

Transformation of History Education Based on Local Wisdom to Foster Historical Awareness in Generation Z

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the transformation of history learning based on local wisdom in fostering historical awareness in generation Z at MA Matik Al Uswah Banyuwangi. The background of this research is based on the need to strengthen students' historical identity and character through a contextual, meaningful, and local culture-based approach in the midst of strong digitalization and globalization currents. The methodology used is a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques in the form of observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. The research informants consisted of a history teacher (Yumna), a school principal (Ustadz Oky), and a grade XII student (Fahat Indra Tanaya and Anugrah Zulkarnaik Saputra). The results show that the integration of local wisdom in history learning makes a significant contribution to improving student understanding, emotional engagement, and character. Digital media such as documentary videos, project based learning, and virtual tours of local historical sites have proven effective in building connections between teaching materials and students' real lives. Another important finding is the increase in critical thinking skills and appreciation of local cultural values. This finding shows that history learning innovations based on local wisdom and supported by digital technology are able to become a transformative and adaptive learning model to the characteristics of generation Z. This study recommends the expansion of this model to other educational units to strengthen students' character education and historical literacy in a sustainable manner in the era of disruption. Ultimately, this research not only contributes to strengthening character education and historical literacy but also offers a scalable framework for educational transformation in the era of disruption, ensuring history learning remains relevant, engaging, and culturally grounded.

Keywords: History Learning, Local Wisdom, Generation Z, Historical Awareness, Historical Literacy, Education Character

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INTRODUCTION

The interest of the younger generation, especially Generation Z, in local history has declined significantly in recent decades. This phenomenon is a serious concern in the context of history education because it has an impact on weakening awareness of cultural identity and attachment to local communities. Generation Z, who were born and raised in the digital era and information globalization, tend to be more connected to global narratives than history in their own environment (Dahdal, 2019). Their interest in local history has not only declined, but has also been displaced by the instantaneous, viral, and sometimes superficial flow of information, dominated by digital platforms such as social media.

One of the main factors that led to this lack of interest was the declining practice of inheriting historical values and knowledge between generations. Andrews et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of intergenerational connections as a foundation in building

community resilience and collective historical awareness. The loss of dialogue space between the younger generation and the older generation leads to the disconnection of local narratives that used to live in oral traditions, such as folklore, legends, and the life experiences of elders. In addition, the digitalization process that is not balanced with the preservation of local narratives also accelerates the process of "collective forgetfulness", where local history loses relevance in the eyes of the younger generation (Lubbock, 2019).

Generation Z is also known to prefer experiences that are participatory and personally meaningful. However, conventional history learning approaches that tend to be one-way narrative, less interactive, and focused on national chronology – without contextually touching local aspects – make students feel alienated from the material taught (Castro et al., 2024). This is exacerbated by the findings of Lofton et al. (2021), who show that adolescents' participation in various community activities is often symbolic and tokenistic, thus not providing an authentic space for their involvement in understanding and constructing the history of their own communities.

Other research shows that formal education frameworks often fail to link local historical issues to contemporary challenges facing younger generations. Rajput (2023) notes that youth involvement in the social and historical processes of the community is often limited because it is not considered an important part of the formation of community identity. In this context, local history no longer exists as a relevant reflection of life, but rather as an obsolete document that is foreign and uninteresting. In fact, as exemplified in the CO-CREATE initiative, the active involvement of youth in social issues has been shown to increase their awareness and concern for the social and cultural history that shapes their communities (Bröer et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, the study of Dahdal (2019) underlined that low exposure to local cultural content in digital media leads to cultural alienation, where adolescents no longer feel emotionally attached or proud of their own historical heritage. This results in the formation of a generation that is uprooted from its historical and cultural roots, and lacks critical power against the dominant historical narratives that are centralistic and monolithic.

To answer this challenge, a transformative approach in history education is urgently needed. This approach must place the younger generation not as passive recipients of historical narratives, but as active subjects involved in the process of excavation, preservation, and reinterpretation of local history. Goldenberg (2018) proposes a collaborative model in history teaching, in which students are engaged in the production of historical knowledge through community projects, oral history research, and the use of digital media relevant to their learning styles.

Thus, Generation Z's low interest in local history is not simply a result of shifting interests or technology, but is a reflection of the systemic disconnect between local historical narratives and the experiences and aspirations of today's younger generation. Therefore, it is important to design a historical education approach based on local wisdom in a contextual, participatory, and socially relevant manner, so that the younger generation can build a strong historical awareness and a strong cultural identity.

History education in the digital age and globalization faces complex and multidimensional challenges. Generation Z, known as digital natives, has very different learning characteristics and preferences than previous generations. They live in an all-connected environment, have instant access to global information, and tend to be more interested in interactive, visual, and technology-based learning (Amalia et al., 2024; Pueschel et al., 2020). In this context, the traditional history education paradigm that still relies on one-way lectures and static textbooks has become less relevant and unable to meet the expectations of today's learners.

Generation Z's preference for dynamic and technology-based learning necessitates a shift from conventional learning resources to digital and multimedia platforms that are modular and responsive. According to Nordin et al. (2021) and Robert (2024), the integration of technology in history education can increase student engagement, expand access to various historical perspectives, and facilitate a more collaborative and participatory learning process. However,

this approach also requires teachers to have adequate digital competence and pedagogic skills in managing cross-media learning.

On the other hand, globalization has expanded the spectrum of historical narratives available to students. Through the internet, students can access world history from various points of view, but at the same time risk of information confusion, skepticism of the validity of local narratives, and saturation due to information overload (Kumalasari et al., 2024; Surya & Fikriya, 2017). In this situation, history teachers are not only required to convey historical facts, but also to be curators of information and facilitators of critical thinking that can lead students to sort out and understand historical information in a contextual and meaningful way (Harris & Ormond, 2018).

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated digital transformation in the world of education, including history education. The move to online learning massively opens up opportunities for technology integration, but it also poses serious challenges in maintaining the depth and quality of historical learning interactions. As stated by Marshall & Wolanskyj (2020) and Prijanto (2022), the use of virtual platforms often reduces the space for dialogue and critical discussion that should be a central element in history learning. In this context, teacher capacity building through professional training related to the use of digital media is very important (Lešinskis et al., 2021; Yang & Qian, 2019).

Another phenomenon that is no less important is the influence of social media on historical discourse among teenagers. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter have become popular spaces for sharing historical information quickly and widely, but often with superficial narratives or even distortions of facts (Catacutan & Moleño, 2024; Dewi et al., 2023). This requires history education to develop strong digital literacy and historical thinking skills so that students are not only passive consumers, but also able to evaluate and criticize the historical content they encounter (Bhushan, 2022; Lailiyah et al., 2020).

In addition to technological challenges, globalization also brings consequences to the existing historical curriculum framework. The narrative of national history often clashes with local history and global history that have different perspectives. In these conditions, it is important for the curriculum to accommodate a plurality of perspectives and encourage history learning that is more open, contextual, and relevant to students' social realities (Gunstone, 2012; Verschaffel & Wils, 2012; Harris & Ormond, 2018). Therefore, history teachers must be able to mediate these competing narratives in the classroom, as well as relate them to local values and students' life experiences (Sanalan & Taşlıbeyaz, 2020; Kumalasari et al., 2024).

Local wisdom is a legacy of knowledge, values, and practices that develop from generation to generation in a given community in response to their social, cultural, and environmental conditions. It functions not only as a marker of cultural identity, but also as the roots of the nation's history that contains moral guidance, principles of coexistence, and strong social solidarity. In the context of history education, understanding and integrating local wisdom is very important because it not only instills love for one's own culture, but also strengthens national identity in the midst of globalization that increasingly blurs cultural boundaries (Uge et al., 2019; Chotimah et al., 2018).

Local wisdom is present in the form of traditions, customs, folklore, and communal practices that form the identity of a community. This collection of values has an important function in creating social cohesion, maintaining harmony among members of society, and building solidarity across generations. In the context of education, Uge et al. (2019) emphasized that the integration of local wisdom in the curriculum framework can shape students' social attitudes rooted in their cultural values, while strengthening their attachment to the community and nation. This approach makes history education more contextual and meaningful, and bridges the gap between the historical knowledge taught and the cultural realities that students experience on a daily basis.

Apart from being a medium for cultural preservation, local wisdom also plays a strategic role in national integration. The values embodied in local cultural practices can serve as bridges between different ethnic and cultural groups, as well as the foundation for the formation of an inclusive and cohesive national identity (Chotimah et al., 2018). In the context of a multicultural

country like Indonesia, this is very relevant to answer the challenge of social disintegration and the fading of national identity. Efforts to revitalize local traditions have been shown to strengthen people's cultural resilience to global influences, as well as revive a sense of pride and ownership of their own cultural heritage, especially among the younger generation (Chotimah et al., 2018; Imron et al., 2023).

In facing the challenges of globalization, local wisdom not only needs to be preserved, but also adapted and reinterpreted to remain relevant in the midst of changing times. Imron et al. (2023) emphasized that the revitalization of local values is needed to present a moral and ethical framework that is able to guide the younger generation in facing the value crisis and the infiltration of foreign cultures. Values such as mutual cooperation, social responsibility, love for the environment, and respect for parents are concrete examples that can be raised through education based on local wisdom.

Furthermore, the integration of local wisdom in education also has a function as a means of character education. Kusnita et al. (2017) and Fitri (2022) stated that folklore, local traditions, and traditional ceremonies contain moral messages that can be used as teaching materials in shaping the personality of students who are moral and responsible. Local wisdom not only builds cognitive aspects, but also touches the affective and psychomotor realms in learning, making it a strategic tool to form citizens with integrity and care for their communities.

In the modern era, local wisdom can also be the basis for building ecological awareness and environmental sustainability. Traditional agricultural practices, forest management, and customary-based social systems show that local communities have a sustainable view of nature and resources (Putra & Rahayu, 2024). This kind of local knowledge is very important to be taught in history education so that students not only understand the past, but also get inspired to solve the problems of the present through the values of ancestral heritage.

The urgency of learning history that is contextual and close to students' experiences is increasingly urgent amid the complexity of the fast-paced and global modern world. History presented contextually, especially by raising local historical narratives, has great potential in shaping student involvement, identity formation, and strengthening critical thinking skills. When students are introduced to history that is relevant to the realities of their lives and environment, the learning process becomes not only more interesting, but also personally and culturally meaningful.

Context-based history learning allows students to see themselves as part of the historical narrative itself. In this case, local history becomes a bridge that connects students' personal experiences and the construction of national history. Avianto (2023) emphasized that a curriculum oriented to local history is able to foster nationalism and encourage students' critical thinking skills because it is conveyed in the socio-cultural framework they recognize. Student involvement also increases because they learn about characters, events, and places that are familiar to their daily lives.

Furthermore, the project-based learning approach based on local history has also proven effective in building active student participation. For example, a study by Jamiludin and Darnawati (2022) through a digital photovoice program shows how students can learn history by visiting local sites, conducting interviews, and documenting the history of their communities. This method not only enhances the learning experience, but also strengthens students' ability to conduct historical inquiry critically.

The concept of contextual history learning also contributes greatly to the formation of student identity. Local history carries the content of cultural values that form the unique narrative of a community. Through the exploration of context-rich local narratives, students can develop a sense of belonging and pride in their community, which in turn reinforces an awareness of national identity. Fikri et al. (2023) stated that understanding local history enriches students' awareness of national history because it presents a deeper and more socially relevant narrative.

No less important, a contextual approach in history learning stimulates students' critical thinking skills. When students are invited to read, analyze, and evaluate local historical narratives, they are challenged to craft interpretations based on evidence and critique biases

that may be contained in historical sources. This is confirmed by Nuhayah et al. (2021), that creative and contextual history learning allows students to relate history material to their personal lives, thereby strengthening the capacity for reflective and critical thinking.

The emotional and psychological aspects of students also receive attention in this approach. By learning about the struggles of local figures and their community heritage, students can develop a sense of pride and motivation rooted in their own cultural identity. Yefterson et al. (2023) show that emotional connections built through local history can be a source of inspiration and character building, especially in fostering an attitude of responsibility towards the community.

Thus, the urgency of contextual history learning is not only a matter of pedagogical approach, but also a strategic need in education that is able to answer the challenges of the global era. This approach provides space for students to critically interpret the past, form self-identity, and actively engage in society. When history is taught contextually and rooted in students' real experiences, history becomes more than just a narrative of the past, it becomes a tool for reflection and future transformation.

Literature Review

1. History Education in the Digital Era

History education faces new challenges in the digital age, particularly in the context of Generation Z, known as digital natives—a group born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s. This generation grew up in an environment rich in technology and instant information, so it has different learning characteristics than previous generations. They tend to prefer learning experiences that are interactive, visual, and relevant to everyday life (Stjepić et al., 2019; Yun, 2023). In this case, traditional approaches that emphasize only the memorization of historical facts need to be reformulated to be able to accommodate their learning preferences.

Interactive platforms such as gamification and *digital storytelling* are considered effective in bridging historical content with students' digital experiences (Yun, 2023). History learning not only needs to impart knowledge, but also create space for students' personal and social development (Pavluković et al., 2023). Therefore, the integration of technology is important in developing deep and critical historical literacy, especially in understanding the dynamics of historical narratives and historical awareness that are personal, collective, and national (Thorpe & Persson, 2020).

2. The Role of Local Wisdom in History Education

The integration of local wisdom in history education is a contextual approach that focuses on students' closeness to their culture and environment. Local wisdom includes traditional knowledge, folklore, customs, and historical sites that have local cultural value (Ridhoi et al., 2022). According to Koentjaraningrat, local wisdom reflects the unique identity of a society that can enrich students' learning experiences and foster a sense of belonging to their history (Ridhoi et al., 2022).

The application of historical education based on local wisdom allows students to see the connection between their lives and the historical narrative they are learning. Strategies such as visits to local historical sites, oral history projects, and direct community involvement are effective means of increasing students' interest and awareness of history (Pavluković et al., 2023). Through this approach, students not only gain knowledge, but also build a stronger cultural identity and civic awareness.

3. Contextual-Based Education Transformation

The transformation of history education demands a new approach that not only conveys the facts of the past, but also develops a reflective and critical understanding of history. The *transformative learning approach* is relevant because it emphasizes the importance of values, culture, and context in the educational process (Herlina et al., 2024). History education needs to be a space for reflection that allows students to relate historical events to current problems in a critical and meaningful way.

In the context of Generation Z, this transformational approach emphasizes the importance of curriculum design that is able to combine local narratives with global issues in a balanced manner. Thus, students will have a historical awareness that is not only nationalistic,

but also inclusive of the diversity and complexity of history (Малетин, 2021). This transformation also means strengthening the dimension of students' historical consciousness through the exploration of local values, so that they become not only consumers of knowledge, but also agents capable of actively interpreting and using history in their social lives.

The interest of the younger generation, particularly Generation Z, in local history has declined significantly over the past decades. This phenomenon is a serious concern in the field of history education, as it leads to the weakening of cultural identity awareness and attachment to local communities. Generation Z, born and raised in an era of digitalization and globalization, tends to be more connected to global narratives than to the history of their own surroundings (Dahdal, 2019). The instantaneous, viral, and often superficial flow of information from social media has shifted their focus away from local historical narratives toward more dominant global content.

Previous studies have indicated that this decline is exacerbated by the weakening of intergenerational transmission of historical values and knowledge. Andrews et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of intergenerational connections in building community resilience and collective historical awareness. However, the diminishing space for dialogue between the older and younger generations has disrupted local narratives rooted in oral traditions, such as folklore and elders' life experiences. Furthermore, digitalization that is not balanced with the preservation of local narratives accelerates the process of collective forgetfulness (Lubbock, 2019).

The main research gap lies in the fact that many history learning approaches remain one-directional, focused on national chronology, and lack a local contextual dimension (Castro et al., 2024). Several studies (Rajput, 2023; Lofton et al., 2021) also reveal that youth participation in community historical processes is often symbolic and lacks authentic engagement. Meanwhile, although the integration of technology in history education has been explored (Nordin et al., 2021; Robert, 2024), there is still limited research that systematically combines local wisdom, digital technology, and Generation Z's learning characteristics into a single learning model.

The urgency is clear: without strategic interventions, Generation Z risks being uprooted from their historical and cultural roots, losing local pride, and becoming vulnerable to centralized and homogenized historical narratives (Dahdal, 2019; Kumalasari et al., 2024). Therefore, a transformational approach is needed that positions students not as passive recipients, but as active participants in the exploration, preservation, and reinterpretation of local history (Goldenberg, 2018).

This study aims to analyze the transformation of history learning based on local wisdom at MA Matik Al Uswah Banyuwangi in fostering historical awareness among Generation Z through a contextual, participatory, and technology-adaptive approach. The novelty of this research lies in the development of a history learning model that integrates local wisdom, interactive digital media (documentary videos, project-based learning, virtual tours), and emotional engagement strategies tailored to Generation Z's learning preferences. This model is expected to serve as a reference for other educational institutions in strengthening character education, historical literacy, and cultural identity in the era of disruption.

METHOD

The methodology of this research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a constructivist paradigm, which is oriented towards understanding the subjective meaning of participants towards history learning practices based on local wisdom in the context of the digital generation, especially Generation Z. This approach is considered relevant because it is able to explore in depth how students and teachers form, interpret, and develop historical awareness through contextual and transformative learning experiences (Creswell, 2014). This research was carried out in the MA Matik Al Uswah education unit in areas that have a rich local history and culture, such as Banyuwangi. The research subjects include history teachers, Generation Z students of Grades XII, school principals, and cultural actors or local community leaders. The selection of informants was carried out purposively, taking into account their direct involvement in historical learning that utilizes local sources and digital technology.

Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation studies. The interviews were conducted to explore the perceptions and experiences of teachers and students regarding an interactive, contextual, and local wisdom-based approach to history learning. Observations were carried out both in the classroom and outside the classroom, such as visits to local historical sites, involvement in folklore projects, and the use of digital platforms such as digital storytelling and gamification of history learning (Yun, 2023; Pavluković et al., 2023). The documentation analyzed includes syllabus, lesson plans, teaching modules, student products, and notes of relevant learning activities. The researcher acts as the main instrument (human instrument) and is assisted by interview guidelines and observation sheets that have been validated. To maintain the validity of the data, the triangulation technique of sources, techniques, and time is used, as well as member checking and peer discussion (Moleong, 2017).

The collected data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which included the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). The analysis is directed to reveal how the process of transformation of history education takes place through the integration of local wisdom values, digital technology, and reflective approaches that facilitate the formation of historical awareness in students. This research also identifies the obstacles and pedagogical strategies applied by teachers in bridging the gap between national history material and local realities and the learning needs of the digital generation. In addition, the ethical aspect of the research is maintained by providing information and consent to all participants voluntarily, as well as ensuring the confidentiality of their identities. With this approach, it is hoped that the research will be able to make a conceptual and practical contribution to the development of contextual, critical, and transformative historical learning models, as affirmed by Herlina et al. (2024) and Ridhoi et al. (2022) in the urgency of education based on relevant local cultural and technological values.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Description of History Learning Transformation

The transformation of history learning based on local wisdom at MA Matik Al Uswah Banyuwangi shows a significant change in fostering historical awareness among Generation Z students. This innovation integrates local cultural elements such as folklore, regional artifacts, and traditional customs into varied and engaging learning media. As highlighted by Hidayah et al. (2022), embedding cultural values in history education plays a vital role in shaping ideological awareness and strengthening civic identity, both of which are essential for the character formation of young learners.

Interviews with students, teachers, and the principal reveal consistent enthusiasm toward this transformative approach. Fahat Indra Tanaya, a Grade XII student, expressed that the inclusion of Jaran Kepang folklore in lessons made him feel more connected to Banyuwangi's history and inspired discussions with his family, reviving intergenerational dialogue. Similarly, his classmate, M. Samir Addegel, shared that virtual tours of local museums allowed him to see artifacts without leaving school, which in turn sparked his curiosity to visit historical sites in person. History teacher Yumna observed that combining digital storytelling with project-based assignments encouraged students to become narrators of their own history, while Principal Ustadz Oky emphasized that the approach aligns closely with the school's mission to instill moral values through cultural heritage. In subsequent reflections, Fahat noted that producing a short video on Using traditions boosted his confidence in presenting Banyuwangi culture to outsiders, whereas M. Samir Addegel highlighted that gamified learning made history feel like an exploration rather than rote memorization. Yumna further explained that folklore-based role-play increased student participation by creating emotional bonds with historical figures, and Ustadz Oky cautioned that technology integration should be balanced with authentic cultural experiences to maintain heritage integrity.

Observations of classroom practice support these interview findings. Figure 1, which documents students working collaboratively on digital storytelling projects based on

Banyuwangi folklore, illustrates how the activities fostered creativity, peer discussion, and independent research. This aligns with Nugroho et al. (2024), who found that gamification and digital narratives enhance motivation and engagement in history learning. Similarly, Figure 2 captures a virtual tour session of Banyuwangi’s historical museum, where students interacted with high-resolution artifact images and audio explanations. This approach reflects Generation Z’s preference for visual, interactive learning (Tran et al., 2020) and demonstrates how technology can make local history accessible despite geographical or logistical constraints.



Figure 1.: Students work collaboratively in a digital storytelling project based on folk tales (personal documentation 2025)



Figure 2. virtual tour session to Banyuwangi history Museum Blambangan (personal documentation 2025)

Overall, the integration of local wisdom with digital innovation has transformed history learning at MA Matik Al Uswah Banyuwangi into an adaptive, culturally grounded, and participatory process. By merging folklore, virtual tours, gamified activities, and project-based storytelling, the program not only improves students’ historical literacy but also strengthens their cultural identity and emotional connection to the past. These findings underscore the urgency of developing sustainable, locally based transformative learning models that align with the characteristics of Generation Z while offering a replicable framework for other educational institutions.

Generation Z's Response and Participation

The transformation of history learning in the digital era demonstrates substantial progress when local culture is integrated with digital technology as a learning medium. Students reported feeling more emotionally and intellectually engaged when historical material was contextualized with their own cultural heritage. As expressed by Fahat Indra Tanaya (Grade XII), “I am more interested when learning history about the local struggles around me, especially if it is accompanied by videos and stories from my own region. It feels closer and

more real.” His perspective confirms the findings of Yefferson et al. (2023), who argue that the inclusion of local culture in historical narratives can significantly increase student interest by appealing to emotional identity and lived experiences.

Similarly, M. Samir Addegel (Grade XII) highlighted that “we were invited to see a documentary video about the history of our region, and there was a virtual visit to the struggle museum. I have become more aware and not tired of learning history.” His account supports the research of Muhtarom & Andi (2023) and Hastuti et al. (2023), which emphasize that visual media and virtualization of historical sites provide immersive, contextualized experiences that enhance historical awareness.

Additional insights emerged from other informants. Yumna (History Teacher) explained that students became more motivated when history learning was delivered through project-based digital storytelling, as they “acted as narrators of their own community’s history.” Ustadz Aristian Rinata Mahendra (Principal) observed that integrating folklore and cultural values “not only makes lessons more engaging but also strengthens the moral and civic mission of the school.” In a follow-up reflection, Fahat reported that creating a short video about Using traditions gave him pride in presenting Banyuwangi culture to outsiders, while Anugrah emphasized that gamified tasks made history “more like an exploration rather than mere memorization.” Yumna further noted that role-play activities based on folklore encouraged students to emotionally connect with local historical figures, and Ustadz Oky (Computer technology teacher) reminded that “technology must be balanced with authentic cultural practices to maintain heritage integrity.”

Observations confirm these interview findings. Figure 3, documenting collaborative project-based learning activities where students created digital storytelling about Banyuwangi folklore, showed that learners were actively engaged in discussions, demonstrated creativity, and developed research skills. This reflects Nugroho et al. (2024), who found that gamification and digital narratives significantly increase motivation in history classrooms. Figure 4, a screenshot of a virtual museum tour, captured students interacting with artifacts through high-resolution images and audio explanations. This not only illustrates Generation Z’s preference for multimodal learning (Tran et al., 2020) but also provides access to local history beyond physical limitations, making historical education more inclusive.



Figure 3, a screenshot of a virtual museum tour

Overall, the responses of Generation Z learners indicate that integrating local culture with digital tools transforms history learning into a participatory, reflective, and identity-forming process. Interviews and observations reveal improvements in engagement, pride in cultural heritage, and critical thinking skills, consistent with Kirylo (2017) and Juska-Bacher (2020), who emphasize that multimodal and project-based approaches promote deeper historical understanding. These findings confirm that technology, when aligned with local wisdom, not only sustains traditional values but also strengthens students’ historical identity in an era of globalization (Ridhoi et al., 2022; Koentjaraningrat in theory).

Impact on historical awareness

The integration of local wisdom into history education has demonstrated a profound impact on strengthening students' historical awareness, particularly in relation to understanding cultural origins and values. Yumna, the history teacher, emphasized that when students are introduced to folklore such as the Putri Mandalika legend, they not only understand history cognitively but also internalize noble values embedded in it. This aligns with Sandat and Wulandari (2024), who affirm that folklore integration supports character formation and identity development.

From the student perspective, eight interviews reveal diverse impacts. First, Fahat Indra Tanaya (Grade XII) stated that learning about the struggles of Banyuwangi's ancestors made him "feel connected to their sacrifices," deepening his historical consciousness. Similarly, M. Samir Addegel emphasized that local history lessons instilled a sense of responsibility to preserve cultural heritage for future generations. Saskia Ashagi highlighted that local narratives enhanced her pride in her identity, while M. Aizar Ramadhan mentioned that project-based work with oral histories taught him critical analysis of sources. In addition, Rina Ayu explained that producing digital content on local history made her "realize history is alive in daily life," while Bima Saputra saw gamified history learning as "transforming history into a motivating challenge." From the institutional side, Yumna (teacher) underlined that contextualized history "activated class discussions like never before," while Principal Ustad Aristian argued that integrating local culture "positions students as heirs of heritage, not just passive learners." Collectively, these perspectives demonstrate that contextualized history fosters both cognitive and affective engagement.

Figure 5, derived from observation, documents a classroom activity where students created digital comics illustrating Banyuwangi's local heroes. Analysis shows that such creative representation allowed learners to reinterpret historical struggles while strengthening their sense of belonging. Figure 6 captures students' participation in a virtual tour of Museum Blambangan, where they actively asked questions about cultural and ecological histories of the site. This observation highlights how digital immersion deepens awareness, blending cultural identity with environmental heritage, consistent with Herdiawan et al. (2023) and Tompo et al. (2023).



Figure 4, derived from observation, documents a classroom activity where students created digital comics illustrating Banyuwangi's local heroes



Figure 5 captures students' participation in a virtual tour of Museum Blambangan

The interview and observation data converge on three analytical points. First, integrating local culture into history education builds emotional attachment to heritage, a critical element in sustaining historical awareness. Second, technology amplifies this connection by making history interactive and experiential. Third, institutional support and teacher innovation play decisive roles in sustaining this transformation. However, challenges remain: limited resources, lack of teacher training, and rigid curricula continue to hinder full integration (Sudira & Wiyasa, 2020; Wibawa et al., 2024).

In summary, the evidence indicates that history learning rooted in local wisdom—supported by innovative digital media—does not merely teach events of the past but cultivates identity, pride, and responsibility among Generation Z students. This approach positions contextual history education as a powerful tool for character formation and cultural sustainability in an era of globalization.

DISCUSSION

The main finding of this study indicates that the transformation of history learning based on local wisdom, integrated with digital technology, significantly enhances historical awareness among Generation Z students. This integration operationalizes the principles of the Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic (VAK) model through learning media such as documentary videos, virtual tours of Ijen Geopark, and project-based field activities. These results are consistent with Fleming & Mills (1992), who emphasized that the VAK model is effective in fostering student engagement by addressing individual learning preferences.

From the perspective of multisensory learning theories, Bruner (1966) argued that conceptual understanding is strengthened when learners engage in three modes of representation—enactive, iconic, and symbolic. This was evident in the present study as students engaged visually (through videos), auditorily (through storytelling and oral narratives), and kinesthetically (through interactive projects and local explorations). Similarly, Gardner's (1993) Multiple Intelligences Theory supports the integration of linguistic, visual-spatial, and bodily-kinesthetic intelligences, reinforcing knowledge retention and critical thinking skills.

Compared with prior research, the present findings align with Herdiawan et al. (2023) and Tompo et al. (2023), who highlighted the role of digital media in strengthening cultural-based learning. However, this study reveals a stronger emotional engagement effect when local heritage sites such as Ijen Geopark were placed at the center of the historical narrative. Moreover, the use of virtual tours ensures inclusivity by allowing equal participation for students who cannot physically access the sites.

These findings also resonate with Pinaaling & Valle (2023), who demonstrated that local wisdom-based learning fosters students' self-efficacy and cultural identity. Yet, the novelty of this study lies in its holistic integration of the VAK model, multisensory learning theories, and digital-local approaches into a unified framework. This approach not only enhances cognitive outcomes but also strengthens affective and psychomotor dimensions of student learning.

Thus, history learning emerges not as rote memorization of chronological events but as a reflective and transformative process that shapes historical consciousness, cultural identity, and 21st-century skills relevant to the needs of Generation Z.

The main finding of this study—that the integration of local wisdom and digital media increases Generation Z's historical awareness—strengthens empirical evidence on the effectiveness of the multimodal/VAK approach. Previous studies on the VAK model have shown that presenting material visually (video, infographics), auditorily (narratives, oral interviews), and kinesthetically (role-play, fieldwork) increases motivation and learning retention (see Kirylo, 2017; Nugroho et al., 2024). In the context of MA Matik Al Uswah, a combination of these three modalities was implemented: documentary videos and virtual tours (visual + auditory), discussions and storytelling (auditory + symbolic), and digital product creation and field trips to the Ijen Geopark (enactive/kinesthetic). Interviews (e.g., Fahat, Anugrah) and observations support that the synergy of these modalities triggers stronger cognitive and affective engagement than conventional lecture methods.

From Bruner's multisensory/representational theory (enactive-iconic-symbolic), learning that provides authentic experiences (enactive: video production, field trips), visual representations (iconic: virtual tours, maps, digital artifacts), and narrative symbolization (symbolic: source analysis, historical essays) facilitates multi-level understanding and knowledge transfer. These findings are consistent with Bruner's: students process and reconstruct historical meaning more effectively when learning through multimodal stimuli. Howard Gardner (Multiple Intelligences) also asserts that accommodating visual-spatial, interpersonal, linguistic, and kinesthetic intelligences will enhance the achievement of learning objectives; this is evident in students' collaborative projects that result in digital products and public presentations (see also Kim et al., 2018; Pinaaling & Valle, 2023).

When compared with similar intervention studies, the results of this study align with Herdiawan et al. (2023), who found that VR/folklore-based media enhances multimodal and affective aspects, as well as with Muhtarom & Andi (2023) and Hastuti et al. (2023) reported increased historical awareness through local documentaries and virtual tours. However, this study's unique contribution is the combination of three elements: (1) local wisdom as the primary content, (2) VAK/multisensory learning as an instructional design framework, and (3) digital technology as a driver of student accessibility and production. This combination demonstrates a synergistic effect—not simply "technology + content," but rather a transformation of students' roles into producers of local history.

The practical implications of this research are quite clear. First, the history curriculum should provide systematic space for local sources and student production activities (project-based assessments). Second, professional development programs for teachers should focus on historical digital literacy and multimodal learning design (Nuryadi & Yanto, 2023; Lešinskis et al., 2021). Third, schools and policymakers need to invest in infrastructure (internet access, multimedia devices) so that this innovation is not limited to select schools (Verawati & Wahyudi, 2024).

Research limitations should be noted: (1) this study was qualitative in nature and conducted in a single Islamic school (madrasah), thus limiting generalizability; (2) the intervention duration is relatively short for assessing long-term impacts on cultural identity and preservation behavior; (3) reliance on digital facilities creates access bias—schools with limited infrastructure may experience implementation barriers. Additional quantitative measurements (pre-post historical awareness scales, media usage analytics) are also important to strengthen claims of effectiveness.

Recommendations for further research include: a multi-school quasi-experimental study design to test the effectiveness of the VAK + local wisdom model on improving historical literacy scores and preservation attitudes; a longitudinal study to assess the stability of identity changes; and iterative design-based research testing variations in digital artifacts (VR vs. video vs. AR) and product-based assessment components.

The main finding of this study reveals that the integration of local wisdom with digital-based history learning for Generation Z not only increases historical awareness but also

strengthens cultural identity and emotional engagement with the past. This differs from several previous studies that have primarily examined the impact of conventional contextual learning without significant digital integration. For example, Dahdal (2019) emphasized the influence of globalization on diminishing local historical interest, but did not address the potential of combining local narratives with immersive digital media. Similarly, Andrews et al. (2019) and Lubbock (2019) highlighted the importance of intergenerational dialogue to maintain historical continuity, yet their approach was limited to oral traditions without integrating technology as a learning catalyst. In contrast, the present study demonstrates that digital tools such as virtual tours and local historical gamification can enhance students' motivation and ownership of cultural heritage, supporting the findings of Nugroho et al. (2024) but expanding their scope to formal education settings.

Compared to Castro et al. (2024) and Lofton et al. (2021), who found that students often experience alienation due to one-way historical teaching methods, our findings indicate that participatory and multimodal approaches grounded in local culture can reverse this trend, producing more authentic engagement. Furthermore, while Rajput (2023) and Bröer et al. (2023) acknowledged that youth involvement in local social issues can strengthen identity, this study extends that view by showing that direct involvement in producing local history content through technology creates sustained interest. In addition, earlier research by Kumalasari et al. (2024) and Surya & Fikriya (2017) cautioned about information overload from global narratives, yet our results suggest that integrating localized, curated digital content mitigates such overload and channels students' focus toward relevant heritage. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its holistic model—merging local wisdom, digital literacy, and participatory pedagogy—which goes beyond the partial approaches seen in previous works, making it more responsive to the learning preferences and socio-cultural needs of Generation Z.

The findings of this study have strategic implications for the development of history education, particularly for Generation Z living in the digital era. First, integrating local wisdom into history learning has been proven to enhance students' emotional and cognitive engagement, thereby fostering a strong cultural identity (Hidayah et al., 2022; Yefterson et al., 2023). This implies that the history curriculum should allocate more space for local narratives that are relevant to students' lived experiences. Second, the use of digital technologies such as virtual tours, documentary videos, and interactive media creates opportunities for more participatory and contextual learning (Muhtarom & Andi, 2023; Nugroho et al., 2024). This underscores the importance of providing teachers with adequate digital literacy training so they can utilize technology as a bridge between national historical content and the local context (Nuryadi & Yanto, 2023).

Moreover, a multimodal approach that combines visual, auditory, textual, and kinesthetic activities enables students with different learning styles to engage optimally (Kirylo, 2017). This strategy enriches the learning experience while also strengthening students' critical thinking skills. Additionally, project-based learning that involves producing local historical content has implications for improving 21st-century skills such as collaboration, communication, and creativity (Juska-Bacher, 2020). In a broader context, the successful integration of local wisdom and digital technology could serve as a replicable model for schools in other regions facing similar challenges in raising historical awareness among the younger generation (Churiyah et al., 2022). Thus, the findings encourage adaptive educational policies, innovative teachers, and flexible curricula so that history learning can serve as a medium for strengthening cultural identity and historical literacy in the era of globalization.

Despite its promising findings, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the implementation of local wisdom-based history learning is still constrained by limited resources and supporting facilities, which can hinder the integration of digital technology and the use of innovative media such as virtual tours and interactive applications (Verawati & Wahyudi, 2024; Muhtarom & Andi, 2023). In addition, teacher readiness remains a key challenge, as not all educators possess adequate digital literacy or the pedagogical competence to adapt national curriculum content to local cultural contexts (Sudira & Wiyasa, 2020; Nuryadi & Yanto, 2023).

The study also operates within the structural limitations of a centralized curriculum, which often prioritizes standardized material over locally relevant narratives, thereby limiting teachers' flexibility in implementing culturally contextualized learning (Wibawa et al., 2024; Churiyah et al., 2022). Furthermore, although the use of technology such as documentary videos and digital storytelling has been shown to increase engagement, it requires consistent technical support and infrastructure, which may not be available in all schools, especially in rural areas (Hidayah et al., 2022; Nugroho et al., 2024).

From a methodological perspective, the qualitative descriptive approach used in this study, while effective in capturing in-depth experiences, limits the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts. The data relies heavily on interviews and observations within a single institution, meaning variations in cultural background, school policy, and community engagement may yield different outcomes (Yefterson et al., 2023; Juska-Bacher, 2020). These limitations highlight the need for broader, comparative studies and for strengthening teacher training, infrastructure, and curriculum flexibility to maximize the potential of local wisdom-based history learning.

The findings of this study underscore the potential of integrating local wisdom and digital technology in history education, yet also reveal opportunities for further exploration and development. Future research should adopt a broader, multi-site design to compare the effectiveness of this model across diverse cultural and geographical contexts, thereby addressing the limitation of this study's single-institution scope (Yefterson et al., 2023; Juska-Bacher, 2020). Longitudinal studies are also necessary to examine the sustainability of students' historical awareness and character development over time, as current findings are based on short-term observations and interviews (Hidayah et al., 2022; Pinaaling & Valle, 2023).

Another promising avenue is the development and testing of hybrid pedagogical frameworks that combine local wisdom-based content with established multi-sensory learning models such as VAK (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic) or Gardner's multiple intelligences, to measure their comparative impact on engagement, comprehension, and critical thinking (Sudira & Wiyasa, 2020; Kirylo, 2017). Additionally, future studies should explore the integration of advanced technologies—such as augmented reality and AI-based adaptive learning systems—into local culture-centered history lessons, assessing their role in enhancing immersive learning experiences (Nugroho et al., 2024; Tompo et al., 2023).

Policy-oriented research is also needed to identify strategies for embedding this approach within national curriculum frameworks while maintaining flexibility for local adaptation (Wibawa et al., 2024; Churiyah et al., 2022). Such investigations could inform teacher professional development programs, infrastructure investments, and community partnerships, ensuring that history education not only preserves cultural heritage but also equips Generation Z with critical, contextual, and globally relevant historical literacy.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the transformation of local culture-based history learning at MA Matik Al Uswah Banyuwangi which utilizes contextual approaches and digital technology to increase student engagement and understanding of historical materials. The integration of local cultures not only succeeds in increasing interest in learning, but also shapes the historical awareness and character of learners. The use of media such as documentary videos, virtual tours of historical sites, and project-based learning practices, provides a multimodal and meaningful learning experience, especially for students such as Fahat Indra Tanaya and Anugrah Zulkarnaik Saputra in grade XII who stated that learning becomes more fun and relevant to their lives.

From the perspective of the history teacher, Mrs. Yumna, and the principal, Ustadz Oky, this approach is able to foster the values of local wisdom, strengthen students' identity, as well as train critical and collaborative thinking skills. Despite challenges such as limited resources, teacher training, and the rigidity of the national curriculum, schools are still able to modify history learning to be contextual and meaningful. The novelty of this research lies in the use of local culture-based technology as an instrument of learning history at the madrasah level. This

innovation is not only academically relevant but also supports the strengthening of the Pancasila Student Profile. Thus, MA Matik Al Uswah Banyuwangi has made a real contribution to a character-based and cultural history education model that is adaptive to the challenges of the times.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

The author declares full responsibility for the conception, design, and execution of this research. This includes the development of the theoretical framework, formulation of the research problem, collection and analysis of qualitative data, as well as interpretation of findings. The author also prepared, drafted, and revised the manuscript in its entirety. Furthermore, the author conducted field research at MA Matik Al Uswah Banyuwangi, engaged directly with informants including the history teacher, school principal, and students, and ensured ethical research standards were maintained throughout the process. All references, arguments, and academic synthesis presented in the article reflect the independent scholarly effort of the author. No other individuals contributed to the writing or editing of the manuscript, nor to the analysis or interpretation of the data.

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