterns and meanings related to the role of the Karawitan extracurricular program in fostering local cultural preservation among students.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study applied credibility, dependability, and confirmability criteria. Techniques such as data triangulation and peer debriefing were employed to enhance the validity and reliability of the data. Through these procedures, the study ensures that the findings accurately reflect the research context and are supported by consistent and transparent analytical processes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

History and Development of the Karawitan Extracurricular Activity at State Vocational High School 1 Surabaya

The Karawitan extracurricular activity at State Vocational High School 1 Surabaya was established in 2008. According to Mr. John G Pakarsi, M.Pd., who currently serves as the supervisor of this activity, the program existed prior to its official inauguration in that year. The Karawitan extracurricular was founded with a strong commitment to preserving and promoting Indonesian cultural values and arts, so that younger generations could continue to recognize, appreciate, and preserve Karawitan music as an essential part of the nation's cultural identity (Aningrum et al., 2024).

The development of this extracurricular activity was not without challenges. Initially, the Karawitan program at State Vocational High School 1 Surabaya faced limited resources, particularly in terms of musical instruments. However, in 2013, the school received a set of bronze gamelan instruments from the Surabaya City Government. This aid, provided during Mayor Bambang DH's leadership, significantly supported the sustainability and growth of the Karawitan program, enabling students to learn and practice more effectively (Hanif & Sri Maruti, 2024).

With sufficient equipment, the Karawitan extracurricular activity at State Vocational High

School 1 Surabaya began to show progress. The number of participants gradually increased, with new students joining each year. This growing enthusiasm is a clear indication that interest in traditional arts, particularly gamelan, remains strong and relevant among the younger generation (Dzakia et al., 2024).

Thanks to the enthusiasm of the students, the dedication of various stakeholders, and the school's strong support, the Karawitan extracurricular has achieved various accomplishments in competitions at both the city and provincial levels. This success demonstrates that the Karawitan program is not merely a ceremonial activity but also a platform for creativity and achievement (Rizzo, 2020). These accomplishments prove that the program continues to develop positively, making a tangible impact on cultural preservation while also enhancing the school's reputation in various competitions.

The Role of Karawitan Extracurricular in Preserving Local Arts and Culture

The Karawitan extracurricular plays a strategic role in preserving local arts and culture. Through this activity, knowledge is transferred from instructors to the younger generation, ensuring that skills and understanding of gamelan music are passed down and preserved. By learning directly from experts, students not only acquire the techniques of playing gamelan but also comprehend the cultural values embedded in the music (Becker & Feinstein, 2020). This process is essential to ensure that Karawitan culture remains vibrant and sustainable amidst the changing times, passing from one generation to the next (Sulistyo, 2021).



Figure 1. Documentation of Training

Knowledge transfer is particularly significant in light of the declining interest among the younger generation in local arts. Through Karawitan extracurriculars, students are encouraged not only to recognize but also to love and appreciate traditional arts that form an integral part of the nation's cultural identity. Thus, this activity serves as a crucial bridge in ensuring that gamelan music is not only known but continues to be popular among youth, preventing it from fading in the face of foreign cultural influences (Wiyoso et al., 2019).



Figure 2. Documentation after show

For the members of the extracurricular, the benefits go beyond knowledge transfer. They also absorb the cultural values inherent in the art form. This process involves deep internalization, where students not only learn how to play the instruments but also understand the philosophy and meaning behind each piece of music performed (Sukinah, 2020). Additionally, the historical stories and traditions shared by instructors enrich their understanding of the origins of gamelan music and its role in society. Therefore, the Karawitan extracurricular serves not just as a music learning platform but as a means to reintroduce and revive the noble cultural values to the younger generation (Rohmadin et al., 2019).

The benefits of this extracurricular are not limited to its members. Other students also gain exposure to traditional music, which they may not have encountered otherwise due to its diminishing presence in daily life (Sujayanthi & Hartini, 2023). They begin to hear traditional music at school events, such as graduations, or even weekly during practice sessions. This exposure introduces them to the beauty of local

cultural arts that are often overlooked amidst the prominence of modern culture.

Moreover, this extracurricular activity does not only introduce culture to the students of State Vocational High School 1 Surabaya, but also to external audiences. For instance, when the group is invited to perform outside the school, such as at weddings or cultural festivals, they have the opportunity to showcase gamelan to a broader public. Additionally, the extracurricular opens doors for people from abroad, such as exchange students, who are interested in learning about gamelan. This not only introduces Indonesian traditional arts to a wider audience but also establishes State Vocational High School 1 Surabaya as a center for the preservation and introduction of local culture, appreciated both domestically and internationally (Maruti et al., 2021).

The increased visibility of Karawitan to external audiences has a broader impact on the preservation of Indonesian cultural arts. As more people, both locally and internationally, become aware of and appreciate gamelan music, efforts to preserve this traditional art form gain momentum. The more people value it, the greater the likelihood that it will continue to thrive and be accepted across various communities. As appreciation for Karawitan grows, this local cultural art form will remain preserved, not only as a cultural heritage but also as a part of the national identity of a proud and culturally rich nation (Munawir et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

The Karawitan extracurricular activity at State Vocational High School 1 Surabaya has played a significant role in the preservation of local arts and culture, particularly Karawitan music. Since its establishment in 2008, this extracurricular program has experienced rapid development, despite facing various challenges, particularly related to limited facilities. With support from the Surabaya City Government in 2013, the provision of adequate musical instruments has ensured the continuity of this activity. Additionally, through knowledge transfer activities conducted by the trainers, the program has successfully taught students not only the techniques of playing Karawitan, but also the cultural values embedded within it. The success of this extracurricular program in achieving

achievements in various competitions demonstrates that this traditional art continues to evolve and is valued by the younger generation. Furthermore, this extracurricular activity has introduced Karawitan to a broader audience, both within and outside the school, making a significant contribution to the preservation of local culture.

Recommendations

To enhance the impact of cultural preservation through the Karawitan extracurricular program, it is recommended that State Vocational High School 1 Surabaya continue to expand access to various external parties, such as other educational institutions or cultural communities, in order to increase appreciation for Karawitan arts. Additionally, efforts should be made to provide better facilities and more intensive support from the school, both in terms of musical instruments and human resources, to ensure the sustainability of this extracurricular activity. The utilization of digital technology can also be considered to introduce Karawitan to a broader audience, both nationally and internationally, through online platforms or performance recordings.

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