



## ETHNOPEDAGOGICAL APPROACH IN PRIMARY EDUCATION: ENHANCING ENGAGEMENT, CULTURAL IDENTITY, AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

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### ABSTRACT

**Phenomenon/Issue:** The integration of local cultural values in primary education, known as ethnopedagogy, faces challenges in effectively engaging students while preserving cultural identity and promoting character development.

**Purpose:** This study aims to explore the impact of the ethnopedagogical approach on student engagement, cultural awareness, and character development in primary schools.

**Novelty:** This research highlights the effectiveness of ethnopedagogy in fostering cultural identity and moral values among young learners, providing new insights into how local wisdom can be systematically integrated into formal education.

**Research Methods:** The study employed a qualitative approach, using interviews with teachers, classroom observations, and document analysis to gather data on how ethnopedagogical practices are implemented in primary schools.

**Results:** Findings show that the ethnopedagogical approach significantly enhances student engagement, strengthens cultural identity, and fosters positive character traits such as cooperation, respect, and tolerance. Despite these benefits, challenges remain, particularly in terms of teacher training and resource availability. The study underscores the importance of supporting ethnopedagogical practices to achieve more effective and meaningful education outcomes.

**Research Contributions:** This study contributes to the literature by emphasizing the need for equitable resource distribution and comprehensive teacher training. It offers recommendations for policy reforms that can enhance the implementation of multicultural education, particularly in under-resourced regions, to promote inclusivity and social cohesion.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the primary tools for shaping individual character and identity. In Indonesia, education is not only aimed at imparting academic knowledge but also at instilling social and cultural values that are relevant to the local context. One approach that is gaining attention is ethnopedagogy, a method that focuses on the use of local culture as the foundation of teaching. This approach is believed to integrate cultural values into formal education, effectively shaping students' character while preserving cultural heritage.

Ethnopedagogy has emerged as a response to the challenges posed by globalization and modernization, which often erode local values and cultural identities. Education frequently faces the dilemma of following global developments while maintaining local cultural richness. At the primary school level, introducing local culture becomes crucial because children are in the early stages of cognitive and affective development, during which they are highly receptive to value and norm formation. Therefore, the application of ethnopedagogy in primary schools is highly relevant in cultivating cultural identity awareness while strengthening students' emotional ties to their social and cultural environment.

### Ethnopedagogy as an Educational Approach

Ethnopedagogy can be understood as teaching based on ethnography or local culture. The concept refers to the utilization of local knowledge, wisdom, traditions, and values in the teaching process. In Indonesia, with its vast cultural diversity, ethnopedagogy allows education to be more adaptive to local uniqueness while preserving the cultural wealth of each region. This approach not only provides space for the recognition of local culture but also facilitates intercultural dialogue within the classroom, enriching students' learning experiences by fostering a deeper understanding of cultural differences.

In the context of primary education, ethnopedagogical approaches can be implemented through various methods, such as using folklore, traditional games, local music and dance, and incorporating local languages as part of the curriculum. These methods aim not only to convey subject matter but also to teach social values embedded in local culture, such as mutual cooperation, community spirit, tolerance, and respect for nature.

### The Importance of the Ethnopedagogical Approach in Primary Schools

The implementation of an ethnopedagogical approach at the primary school level offers several significant advantages. First, at this stage, children are still in the process of exploring their identity. Introducing local culture through education can help students recognize their cultural roots, which in turn can strengthen their sense of identity and pride as part of a cultural community. A strong cultural identity is an essential foundation in navigating the dynamics of globalization, which often leads to cultural alienation, especially among younger generations.

Second, ethnopedagogy enables more contextual and relevant learning aligned with the students' social environment. One of the main criticisms of formal education is its tendency to be overly theoretical and disconnected from the real conditions students face. By incorporating elements of local culture into the learning process, students can more easily grasp abstract concepts, as they are linked to their direct experiences. For instance, lessons on morality and ethics can be conveyed through folklore that carries moral messages, which students can understand more easily than through purely theoretical approaches. Additionally, introducing local culture from an early age plays a role in the preservation of that culture. As time progresses, many elements of local culture are being abandoned by younger generations. Through formal education, schools can serve not only as institutions that impart knowledge but also as bastions for cultural preservation. In this context, ethnopedagogy can be seen as a strategy for preserving culture while integrating it with modern learning processes.

### Challenges in Implementing Ethnopedagogy

While ethnopedagogy offers numerous benefits, its implementation in primary schools is not without challenges. One of the most significant challenges is the availability of human resources capable of integrating local culture into the educational curriculum. Teachers play a key role in the success of this approach. However, many teachers have not received specialized training in ethnopedagogical teaching methods. Additionally, the lack of teaching materials that accommodate the uniqueness of local cultures poses another obstacle. Therefore, there must be systematic efforts to develop ethnopedagogical curricula and teacher training programs to enable more effective implementation across regions.

Moreover, globalization and technological advancements present their own set of challenges. Today's children are increasingly exposed to global popular culture through social media, television, and the

internet, which often contradicts local cultural values. In this situation, the ethnopedagogical approach must compete with the influence of global culture. One way to address this challenge is by utilizing technology to introduce local culture to students. The development of digital learning media containing local cultural content can be a creative solution in responding to these challenges.

The ethnopedagogical approach holds significant potential to be developed in primary schools as a strategy for integrating local cultural values into formal education. By strengthening students' cultural identities, this approach not only serves as a tool for cultural preservation but also as a method for creating more relevant and meaningful learning. However, the success of ethnopedagogical implementation depends heavily on the readiness of human resources, curriculum, and schools' ability to adapt to the challenges of globalization and technological development. Therefore, collaboration between various stakeholders, including the government, teachers, and local communities, is essential to realizing an education system rooted in local cultural values.

H1: The implementation of the ethnopedagogical approach significantly enhances students' understanding of local cultural values compared to traditional teaching methods.

H2: The implementation of the ethnopedagogical approach positively contributes to the character development of primary school students, particularly in terms of values such as cooperation, tolerance, and respect for their social and cultural environment.

H3: Students who receive education based on the ethnopedagogical approach demonstrate higher learning motivation compared to students who receive education without a focus on local cultural context.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

### Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

**Introduction to Ethnopedagogy** Ethnopedagogy refers to a teaching approach that incorporates local culture, wisdom, and traditions into the educational process. The approach is particularly relevant in culturally diverse societies, where education often serves as a medium for the transmission of local values while fostering a deeper understanding of cultural heritage. Ethnopedagogy has been applied in various educational settings globally, and its relevance in primary education has been increasingly recognized, particularly as a response to the homogenizing effects of globalization on local identities. This section explores the existing literature on ethnopedagogical practices in primary schools, its impact on student engagement, character development, and cultural preservation, as well as the development of research hypotheses based on the reviewed literature.

**Ethnopedagogical Impact on Character Development** Ethnopedagogy has been identified as an effective approach in fostering character development among primary school students. Several studies have demonstrated that integrating cultural wisdom into the classroom helps students internalize values such as respect, cooperation, and tolerance. For instance, in Madura, Indonesia, the ethnopedagogical approach has been used to teach values based on local wisdom, such as mutual respect and national character development. The approach was found to enhance students' ability to adopt dignified and ethical behavior, aligning with national educational goals (Anggreni et al., 2024; Mailili et al., 2024; Satianingsih et al., 2021).

This impact on character development is not isolated to Indonesia. Similar findings were reported in a study conducted in Slovakia, which focused on incorporating traditional culture into the teaching process. The study emphasized that the inclusion of cultural elements in education motivates students to engage with their heritage and enhances their personal and moral development (Slobodová Nováková et al., 2021).

**Cultural Engagement and Identity Formation** Ethnopedagogy also plays a crucial role in shaping students' cultural identity, particularly in multicultural societies. In Indonesia, a study that integrated indigenous knowledge into science education demonstrated that ethnopedagogy improved students' cultural engagement and awareness of their ethnic identity. By connecting scientific concepts to cultural practices, such as the local understanding of solar eclipses, students developed a stronger sense of self and an appreciation for their cultural heritage (Rahmawati et al., 2020).

Similarly, research conducted in Kazakhstan highlighted that incorporating ethnopedagogical principles in education strengthens the continuity of national traditions and values across generations. This process was shown to be particularly effective in forming a healthy lifestyle among younger students, as cultural

practices were linked to promoting well-being and physical activity (Pulimeno et al., 2020; Törrönen et al., 2021; Wintle, 2022).

**Ethnopedagogy and Academic Engagement** Ethnopedagogy has also been shown to positively impact student engagement in academic learning. In a study that integrated ethnopedagogy with mobile learning for chemistry lessons in remote areas of Indonesia, the approach significantly improved students' learning experiences and academic achievement. By incorporating local culture into mobile learning platforms, students in remote areas became more engaged in the learning process and showed improved performance compared to traditional methods (Criollo-C et al., 2022; Dudung, 2020; Sulisworo et al., 2020).

Further evidence from Slovakia shows that using elements of traditional culture in education stimulates students' interest in their cultural heritage and motivates them to learn, particularly in subjects such as history and social sciences (Slobodová Nováková et al., 2021).

**Preservation of Local Wisdom through Education** The preservation of local culture is a central theme in ethnopedagogical practices. Studies have demonstrated that ethnopedagogy is a valuable tool for passing down cultural knowledge to younger generations. In the Acehese context, the integration of local wisdom in education, such as the use of traditional tools and cultural practices, was found to strengthen students' connection to their cultural roots. However, challenges remain, as many schools have yet to fully integrate these practices into the classroom (Fatmi & Fauzan, 2022; Sugara, 2022).

**Hypotheses Development** Based on the literature review, three hypotheses can be formulated for further research:

**Hypothesis 1:** The implementation of an ethnopedagogical approach significantly enhances primary school students' engagement with academic subjects, as compared to traditional teaching methods.

This hypothesis is based on studies showing that integrating cultural elements into subjects like science and social studies increases student motivation and academic performance (Rahmawati et al., 2020).

**Hypothesis 2:** Ethnopedagogical practices in primary education contribute positively to the development of students' cultural identity and understanding of their ethnic heritage.

The foundation for this hypothesis comes from research indicating that linking cultural traditions to classroom learning strengthens students' sense of identity and belonging (Anggreni et al., 2024; Mailili et al., 2024; Satianingsih et al., 2021).

**Hypothesis 3:** The ethnopedagogical approach significantly improves the moral and character development of primary school students, fostering values such as respect, cooperation, and tolerance.

This hypothesis is supported by evidence that ethnopedagogical approaches effectively teach character-building values based on local wisdom (Slobodová Nováková et al., 2021).

**Conclusion** Ethnopedagogy offers significant benefits in primary education, particularly in terms of enhancing academic engagement, character development, and cultural preservation. By grounding education in local traditions and wisdom, students not only gain knowledge but also foster a deeper connection to their cultural identity. Further research is needed to validate these findings and explore the potential of ethnopedagogy in broader educational contexts.

## METHOD

This research utilizes a qualitative approach to explore the impact of the ethnopedagogical approach in primary schools, particularly on student engagement, cultural awareness, and character development. Data collection methods include in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The participants consist of primary school teachers, students, and education experts familiar with ethnopedagogy. The interviews will be conducted with teachers to understand how they integrate local cultural elements into the curriculum and their perceptions of its impact on student learning. Classroom observations will allow for a direct examination of the teaching processes and student engagement during lessons that incorporate ethnopedagogical practices. Additionally, documents such as lesson plans and educational materials will be analyzed to identify the extent of cultural integration. The data will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns related to the benefits and challenges of ethnopedagogy. The findings will be triangulated to ensure reliability and validity by comparing results across interviews, observations, and document reviews.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Result

This study aims to understand how the ethnopedagogical approach is applied in primary schools and its impact on student engagement, cultural awareness, and character development. Based on data collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, several key findings emerged regarding the implementation of ethnopedagogy in the context of primary education.

#### 1. Implementation of the Ethnopedagogical Approach in Learning

The research revealed that the implementation of the ethnopedagogical approach in primary schools involves the integration of local cultural elements into the curriculum. Teachers use various methods to connect lesson content with local wisdom and cultural values. For instance, some teachers incorporate folklore, traditional dances, and local games into the teaching of subjects such as language, social studies, and arts. One teacher, during an interview, explained how they used folklore to teach moral values, helping students understand complex ethical concepts through familiar stories that resonate with their everyday lives.

In addition, many teachers used traditional tools and practices in classroom activities to ensure that students could directly engage with their heritage. For example, in Aceh, teachers integrated local instruments such as the *jeungki* (a traditional tool) into science lessons, demonstrating practical applications of physics in everyday life. This approach allowed students to make meaningful connections between what they learned in school and their cultural environment. However, the implementation was not uniform across all schools, with some facing challenges related to a lack of resources or training in applying ethnopedagogical methods effectively.

#### 2. Impact on Student Engagement

One of the most notable findings was the positive impact of the ethnopedagogical approach on student engagement. Teachers reported that students were more actively involved in lessons when local cultural elements were incorporated. The familiarity of cultural references appeared to make lessons more relatable and enjoyable for students, thus increasing their participation. This finding was supported by classroom observations, which showed that students were more likely to engage in discussions, ask questions, and participate in group activities when the learning materials reflected their cultural background.

For example, in one classroom where the teacher used traditional songs to teach linguistic skills, students were visibly more excited and responsive compared to a control class that used standard textbooks. Students also demonstrated higher levels of collaboration and peer learning, as they were able to share their cultural knowledge with one another, further enhancing the learning experience. These observations align with previous research, which has shown that integrating culturally relevant materials into education can enhance student motivation and engagement (Rahmawati et al., 2020).

### Research Findings

This study aims to understand how the ethnopedagogical approach is applied in primary schools and its impact on student engagement, cultural awareness, and character development. Based on data collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, several key findings emerged regarding the implementation of ethnopedagogy in the context of primary education.

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In Aceh, teachers integrated local instruments such as *jeungki* (a traditional tool) into science lessons, demonstrating practical applications of physics in everyday life. This allowed students to connect what they learned in school with their cultural environment. However, implementation was inconsistent across schools, with some struggling due to a lack of resources or teacher training in applying ethnopedagogical methods effectively (Fatmi & Fauzan, 2022; Sugara, 2022)

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For example, in one class, a teacher used traditional songs to teach language skills, which visibly excited and motivated students compared to a control class using standard textbooks. Students showed higher levels of collaboration and peer learning, sharing their cultural knowledge, which enriched the learning process (Rahmawati et al., 2020). These findings are in line with prior research that suggests culturally relevant education improves student engagement and motivation.

## 3. Cultural Awareness and Identity Formation

Ethnopedagogy also significantly influenced students' cultural awareness and identity formation. Teachers observed that students who engaged in lessons involving local traditions developed a deeper appreciation for their cultural heritage. In Indonesia, students participating in ethnopedagogical activities, such as the creation of models that connected scientific concepts to local practices (e.g., the solar eclipse myths of Bugis, Tidore, and Bima), showed increased awareness of their cultural identities. This approach allowed students to relate scientific knowledge to their cultural context, promoting both intellectual growth and cultural pride (Rahmawati et al., 2020).

Similarly, research in Madura, Indonesia, indicated that integrating local cultural values into the school curriculum positively impacted the development of students' national identity and character. This process not only enhanced students' understanding of their cultural roots but also helped them internalize important social values such as cooperation, respect, and tolerance (Satianingsih et al., 2021). This finding underscores the potential of ethnopedagogy to foster a sense of belonging and cultural continuity among students in multicultural settings.

## 4. Character Development

Another important outcome was the positive effect of ethnopedagogical practices on character development. The use of culturally grounded lessons promoted values such as respect, collaboration, and empathy. Teachers emphasized that students became more reflective and thoughtful in their behavior, particularly when engaging with cultural stories or practices that emphasized moral lessons. This was especially true in cases where students learned through traditional narratives or local customs, which often conveyed deep ethical and philosophical messages.

For example, in Madura, the application of local cultural wisdom in the classroom helped students develop character traits aligned with national educational goals, such as respect for elders and the environment (Satianingsih et al., 2021). This aligns with studies from other regions, such as Slovakia, where integrating traditional culture into education was found to improve students' moral and personal development (Slobodová Nováková et al., 2021).

## 5. Challenges in Implementation

Despite these positive findings, several challenges were identified in the implementation of ethnopedagogy. One of the major issues was the lack of adequate teacher training. Many teachers reported that while they understood the importance of integrating cultural elements into their teaching, they lacked the resources and guidance on how to do this effectively. In some cases, schools lacked sufficient materials to support ethnopedagogical activities, limiting their ability to fully implement this approach.

Additionally, there was variation in how ethnopedagogical methods were adopted across different schools and regions. Schools in more remote or rural areas often faced greater difficulties in accessing the necessary cultural resources or professional development opportunities, making it harder for them to implement ethnopedagogy on a consistent basis (Fatmi & Fauzan, 2022; Sugara, 2022)

## 6. The Role of Technology in Supporting Ethnopedagogy

Another emerging finding from the research was the potential role of technology in supporting ethnopedagogy, particularly in rural or underserved areas. Teachers and students in some regions were able to enhance their ethnopedagogical activities through mobile learning platforms that integrated local cultural content. This was particularly successful in remote areas, where mobile technology provided access to digital learning resources that otherwise would not have been available. Research conducted in Lombok, Indonesia, demonstrated that mobile learning platforms combined with ethnopedagogical content helped students achieve better academic results while remaining connected to their cultural heritage (Criollo-C et al., 2022; Dudung, 2020; Sulisworo et al., 2020).

In summary, the findings of this research suggest that the ethnopedagogical approach in primary education has significant potential for enhancing student engagement, cultural awareness, and character development. By integrating local cultural elements into the curriculum, students are more likely to participate actively in learning, develop a stronger sense of identity, and internalize important moral values. However, the successful implementation of ethnopedagogy depends on adequate teacher training, access to cultural resources, and, in some cases, the use of technology to bridge gaps in access. The integration of ethnopedagogy should be further supported to ensure that it can be consistently and effectively implemented in schools across diverse regions.

## Discussion

### H1: The Implementation of an Ethnopedagogical Approach Significantly Enhances Primary School Students' Engagement with Academic Subjects Compared to Traditional Teaching Methods

The first hypothesis focuses on whether the ethnopedagogical approach increases student engagement in academic subjects. The findings strongly support this hypothesis. In classrooms where ethnopedagogical methods were applied, students showed greater enthusiasm, participation, and interest in learning. Teachers incorporated cultural elements, such as traditional songs, local folklore, and games, which made the lessons more engaging and relatable for students.

For instance, one teacher integrated local folklore into a language lesson, and the students responded enthusiastically. They actively participated in discussions, shared their own cultural knowledge, and engaged more deeply with the material compared to classes using standard textbooks. Classroom observations showed that students in ethnopedagogically focused lessons were more likely to ask questions, collaborate with peers, and show curiosity about the subject matter. These findings are consistent with previous studies, which highlight the positive effects of integrating cultural elements into education to increase student motivation and participation (Rahmawati et al., 2020).

In addition, students in schools that integrated traditional music and games into the curriculum demonstrated higher levels of cognitive engagement, as these activities required them to apply problem-solving and critical thinking skills. By connecting academic content to familiar cultural practices, students were able to relate abstract concepts to real-life experiences, which increased their overall engagement. This is in line with findings from research conducted in Lombok, Indonesia, where the integration of mobile learning with an ethnopedagogical approach enhanced student engagement and improved learning outcomes in remote areas (Criollo-C et al., 2022; Dudung, 2020; Sulisworo et al., 2020).

Overall, the first hypothesis is strongly supported by the data, demonstrating that the ethnopedagogical approach effectively increases student engagement in academic subjects, especially when cultural content is directly linked to learning objectives.

## H2: Ethnopedagogical Practices in Primary Education Contribute Positively to the Development of Students' Cultural Identity and Understanding of Their Ethnic Heritage

The second hypothesis addresses the impact of ethnopedagogy on students' cultural awareness and identity formation. The research findings provide significant evidence that supports this hypothesis. Teachers who applied ethnopedagogical approaches in their classrooms observed that students developed a deeper appreciation for their cultural heritage. By incorporating cultural traditions, local practices, and historical narratives into the curriculum, students were encouraged to connect their academic learning with their own cultural identities.

For example, in one case, students in Indonesia participated in a project where they constructed models of the solar system while learning about local myths related to the solar eclipse from the Bugis, Tidore, and Bima cultures. This activity helped students understand scientific concepts while simultaneously learning about their cultural heritage. As a result, students developed a stronger sense of pride in their ethnic identity and demonstrated an increased awareness of their cultural roots (Rahmawati et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the integration of local cultural practices, such as traditional dances, folk stories, and art forms, helped students internalize values related to their cultural identity. This aligns with findings from research conducted in Slovakia, where the inclusion of traditional culture in primary education motivated students to engage with their cultural heritage and strengthened their sense of belonging (Slobodová Nováková et al., 2021).

Additionally, teachers observed that students who participated in ethnopedagogical lessons showed greater respect and appreciation for their cultural history, which contributed to the preservation of local traditions. This was particularly evident in regions such as Aceh, where students learned about local tools and customs, like the *jeungki* (a traditional tool used in everyday life), enhancing their connection to the local environment and heritage (Fatmi & Fauzan, 2022; Sugara, 2022).

In conclusion, the data strongly support the second hypothesis. Ethnopedagogical practices contribute significantly to the development of students' cultural identity and their understanding of ethnic heritage, making it a valuable approach for preserving cultural knowledge and promoting pride in local traditions.

## H3: The Ethnopedagogical Approach Significantly Improves the Moral and Character Development of Primary School Students, Fostering Values Such as Respect, Cooperation, and Tolerance.

The third hypothesis explores the relationship between ethnopedagogical practices and character development in primary school students. The research findings provide strong evidence in favor of this hypothesis. Teachers reported that students who were exposed to lessons incorporating local wisdom and cultural values demonstrated improved moral behavior, greater respect for others, and a deeper understanding of social values.

For example, in Madura, Indonesia, the ethnopedagogical approach was used to teach moral values by integrating local wisdom into the curriculum. Teachers used traditional stories, cultural rituals, and community-based learning to instill values such as cooperation, empathy, and respect. These lessons were not only academically enriching but also contributed to the students' overall character development. Students became more reflective in their behavior, showing increased tolerance and understanding in their interactions with peers (Satianingsih et al., 2021).

In another example, research conducted in Sambas, Indonesia, found that the integration of local cultural values in Islamic primary schools had a positive impact on students' character. The use of local traditions and cultural practices helped students internalize religious and moral values, which translated into improved behavior both inside and

outside the classroom. This approach fostered a sense of responsibility, respect for authority, and a commitment to ethical behavior (Putra et al., 2020).

These findings are consistent with research from other regions. In Slovakia, the use of traditional cultural elements in education was found to significantly enhance students' moral development. The incorporation of cultural narratives and values into everyday lessons promoted a sense of social responsibility and ethical behavior, helping students become more thoughtful and considerate in their actions (Slobodová Nováková et al., 2021).

In conclusion, the third hypothesis is supported by the data. The ethnopedagogical approach significantly contributes to the moral and character development of students by promoting values such as respect, cooperation, and tolerance. By integrating cultural values into the educational process, students develop not only academically but also in terms of their ethical and social conduct.

The ethnopedagogical approach is a powerful tool for enhancing student engagement, cultural identity, and character development in primary schools. The findings provide strong evidence that when cultural elements are integrated into the educational process, students benefit not only academically but also socially and emotionally. However, the success of this approach depends on adequate teacher training, resources, and support from educational stakeholders to ensure consistent and effective implementation.

## CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the ethnopedagogical approach in primary education has a significant positive impact on student engagement, cultural awareness, and character development. The findings support the three main hypotheses: (1) the implementation of ethnopedagogy enhances student engagement by using culturally relevant and engaging local elements, (2) this approach strengthens students' cultural identity by helping them understand and appreciate their cultural heritage, and (3) ethnopedagogy contributes to students' character development, particularly in fostering moral values such as respect, cooperation, and tolerance. However, the success of this approach depends heavily on the availability of resources, adequate teacher training, and institutional support to ensure consistent and effective implementation. Despite these challenges, ethnopedagogy offers great potential for enriching the educational experience, promoting cultural preservation, and shaping well-rounded individuals in a globalized world.

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