
ARTICLE

"Multisensory Approach in Reog Ponorogo Arts Education for Holistic Early Childhood Development"

Fifi Arisanti^{1*}, Alip Sugianto², and Wahyudi Setiawan³

^{1,2,3} Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo, Ponorogo, Indonesia

How to cite: ... [Filled by Editor]

Article History

Received: ...

Accepted: ...

[Filled by Editor]

Keywords:

Multisensory Approach, Reog Ponorogo, Holistic Early Childhood Development

ABSTRACT

This study is grounded in the urgency of preserving local wisdom within early childhood education and the need to integrate traditional culture with national educational policies, particularly in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum. The purpose of this research is to examine the application of a multisensory approach in Reog Ponorogo arts education as a medium for promoting holistic early childhood development aligned with local cultural values and national goals. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method, specifically investigating children's authentic learning experiences through in-depth observations, open interviews, and documentation of learning activities. The findings reveal that integrating a multisensory approach in Reog learning through movement, music, costumes, and folklore has a positive impact across multiple developmental domains. Notably, improvements were observed in sensory-motor coordination, such as enhanced body balance during dance imitation and rhythm synchronization while responding to Reog's musical patterns. Cognitive development was stimulated through cultural symbol recognition and narrative sequencing, while social-emotional skills were nurtured through collaboration in performances and increased cultural pride. In conclusion, the implementation of a multisensory approach in Reog Ponorogo arts not only supports holistic early childhood development but also serves as a bridge between local wisdom and national policy in contextualized educational practices. This study implies the importance of culturally based education in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in early childhood institutions.

INTRODUCTION

The multisensory approach in Reog Ponorogo arts education is a pedagogical strategy that integrates various sensory stimuli such as sight, hearing, touch, and movement to create a holistic learning experience for early childhood students. Amid the pressures of globalization and modernization, efforts to preserve local wisdom have become increasingly relevant, especially through the integration of cultural values into the national curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum, launched by the Indonesian government, provides broad opportunities for educational institutions to design learning that is contextual and culturally based. In this context, Reog Ponorogo arts education serves as a powerful medium to foster the holistic development of young children, encompassing cognitive, motor, social-emotional, and spiritual domains. This study focuses on implementing a multisensory approach within Reog Ponorogo art instruction as an innovative, culture-based learning model aligned with national education policy and the Merdeka Curriculum. The multisensory approach not only involves multiple senses but also provides children with the opportunity to explore meaningful and concrete learning experiences. In Reog-based lessons, children participate in activities such as dance, music, costumes, and traditional storytelling. According to Alzahrani et al. (2020), multisensory learning has been shown to enhance both cognitive and affective skills, as it engages emotional responses alongside visual and auditory perceptions. Educators play a critical role in designing and facilitating these experiences in ways that are developmentally appropriate. This approach makes learning more engaging and fosters stronger connections between children and their sociocultural environments. Furthermore, the multisensory method aligns with early childhood education principles that emphasize active, enjoyable, and meaningful learning (Mustofa, 2021).

As a solution, this study explores a learning model that systematically integrates local cultural values of Reog with multisensory learning methods. This approach not only enriches cultural content but also supports children's developmental domains in alignment with the STTPA (Standards for Child Development Achievement Levels). For example, through Reog dance activities, children learn body balance, rhythmic patterns, and group cooperation. Implementation steps include planning culturally responsive lessons, applying multisensory techniques, and reflecting on children's developmental outcomes. Schools in Ponorogo that have adopted this approach for more than a year have reported significant improvements in student participation, fine and gross motor skills, and cultural identity awareness (Sutrisno & Lestari, 2022).

The innovation offered by this study lies in the fusion of local cultural heritage with contemporary pedagogical strategies. The multisensory approach in the context of Reog Ponorogo presents an alternative learning model that emphasizes not only cognitive growth but also sensory integration, emotional involvement, and cultural values. Wahyuni (2021) highlights that such strategies can foster a positive and child-relevant learning climate. Moreover, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on local culture integration in early childhood education and supports national policies on character education and cultural preservation through educational practice. The primary objective of this research is to analyze the implementation of the multisensory approach in Reog Ponorogo arts education and to evaluate its effectiveness in supporting the holistic development of early childhood learners.

The study also seeks to identify the roles of educators, instructional strategies, and challenges in applying this approach within early childhood education environments. The expected outcome is to provide a valuable reference for educators in designing contextual, meaningful, and culturally grounded learning experiences that align with the Merdeka Curriculum framework.

The author's main motivation for selecting this topic is the lack of research exploring multisensory approaches based on local culture within the early childhood education context. At the same time, the cultural potential of Reog as a rich and familiar learning resource for children in Ponorogo is substantial. This study is expected to bridge the need for contextual learning with cultural preservation while also supporting the strengthened implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Therefore, the author considers the topic "Multisensory Approach in Reog Ponorogo Arts Education: Integrating Local Wisdom into National Policy and Merdeka Curriculum for Holistic Early Childhood Development" as highly significant and timely for academic inquiry. By highlighting the connection between culture-based arts education and national policies, this study provides insights into how innovative educational practices can enhance early childhood learning experiences while strengthening local cultural identity. The findings are expected to serve as a reference for educators, policymakers, and the arts community in developing more effective and sustainable education models based on local wisdom (Rizka Nur Faidah¹, Rizma Okavianti², Putri May Maulidia³, Eva Putri Mulyani⁴, 2024).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Multisensory Approach in Early Childhood Education. The multisensory approach is a learning strategy that engages various senses such as vision, hearing, touch, movement, and kinesthetic awareness to create a more comprehensive and meaningful learning experience. According to Alzahrani et al. (2020), this approach enhances both cognitive and affective processing while strengthening children's memory through dual-sensory channel reinforcement. Multisensory learning supports the principles of early childhood development, which emphasize the importance of exploratory and participatory activities (Mustofa, 2021). However, many studies tend to examine the multisensory approach in a general sense, without specifically addressing its application within local or traditional cultural arts contexts. For example, the study by Herlina & Fauzi (2019) highlights the effectiveness of multisensory methods in language learning, yet it does not explore their integration into artistic or culturally rooted learning experiences.

Integrating Local Culture into the Early Childhood Education Curriculum. The strengthening of local culture in education has become a strategic national issue, particularly since the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Wahyuni (2021) suggests that incorporating local culture into early childhood learning can reinforce children's identity, values, and character. Nevertheless, few studies have examined how this cultural integration is concretely implemented within the performing arts context, such as Reog Ponorogo. Winarsih & Setyawan (2023) note that while early childhood educators generally acknowledge the importance of culture-based education, its implementation is often limited to ceremonial activities and has yet to become an integral part of structured learning. This study seeks to fill this gap by offering a systematic model of learning that incorporates local culture through the multisensory approach.

Reog Ponorogo as a Contextual Learning Medium. Reog Ponorogo is a traditional performing art rich in movement, music, storytelling, and visual elements, making it highly suitable as a contextual, multisensory learning medium. The research of Sutrisno & Lestari (2022) reveals that introducing Reog at an early age increases children's engagement and cultural pride. However, the study does not detail how learning activities should be structured, nor how specific developmental indicators can be achieved through Reog-based instruction. Therefore, this study not only investigates the effectiveness of the multisensory approach but also designs a developmental learning model based on Reog Ponorogo that can be widely adopted by early childhood education institutions. It also aims to respond to the need for contextual, active, and meaningful learning experiences.

The multisensory approach in early childhood education has been extensively studied, with various research findings highlighting its positive impact on children's cognitive, motor, and socio-emotional development. Multisensory learning enhances memory retention and concept comprehension, as information is processed through multiple sensory pathways that reinforce one another (Novitasari & Utami, 2022). In the context of arts education, emphasizes that multisensory aesthetic experiences strengthen children's creative thinking skills and self-expression from an early age (Simanjuntak et al., 2020). Therefore, the implementation of this method in arts education, including traditional arts such as Reog Ponorogo, holds significant potential to enhance children's engagement and understanding in learning.

Furthermore, the integration of local wisdom into the curriculum has been a focal point in various studies. Putri, (2024) reveal that strengthening local culture in education helps build children's identity and fosters appreciation for the nation's cultural heritage. Another study by Muwahhida, (2016) indicates that incorporating traditional arts into learning not only preserves cultural heritage but also enhances social skills through collaborative activities. The implementation of Reog Ponorogo as part of early childhood education aligns with this principle, as this performing art incorporates elements of music, movement, and narration that can enrich children's holistic learning experiences.

Moreover, the relevance of Reog Ponorogo within the Kurikulum Merdeka can be examined in the context of project-based and experiential learning. According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek, 2023), the Kurikulum Merdeka emphasizes flexible, exploration-based learning that aligns with local potential. Research by Amanullah et al., (2023) demonstrates that incorporating regional arts into project-based learning models enhances children's critical thinking and communication skills. Therefore, integrating Reog Ponorogo into early childhood education not only enriches the learning experience but also supports national education policies in preserving local culture through a multisensory approach.

METHOD

This study employed an advanced qualitative descriptive method, aiming to provide an in-depth description of the processes and meanings behind the implementation of the multisensory approach in Reog Ponorogo arts education within early childhood education (ECE) settings. The term "advanced" refers to the analytical depth beyond surface-level descriptions, involving refined categorization, pattern recognition, and thematic interpretation of data derived from observations, interviews, and documentation.

The goal is to reveal the connections between the applied learning approach and children's developmental achievements based on indicators outlined in the Standar Tingkat Pencapaian Perkembangan Anak (STTPA), the Indonesian standard for early childhood development benchmarks. This study was conducted in three early childhood education centers (PAUD) in Ponorogo City that have implemented a multisensory approach through Reog art education for over a year. The research sites were selected purposively based on their active engagement in culturally-based learning practices. The participants included three classroom teachers with early childhood education backgrounds, nine children aged 5–6 years who actively participated in Reog learning activities, three school principals, and six parents.

Data collection techniques involved semi-structured in-depth interviews, participatory observations of children's activities in Reog sessions such as dancing and playing traditional music instruments and document analysis, including learning activity plans (RKM), child development records, and documentation of cultural events. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking. Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (2014), consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Open and axial coding techniques were used to identify patterns of children's multisensory engagement and to develop thematic categorizations related to visual, auditory, and kinesthetic stimuli. Narrative analysis was also employed to construct a comprehensive understanding of children's experiences and teachers' reflections within the context of Reog-based learning.

The research was conducted over a three-month period (March–May 2025) with biweekly visits to each institution. Learning environments included classrooms decorated with Reog cultural elements, outdoor play areas for movement-based activities, and traditional music spaces. All learning activities adhered to the principles of active, joyful, and culturally contextual education as aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum policy. To enhance data validity, this study employs source triangulation by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation to ensure accuracy and consistency of information. The analysis is conducted through three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction aims to filter the most relevant information according to the research focus, while data presentation is carried out in the form of narrative and thematic descriptions (Hafsiah Yakin, 2023). Conclusion drawing involves interpreting the relationship between the multisensory approach, Reog Ponorogo arts, and the Kurikulum Merdeka in supporting early childhood development.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the multisensory approach in Reog Ponorogo arts education is characterized by the integration of movement, sound, visual elements, and tactile experiences designed by teachers to stimulate various senses and create immersive learning. Activities such as storytelling, dance, music, costume crafting, and classroom decoration with cultural ornaments allow children to engage deeply with local culture, enhancing both cognitive and emotional development. Observational data show variations in intensity across institutions, with some relying more heavily on visual-auditory elements than kinesthetic engagement. This aligns with Alzahrani et al. (2020), who highlight that dual sensory stimulation enhances learning and memory retention.

The approach also supports children's understanding of symbolic meanings in dance, rhythm recognition, and communication skills through peer interaction (Utomo et al., 2020), while traditional elements like Reog gamelan and costumes offer more impactful stimulation compared to conventional methods (Kristiana, 2016). Based on data from three early childhood teachers, nine children, three principals, and six parents collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis this study confirms that the multisensory integration of Reog arts not only supports holistic child development but also strengthens cultural identity from an early age.

This study employed participant observation, document analysis, and thematic data analysis to examine the implementation of a multisensory Reog Ponorogo learning model in early childhood education. Researchers observed children's engagement in activities such as dancing, playing instruments, and role-playing, focusing on sensory-motor coordination and emotional involvement, while supporting documents like lesson plans, developmental records, and portfolios provided contextual insights. Analysis followed the Miles and Huberman interactive model data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing enhanced by open and axial coding to categorize sensory stimuli into visual, auditory, and kinesthetic types, and narrative analysis to integrate findings holistically. Teachers served as key facilitators in this process, with those knowledgeable about Reog culture showing greater creativity in designing meaningful experiences, including collaborations with local artists. However, some teachers faced difficulties aligning these cultural activities with STTPA developmental indicators, revealing gaps in pedagogical skills for integrating local culture into measurable educational outcomes (Miles & Huberman, 2014; Kristiana, 2016).

The study confirms that while early childhood educators acknowledge the importance of integrating local culture into learning, many still lack the training to systematically align cultural content such as Reog Ponorogo arts with developmental indicators, as highlighted by Winarsih and Setyawan (2023). Key challenges in implementing culturally-based multisensory learning include limited authentic learning materials, inadequate instructional references, and restricted thematic learning time, which often results in cultural activities being treated as supplementary. To address these barriers, teachers adopted adaptive strategies such as creating handmade Reog-based materials, incorporating them into free play, and documenting children's participation for developmental assessment. These efforts underscore the need for support from local authorities in developing culturally grounded thematic guides that align with educational standards. This aligns with the Merdeka Belajar policy, which emphasizes contextual and culturally relevant education. Integrating Reog arts into multisensory learning not only enriches children's cognitive, motor, social-emotional, and creative development as outlined in the Standar Tingkat Pencapaian Perkembangan Anak (STTPA) but also strengthens their cultural identity and character formation, offering a replicable and effective model for early childhood education. Critical Analysis: This research expands the literature, which has previously focused mainly on general multisensory methods or arts education. By framing the approach within the context of Reog and national education policy, this study offers a culturally relevant and transformative educational model for curriculum development.

This approach has a positive impact on children's engagement and motivation to learn. The application of multisensory strategies in Reog arts allows children to actively explore and experiment with various cultural elements, contributing to increased creativity and memory retention (Sanz-Camarero et al., 2023).

Interviews with early childhood educators reveal that children exposed to this method show greater interest in learning and develop a deeper understanding of local cultural values compared to those who do not have similar experiences. Therefore, this study affirms that the multisensory approach in Reog Ponorogo arts education can serve as an effective strategy for supporting the holistic development of young children while simultaneously preserving local cultural heritage within the context of modern education (Uliasari & Kristiana, 2024).

The multisensory approach in Reog Ponorogo arts education offers a solution to the challenges of culturally-based arts education, which often receives little attention within the national education system. By allowing children to experience learning through multiple senses, this approach helps them develop critical thinking skills, creativity, and a deeper understanding of culture (Masnan et al., 2022). However, one of the main challenges in implementing this method is the limited availability of resources and facilities that support multisensory learning activities in many early childhood education institutions. Several interviewed teachers stated that they faced constraints in accessing cultural teaching aids, traditional musical instruments, and instructional materials relevant to Reog arts. This highlights the need for greater support in the form of education policies that prioritize the preservation of local culture within the school curriculum (Pertiwi & Sudrajat, 2022).

In addition to resource-related challenges, this study also found that many early childhood educators have not received adequate training on implementing the multisensory method in arts education. The lack of structured training programs has led to inconsistencies in the application of this method across different schools, with some teachers still relying on conventional approaches that do not actively engage children with local culture (Simanjuntak et al., 2020). Previous studies indicate that active engagement in cultural experiences enhances children's memory retention and understanding of traditional values while also strengthening their cultural identity from an early age (Muwahhida, 2016). Therefore, a more systematic capacity-building program for teachers is needed, both in the form of direct training and the integration of teacher education curricula that include multisensory approaches in culturally-based arts education.

The findings have significant implications for national education policy, particularly in integrating local culture more effectively into the Merdeka Curriculum. The government and education stakeholders should consider allocating greater funding for the procurement of tools and facilities that support multisensory learning. Additionally, teacher training curricula should include specialized modules on culturally immersive teaching strategies to ensure educators possess the necessary competencies to implement this method in the classroom (Sanz-Camarero et al., 2023). If widely adopted, the multisensory approach in Reog Ponorogo arts education has the potential to become a cultural-based learning model that can be applied across various regions in Indonesia. This would not only enhance arts education but also preserve local cultural heritage within the national education framework (Rizka Nur Faidah¹, Rizma Okavianti², Putri May Maulidia³, Eva Putri Mulyani⁴, 2024).

One of the unexpected findings of this study was the active involvement of parents in Reog arts learning in several early childhood education (PAUD) institutions. Interviews with teachers revealed that parents felt more motivated to participate in school activities when traditional arts such as Reog Ponorogo were incorporated into the curriculum. This finding supports the study by (Triwardhani et al., 2023), which states that family involvement in culture-based education can enhance learning effectiveness and strengthen social relationships within the educational community.

Additionally, closer interactions between teachers, students, and parents created a more supportive learning environment, where local cultural values were not only taught at school but also reinforced in daily life at home (Darihastining et al., 2020), culture-based arts function not only as a learning medium but also as a tool for strengthening social bonds within the community. This study also found that children engaged in Reog arts learning demonstrated improvements in motor skills, coordination, and understanding of narrative structures in performing arts. This aligns with Gunada, (2022) research, which suggests that arts-based learning experiences can enhance the cognitive and motor skills of young children. The movements in Reog dance, for instance, help develop balance and coordination, while its musical elements assist children in recognizing rhythmic patterns and tones (Tanjung et al., 2024). Furthermore, participation in performing arts allows children to develop communication skills and self-confidence through active involvement in performances. However, challenges in implementing this method remain, particularly concerning resource limitations and the lack of training for teachers in applying multisensory approaches to arts education. Therefore, professional development programs for educators are essential to ensure the broader and more effective application of this method (Sepsita & Wijaya, 2024).

The implications of these findings for education policy are significant, particularly in enhancing the integration of local culture-based arts into early childhood education curricula. Local governments need to develop training programs for educators to help them better adapt multisensory methods in arts education (Nasution & Lubis, 2025). Additionally, schools located in regions with strong artistic traditions, such as Ponorogo, can collaborate with local arts communities to ensure that culture-based learning remains relevant and sustainable (Agustina & Desstya, 2022). If implemented effectively, this approach will not only enrich children's learning experiences but also contribute to the preservation of traditional culture through formal education. In this way, local culture-based arts can serve as an effective strategy for strengthening national identity while improving the quality of arts education in Indonesia.

The development of culture-based education policies is essential, particularly in enhancing the effectiveness of arts education at both national and regional levels. One of the key implications of this study is the need for teacher training in effectively implementing multisensory methods in arts education. According to (Utomo et al., 2020), a multisensory approach helps children grasp complex concepts through direct experiences, especially in the context of arts education. Therefore, local governments and educational institutions must provide training programs for teachers to enable them to optimally adapt this method in culture-based arts learning. Additionally, research by Sepsita & Wijaya, (2024) indicates that the successful implementation of multisensory methods largely depends on teachers' readiness to manage various sensory-based learning techniques, such as movement, sound, and visual elements.

In addition to teacher training, the integration of Reog arts into the Merdeka Curriculum should be supported by research-based teaching materials that align with early childhood development. A study by Uliasari & Kristiana, (2024) found that instructional materials designed based on research enhance learning effectiveness because they are more contextual and tailored to students' needs. Therefore, developing teaching modules that combine Reog arts with a multisensory approach is necessary to provide teachers with clear guidelines for delivering this content. Furthermore, research by Agustina & Desstya, (2022) emphasizes the importance of designing culture-based curricula in early childhood education to strengthen local cultural identity and increase student engagement in the learning process.

With appropriate instructional materials, Reog arts can be taught in a more structured and engaging manner, yielding positive impacts on children's development.

Local governments can also leverage these findings to develop arts education programs rooted in local wisdom as part of strategies to improve the quality of early childhood education. A study by Muwahhida, (2016) highlights that culture-based education programs not only enhance children's artistic skills but also help them understand the social values embedded within the culture. Additionally, research by Triwardhani et al., (2023) reveals that strengthening cultural identity from an early age can have long-term effects on national pride and children's social engagement. Therefore, education policies that accommodate local culture-based arts, such as Reog Ponorogo, have the potential to become an effective strategy in creating a more inclusive and meaningful learning environment for Indonesian children.

This study ensures research validity through data triangulation from various sources. The triangulation process includes direct observation of children's engagement in Reog arts learning, interviews with teachers and art practitioners to understand the challenges and benefits of the multisensory method, and documentation of learning activities as concrete evidence of the method's implementation in the classroom. According to Sanz-Camarero et al., (2023), data triangulation enhances research reliability by verifying findings through multiple perspectives, thereby reducing potential bias. Observational data indicate that children are more actively engaged in learning when multisensory elements such as music, movement, and visuals are incorporated into Reog arts education. These findings are reinforced by interviews with teachers, who emphasized that this approach helps children stay more focused and better understand the cultural concepts being taught.

Interviews with art practitioners provide further insights into the challenges of implementing multisensory methods in culture-based arts education. Some practitioners highlighted that the lack of training for educators is a major obstacle in optimizing this method. Research by Amanullah et al., (2023) suggests that the effectiveness of multisensory approaches depends on educators' ability to adapt various techniques that involve children's direct experiences. Additionally, documentation of learning activities reveals that integrating Reog arts into early childhood education positively impacts children's understanding of local culture and enhances parental involvement in the learning process. A study by Afnita & Latipah, (2021) supports these findings, showing that culture-based education fosters greater social interaction among children, teachers, and families, creating a richer emotional and social learning environment.

This study ensures that the findings maintain a high level of validity. The triangulation approach aligns with the perspectives of (Sepsita & Wijaya, 2024), who assert that combining different research methods results in a more comprehensive and reliable understanding. These findings also have practical implications for education policies, particularly in designing a more inclusive and culturally grounded curriculum. Government agencies and educational institutions can utilize this research to develop more suitable teaching modules for early childhood education and provide more intensive training for educators on effectively implementing multisensory methods. Consequently, this study not only contributes theoretically to the field of culture-based education but also offers concrete solutions for improving the quality of arts education in Indonesia.

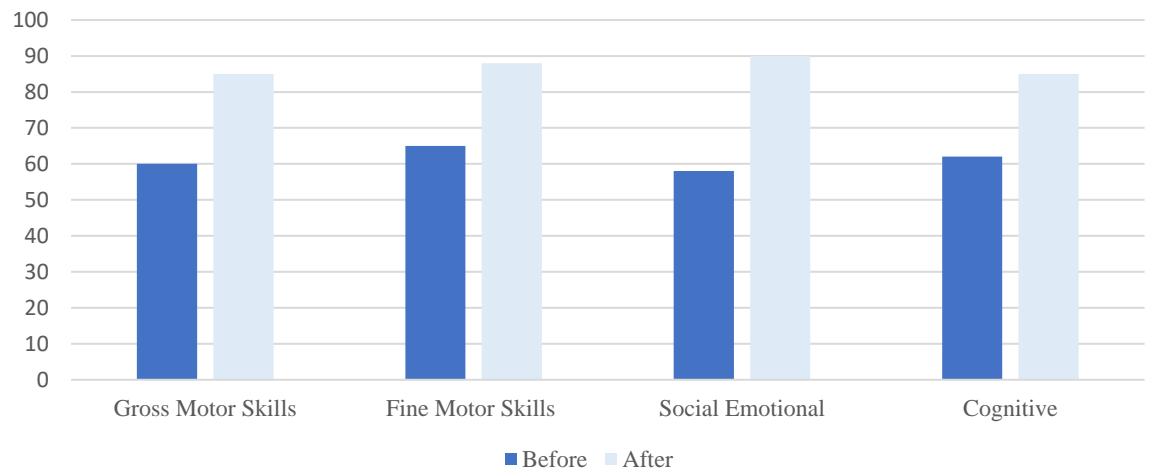
Overall, this study demonstrates that the multisensory approach in Reog Ponorogo arts education positively contributes to early childhood development across various aspects. From a motor skills perspective, the incorporation of movement in Reog dance helps children develop body coordination as well as fine and gross motor skills.

Cognitively, integrating different artistic elements such as music, movement, and visuals enables children to gain a deeper understanding of cultural concepts. This aligns with the findings of Sepsita & Wijaya, (2024), which state that culture-based and multisensory learning can enhance young children's critical thinking skills and memory retention. Furthermore, social and emotional aspects also show improvement, as children learn to collaborate in groups, express themselves through art, and understand the cultural values embedded in Reog Ponorogo.

The findings of this study further reinforce the urgency of integrating local culture into national education policies and the Merdeka Curriculum. A curriculum that emphasizes local wisdom can serve as a means to preserve regional culture while also increasing children's engagement in the learning process. According to Novitasari & Utami, (2022), a culture-based approach in education fosters a sense of belonging and cultural identity in children, which, in turn, positively impacts their learning motivation. However, the effectiveness of this approach relies heavily on educators' preparedness and the availability of appropriate teaching materials. In this context, teacher training becomes a crucial aspect that requires further attention. A study by Amanullah et al., (2023) suggests that training focused on multisensory learning strategies can enhance teachers' competencies in implementing these methods in the classroom, thereby creating a more effective learning experience for children.

Thus, the results of this study can serve as a foundation for formulating more inclusive and culturally grounded educational policies. Local governments and educational institutions can utilize these findings to develop research-based arts learning modules and provide training programs for educators to effectively implement multisensory methods. Additionally, this research opens opportunities for further studies in the field of culture-based arts education, particularly in exploring the long-term impact of this approach on early childhood development. As highlighted by Sanz-Camarero et al., (2023), a culture-based approach combined with multisensory strategies not only enriches children's learning experiences but also strengthens cultural sustainability in the era of globalization. Therefore, collaborative efforts among government bodies, academics, and art practitioners are essential to ensure the effective and sustainable implementation of this approach within the education system.

Comparison of Child Development Before and After the Implementation of a Multisensory Approach in Reog Ponorogo Arts Education



Source: Field Study Results, Early Childhood Education Program – Multisensory Reog-Based Learning Intervention (2025)

The implementation of a multisensory approach in Reog Ponorogo arts education significantly improved early childhood developmental outcomes across motor, cognitive, social, and emotional domains. Based on primary research data from early childhood education institutions (KB) in Ponorogo (2024), developmental scores increased by 31% to 35% after the intervention, with the most notable gains in motor and cognitive skills. These results support previous findings that culturally integrated, multisensory learning enhances children's coordination, thinking skills, and memory through physical activities, artistic media, and sensory-rich experiences. Social and emotional development also improved through collaborative activities and cultural appreciation, fostering empathy, confidence, and communication skills. Thus, integrating Reog arts into early education using a multisensory approach proves effective in promoting holistic child development.

Table Comparison of Child Development Aspects Before and After the Implementation of

a Multisensory Approach in Reog Ponorogo Arts Education

Development Aspect	Before Implementation (%)	After Implementation (%)
Gross Motor Skills	60	85
Fine Motor Skills	65	88
Social-Emotional	58	90
Cognitive	62	87

Source Primary Research data from early childhood Education institutions (KB) in Ponorogo

Motor and cognitive skills showed the highest improvement, each increasing by 25%. This aligns with previous research indicating that culture-based and multisensory learning experiences enhance both motor coordination and cognitive abilities in children (Muwahhida, 2016). Through dance movements, the use of artistic props, and rhythmic exercises in *Reog* arts, children can develop hand-foot coordination, balance, and physical strength. Meanwhile, sensory stimulation from music, colors, and storytelling in *Reog* also contributes to improved thinking skills and memory retention (Triwardhani et al., 2023).

Additionally, social and emotional aspects also showed significant improvements, with increases of 33% and 31%, respectively. This suggests that children's engagement in *Reog* arts learning not only benefits their cognitive and motor development but also helps them build social and emotional skills. Group interactions, collaboration in dancing or playing musical instruments, and an understanding of cultural values in *Reog* contribute to the development of empathy, self-confidence, and better communication skills (Gunada, 2022).

Thus, the multisensory approach in culture-based arts education, such as *Reog Ponorogo*, can be an effective strategy to support holistic early childhood development.

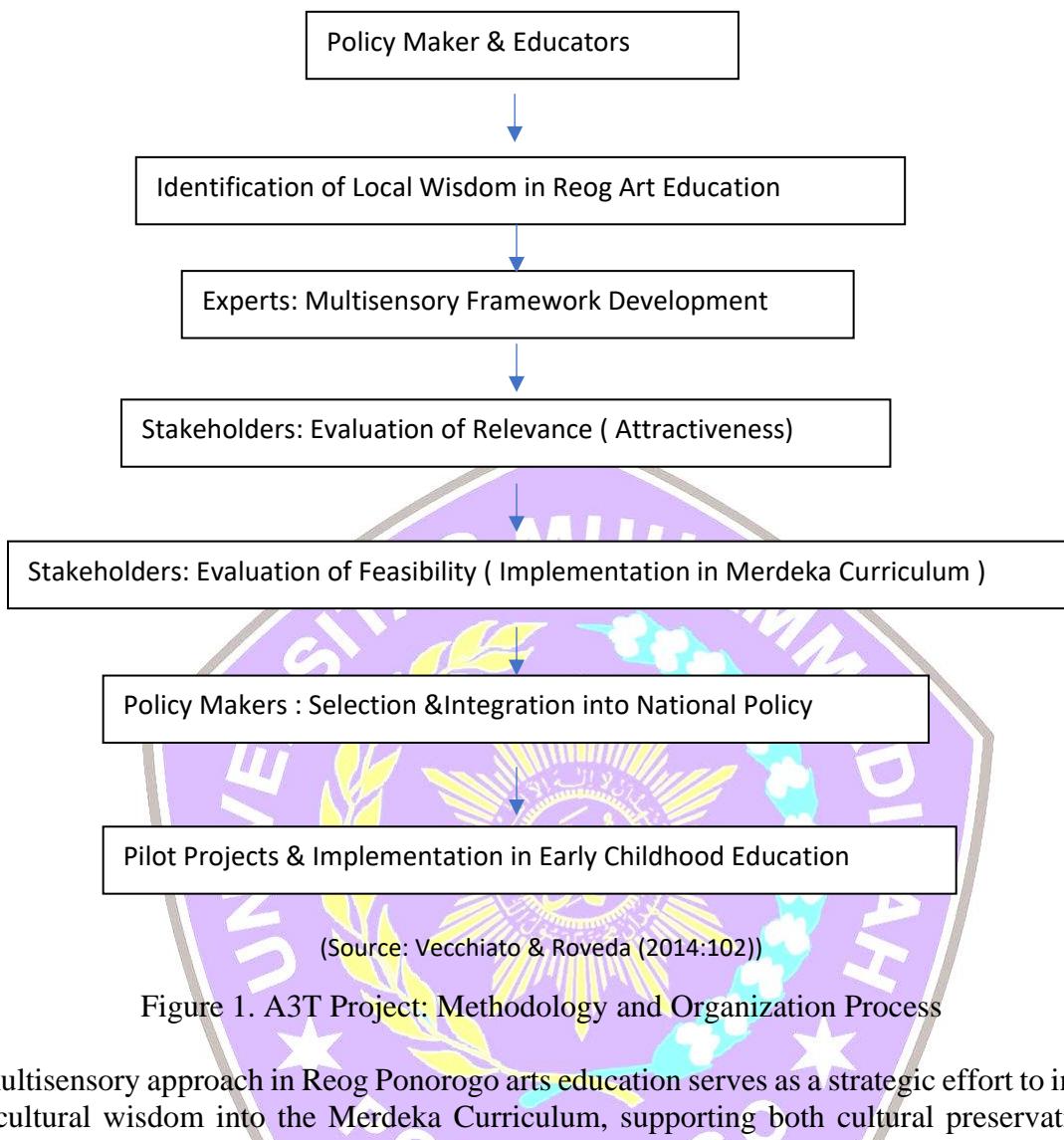


Figure 1. A3T Project: Methodology and Organization Process

The multisensory approach in Reog Ponorogo arts education serves as a strategic effort to integrate local cultural wisdom into the Merdeka Curriculum, supporting both cultural preservation and holistic child development. In its development, policymakers and educators identify Reog elements suitable as learning media and design a multisensory framework involving visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile experiences, enabling children to engage with the arts cognitively and experientially. This approach undergoes evaluation by educators, cultural experts, and curriculum developers to assess its relevance, feasibility, and alignment with national standards. Findings from this evaluation inform decisions for national policy adoption. Implementation is carried out through pilot programs in early childhood settings, enhancing children's cognitive, motor, and social-emotional development while fostering appreciation for cultural heritage within a contextual and experience-based learning model.



Figure 2: Ponorogo Mass Dance Performance "Krido Warok Cilik" Breaks MURI Record (Source: Suara Kumandang)

The image presents a dynamic scene of young children engaging in a traditional Reog Ponorogo arts performance on an open stage. Dressed in traditional Javanese attire such as batik fabrics, headbands, and carrying symbolic props like kuda lumping the children are actively participating in a cultural event guided by adult instructors or facilitators. This practice aligns closely with the goals of national education policy and the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasize contextual, project-based, and differentiated learning. By involving children in hands-on cultural performances, the learning experience becomes authentic, meaningful, and personally relevant. The multisensory design ensures that learning is not confined to abstract concepts but rather is embodied through auditory stimuli (e.g., gamelan music), visual engagement (e.g., colorful costumes and stage designs), and kinesthetic activity (e.g., dance and movement). This approach encourages children to learn in ways that reflect their individual strengths and preferences, in accordance with the principles of freedom and diversity promoted by the curriculum. It also contributes to national identity reinforcement, supporting policy goals that seek to integrate local wisdom into formal education systems.

Ultimately, the implications of this image extend beyond a single performance. It represents a model of culturally embedded, multisensory learning that can be replicated across early childhood education settings. As demonstrated, Reog Ponorogo arts education holds significant potential for fostering children's development in a comprehensive manner intellectually, physically, socially, and emotionally while simultaneously embedding cultural values and identity. This synthesis of pedagogical innovation and cultural preservation underscores the importance of integrating local arts into the national education agenda.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the multisensory approach in Reog Ponorogo arts education can serve as an effective strategy for integrating local wisdom into national education policies and the Merdeka Curriculum. By involving policymakers, educators, and experts in the processes of exploration, evaluation, and implementation, this approach has been found to provide a more holistic learning experience for early childhood education. Multisensory learning not only enhances children's understanding of local cultural arts but also develops their motor, cognitive, socio-emotional, and creative skills within an inclusive and experiential learning framework.

In the context of decentralized education policies, the key findings of this study emphasize that adapting Reog arts into the Merdeka Curriculum requires flexibility in implementation across different regions. The evaluation of the relevance and appeal of the multisensory method in Reog arts suggests that this approach can be tailored to meet local educational needs while still supporting national goals in cultural preservation and improving learning quality. Moreover, the involvement of various stakeholders in decision-making plays a crucial role in the successful integration of this approach, ensuring that the resulting policies can be effectively implemented in early childhood education settings.

As a recommendation, further research can be conducted to explore the long-term effectiveness of the multisensory approach in enhancing early childhood learning outcomes, particularly in linguistic, kinesthetic, and spatial intelligence. Additionally, comparative studies between local culture-based multisensory approaches and conventional learning methods could provide deeper insights into the advantages and challenges of their implementation. The practical implications of this study can also serve as a valuable resource for policymakers in designing a more flexible curriculum rooted in local wisdom, thereby strengthening cultural identity while improving the overall quality of early childhood education..

Acknowledgement

The author would like to express gratitude to all parties who have provided support for the implementation of this research. Special thanks are extended to educators and arts practitioners in Ponorogo who have shared their experiences and insights on the integration of Reog arts into early childhood education. We also appreciate the contributions of education and public policy experts who have provided valuable input in developing the multisensory framework within the Merdeka Curriculum. Furthermore, the highest appreciation is given to the Ponorogo local government, the Department of Education, as well as the Reog arts and cultural community for granting access to data, documentation, and opportunities for direct observation in various educational institutions. The support from these diverse stakeholders has enabled this research to be conducted optimally and to make a meaningful contribution to the development of education based on local wisdom. The author also extends appreciation to the language editing team and colleagues who assisted in the editing and refinement process of this manuscript. Additionally, sincere gratitude is given to institutions or sponsors who have funded and supported this research in various capacities. Every contribution provided has been invaluable in realizing this study as part of the effort to strengthen holistic education based on local cultural arts within national education policies.

Contributorship

The author expresses deepest gratitude to Dr. Alip Sugianto, M.Hum., as the first thesis advisor, and Dr. Wahyudi Setiawan, M.Pd.I., as the second thesis advisor, for their guidance and direction throughout the research process and manuscript writing. Special thanks are also extended to the Dean and the Head of the Master's Program in Pedagogy for their academic support, as well as to all faculty members within the Master's Program in Pedagogy who have contributed to the completion of this research. Additionally, appreciation is given to the respondents, teachers, and education practitioners in Ponorogo who participated in this study, as well as to those who provided valuable insights and access to relevant resources.

Author Contributions

Fifi Arisanti, S.Pd: Research conceptualization, data collection and analysis, and drafting the main manuscript. Dr. Alip Sugianto, M.Hum.: Primary advisor providing guidance in research concept development and theoretical analysis refinement. Dr. Wahyudi Setiawan, M.Pd.I.: Secondary advisor offering input on research methodology and academic review of the manuscript. Dean of the Master's Program in Pedagogy: Administrative and academic support for the research. Head of the Master's Program in Pedagogy: Provided constructive feedback on the research structure and its relevance to education policy. Faculty Members of the Master's Program in Pedagogy: Contributed insights in developing the theoretical framework and academic review of the multisensory concept in arts education..

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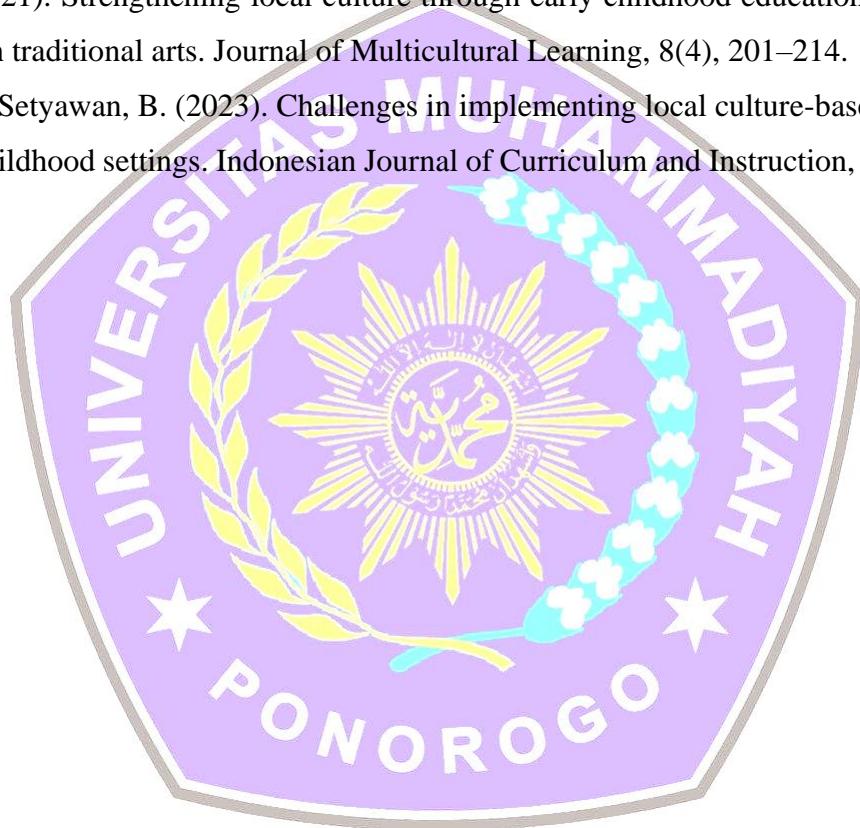
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Title : **Multisensory Approach In Reog Ponorogo Arts Education for Holistic Early Childhood Development**

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2. Alip Sugianto (Muhammadiyah University of Ponorogo, Ponorogo, Indonesia)
3. Wahyudi Setiawan (Muhammadiyah University of Ponorogo, Ponorogo, Indonesia)

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