Embedding Local Wisdom Values in the Pedagogical Profession Course to Enhance Students' Professional Identity

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how local wisdom values such as *sipakatau* (humanity), *sipakalebbi* (respect), and *sipakainge* (moral reminder) are integrated into the Pedagogical Profession course and how this integration contributes to the development of pre-service teachers' professional identity. The purpose of this research is to examine the extent to which culturally grounded pedagogical practices shape students' ethical awareness, character formation, and professional self-concept. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected from 20 English Education undergraduates through classroom observations, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews. Local wisdom values were embedded through structured reflective journals, culturally oriented case analyses, and project-based learning tasks. Thematic analysis generated three key themes: (1) Contribution to Professional Identity, (2) Affective and Character Formation, and (3) Professional Identity Internalization. Findings show that engaging with local wisdom strengthened students' ethical reasoning, emotional sensitivity, and reflective capacity. Students also reported increased commitment to professional responsibilities and deeper alignment with cultural and moral principles. The study concludes that integrating local wisdom into teacher education supports both professional competence and value internalization, offering important implications for culturally responsive curriculum design, teacher preparation programs, and moral development in higher education.

INTRODUCTION

The formation of professional identity represents a fundamental component of teacher education, shaping how pre-service teachers perceive their roles, responsibilities, and ethical commitments within the educational landscape (Le & Bui, 2024). Professional identity is widely recognized as a dynamic construct shaped by beliefs, cultural experiences, pedagogical understandings, and social interactions(Kim et al., 2013). In the Indonesian context, where cultural norms and local wisdom deeply influence social behavior, the development of a teacher's professional identity is inseparable from cultural and moral foundations (Akkerman & Meijer, 2010).

The Pedagogical Profession course is designed to help pre-service teachers understand the philosophical, legal, ethical, and moral dimensions of teaching (Belinova et al., 2017). However, many higher education institutions continue to deliver this course with a strong emphasis on theoretical or regulatory content, while giving limited attention to integrating culturally embedded values. Scholars increasingly emphasize that local wisdom should function not merely as an additional cultural reference but as a pedagogical foundation that strengthens professional meaning-making (Faqihuddin & Sinta, 2024).

Local wisdom encompassing values such *sipakatau* (humanity), *sipakalebbi* (respect), and *sipakainge* (moral reminder) continues to guide social interactions and moral expectations within Indonesian communities (Ariska et al., 2025). These values have strong potential to support the moral awareness, ethical reasoning, and contextual sensitivity needed in teacher professionalism (Kumar, 2024). Recent studies underline the importance of embedding cultural values in teacher education to promote holistic competence and culturally responsive practice (Dahliani, 2015)

Despite growing scholarly attention, a clear research gap remains. Existing literature predominantly focuses on pedagogical experience, reflective practice, or mentoring as the main drivers of professional identity formation (Krishna et al., 2024) Only limited empirical studies examine how local wisdom can be systematically integrated into the Pedagogical Profession course or how such integration concretely shapes the professional identity of pre-service teachers (Mitiche, 2025). Moreover, few studies explore the mechanisms through which cultural values contribute to students' affective development, ethical grounding, and internalization of professional identity (Huang & Wang, 2024). This gap indicates the need for research that links culturally rooted values with identity formation processes within formal coursework.

Responding to this gap, the present study integrates selected local wisdom values into the learning design of the Pedagogical Profession course and investigates how this integration shapes students' understanding of professionalism, supports their affective and moral development, and fosters the internalization of their professional identity. This study is grounded in the view that teacher professionalism emerges not only from cognitive mastery but also from meaningful engagement with cultural values, ethical reflection, and community-oriented perspectives.

The research addresses the following questions:

1. How are local wisdom values integrated into the Pedagogical Profession course?
2. How do students perceive the relevance of local wisdom to their professional development?
3. How do these values contribute to the formation and internalization of pre-service teachers' professional identity?

By addressing these questions, the study contributes to theoretical discussions on culturally responsive teacher education and provides practical insights for designing professional courses that meaningfully integrate local values (Ibnu Fitrianto & Muhammad Farisi, 2025). The findings are expected to guide curriculum designers, teacher educators, and higher education institutions in strengthening ethical foundations and preparing culturally grounded future educators (Zhukov et al., 2025).

METHODS

This study used a qualitative case study design to examine how local wisdom values were integrated into the Pedagogical Profession course and how they contributed to the development of pre-service teachers' professional identity. This approach enabled an in-depth exploration of students' reflective processes and cultural meaning-making within an authentic instructional context (Creswell, 2015)

The study involved 20 English Education students at Sawerigading University who were purposively selected because they were in the early stage of professional formation and directly experienced the culturally embedded course design. The local wisdom values chosen *sipakatau* (humanity), *sipakalebbi* (respect), and *sipakainge* (moral reminder) were selected because they represent core Makassar ethical principles that closely align with teacher responsibilities such as empathy, professionalism, and moral accountability. These values were operationalized through structured learning activities embedded across the semester. Examples included:

1. Reflective journal prompts asking students to analyze weekly topics (ethics, professionalism, classroom roles) through the lens of *sipakatau*, *sipakalebbi*, or *sipakainge*.
2. Local-wisdom case studies, such as dilemmas involving disrespect, conflict, or moral negligence, where students proposed culturally grounded solutions.
3. Community narrative projects, requiring students to interview local community members about practices of respect and moral guidance and connect findings to teacher professionalism.
4. Role-play sessions in which students practiced giving constructive feedback or moral reminders using culturally appropriate expressions.

Data were collected over 16 weeks through classroom observations, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews with 12 volunteers selected based on the depth of their reflective contributions. Observations captured students' behavior and engagement related to value internalization, while documents (journals, case analyses, project outputs) provided evidence of their evolving understandings. Interviews explored students' perceptions of how local wisdom shaped their sense of professional identity.

Thematic analysis followed Braun and (Weller et al., 2023) six-phase process, applied through an explicit coding procedure. First, all transcripts and documents were repeatedly read for familiarization. Second, line-by-line initial codes were generated for example, "showing empathy," "respectful communication," "moral accountability," and "cultural grounding." Third, codes were grouped into subcategories such as "ethical reasoning," "value-driven decision-making," and "professional sensitivity." Fourth, these subcategories were merged into broader candidate themes. Fifth, themes were reviewed across datasets to confirm coherence. Finally, three themes were defined and named: Contribution to Professional Identity, Affective and Character Formation, and Professional Identity Internalization. Member checking and peer debriefing strengthened the credibility of the findings, following (Krishna et al., 2023)

Ethical procedures included informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and delayed data collection until after grades were submitted to avoid coercion (Rogers, 2007). Overall, this methodological design captured how culturally grounded instructional activities facilitated students' ethical awareness, reflective engagement, and the internalization of their professional identity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

The findings present an integrated understanding of how local wisdom values embedded in the Pedagogical Profession course shaped pre-service teachers' professional identity. The analysis drew from classroom observations, reflective journals, weekly assignments, learning portfolios, and semi-structured interviews. Following the coding procedures outlined in the methodology beginning with line-by-line coding, clustering codes into subcategories, and refining these into themes three coherent themes emerged:

1. Contribution to Professional Identity
2. Affective and Character Formation
3. Professional Identity Internalization.

While conceptually distinct, these themes reflect an interrelated developmental process through which students interpreted, practiced, and embodied local wisdom values—*sipakatau*, *sipakalebbi*, and *sipakainge*—within their evolving professional roles.

1. Contribution to Professional Identity

This theme illustrates how local wisdom values reshaped students' understanding of what it means to be a professional teacher. Early codes such as *"knowing rules," "following regulations,"* and *"understanding teacher tasks"* gradually merged with culturally grounded codes such as *"embodying humanity," "showing respect,"* and *"moral guidance."* This integration shifted professionalism from a technical construct to a culturally embedded ethical framework.

a. Cultural grounding of professionalism

As students engaged with class activities—including cultural narrative analysis and case-based discussions they increasingly interpreted teacher professionalism through *sipakatau* (humanity), *sipakalebbi* (respect), and *sipakainge* (moral reminder). One student reflected in a weekly journal:

"I realized that being professional is not only about skills. It also means practicing *sipakatau* when dealing with students." (Journal Entry, Week 5)

b. Ethical clarity and moral reasoning

Narratives and moral dilemmas presented in class allowed students to articulate ethical responsibilities more concretely. A student wrote in an assignment analyzing a local story:

"*Sipakainge* teaches me that a teacher must remind students with patience, not anger." (Assignment, Week 7)

c. Social and communal responsibility

Students began to see teaching as a form of cultural and social service. As one interviewee stated:

"Teachers are trusted figures. We bring dignity to our community through our actions." (S12)

Table 1. Contribution to Professional Identity

Category	Description	Evidence
Cultural grounding	Professionalism viewed as culturally embedded	"Professional teachers reflect their community values." (S3)
Ethical clarity	Local wisdom clarifies teacher ethics	"Stories make ethics more concrete for me." (S8)
Responsibility	Teaching as service to society	"Teachers must contribute to society's well-being." (S12)

Overall, this theme reflects a conceptual shift from professionalism as rule-based compliance to professionalism as culturally informed moral practice.

2. Affective and Character Formation

This theme captures the emotional and character-related transformations students experienced through culturally grounded activities. Initial codes such as *"feeling touched," "more patient," "thinking about others,"* and *"self-reflection"* clustered into categories of empathy, moral sensitivity, and emotional maturity.

a. Empathy and emotional awareness

Reflective prompts and group dialogues encouraged students to connect cultural values with human relationships an important dimension of *sipakatau*. One student noted:

"I think more about how my actions affect students' feelings." (S16).

Classroom observations showed increased attentiveness, active listening, and encouragement during group tasks behaviors coded as "empathetic engagement."

b. Moral sensitivity and integrity

Students described cultural values as heightening their awareness of right and wrong. A reflective journal entry stated:

"*Sipakalebbi* makes honesty feel more personal, not just a rule." (Journal Week 8)

c. Emotional maturity and self-regulation

Students reported improved emotional control, linked to cultural emphasis on humility and respect. Observational notes documented fewer interruptions, calmer discussions, and more respectful disagreement by mid-semester.

Table 2. Affective and Character Formation

Category	Description	Evidence
Empathy	Greater sensitivity to others	"I now think more about students' feelings." (S16)
Emotional maturity	Improved emotional control	"I became calmer and more patient." (S9)
Integrity	Strengthened honesty and responsibility	"These values feel more meaningful now." (S3)
Respect	Internalized respectful behavior	"Respect is part of our culture as teachers." (S7)

This theme demonstrates how the integration of local wisdom values supported character growth essential to teacher identity formation.

3. Professional Identity Internalization

The final theme explains how students began to internalize the identity of "being a teacher." Codes such as *"imagining myself teaching," "feeling responsible," "wanting to model values,"* and *"seeing myself as a role model"* converged into subcategories of self-recognition, meaning-making, and commitment.

a. Self-recognition as future teachers

Students increasingly used language of ownership and identity:

"I now feel like a future teacher who must practice cultural values." (S19)

b. **Reflective meaning-making**

Through repeated reflection, students linked course content to family practices, community expectations, and personal experiences. This recursive reflection allowed values to become internalized dispositions rather than external concepts.

c. **Commitment to value-based practice**

Students expressed intention to bring *sipakatau, sipakalebbi,* and *sipakainge* into their future classrooms. Assignments showed concrete examples, such as using *sipakainge* to give gentle reminders or *sipakalebbi* when managing conflicts.

Table 3. Professional Identity Internalization

Category	Description	Evidence
Self-recognition	Students see themselves as teachers	"I now feel like a future teacher." (S19)
Meaning-making	Reflection deepened understanding	"Reflection helped define my identity." (S10)
Value internalization	Cultural values adopted personally	"These values are in my mindset now." (S5)
Commitment	Desire to enact values	"I will bring these values to my teaching." (S13)

This theme captures the culmination of students' cognitive, emotional, and cultural learning processes.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study demonstrate that embedding local wisdom values in the Pedagogical Profession course plays a pivotal role in shaping pre-service teachers' professional identity. The emergence of the three major themes contribution to professional identity, affective and character formation, and identity internalization indicates that cultural values function not merely as contextual knowledge but as core mechanisms through which identity is formed. The innovative in this study is the empirical evidence that specific local wisdom values such as *sipakatau, sipakalebbi*, and *sipakainge* operate as culturally grounded identity frameworks that guide ethical understanding, interpersonal behavior, and professional meaning-making. This extends socio-cultural perspectives on teacher identity (Kaasila et al., 2025) by showing that identity in non-Western contexts is shaped not only through interaction and reflection but also through culturally embedded moral logics that anchor professional purpose. This aligns with (Parr et al., 2025) argument that culturally responsive pedagogy can deepen ethical grounding.

The integration of local wisdom also fostered significant affective and character development, as reflected in students' increased empathy, emotional regulation, and moral sensitivity. Importantly, this study shows how cultural narratives and value-based discussions evoke emotional resonance that strengthens ethical judgment a dynamic consistent with (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2025) emphasis on emotions as central to teacher identity. The innovative insight here is that cultural emotion-work, not just pedagogical reflection, plays a decisive role in shaping relational awareness and moral commitment.

Identity internalization was further reinforced through culturally anchored reflective activities, which helped students articulate a clearer and more value-driven image of themselves as future teachers. This finding supports (Lynch, 2020) claim that reflection is essential for aligning beliefs with

professional expectations while also expanding it by demonstrating that reflection grounded in local wisdom produces stronger ethical resilience and cultural awareness, (Liu et al., 2025).

Overall, these findings highlight a key theoretical contribution: teacher identity development in Indonesia cannot be fully understood without considering the cultural value systems that shape moral reasoning and professional purpose. Practically, the study underscores the need for teacher education programs to embed local wisdom systematically in coursework, as such integration enhances cognitive understanding, emotional maturity, and reflective clarity—ultimately preparing educators who are ethically grounded and culturally responsive to the communities they serve.

CLOSING

Conclusion

This study concludes that integrating local wisdom values into the Pedagogical Profession course plays a vital role in shaping the professional identity of pre-service teachers. Engagement with key Makassar cultural principles *sipakatau* (respecting others' humanity), *sipakalebbi* (honoring others with dignity), and *sipakainge* (mutually reminding one another to act responsibly) enables students to internalize teacher professionalism as both an ethical and relational commitment, not merely a technical requirement. These values enriched students' understanding of the teacher's role by grounding it in moral awareness, social responsibility, and culturally embedded interpersonal conduct.

The findings also extend teacher identity theory by demonstrating that identity formation is strengthened when personal, cultural, and professional domains intersect. Cultural narratives and reflective tasks allowed students to articulate who they are, where they come from, and the kind of teachers they aspire to be thus reinforcing identity as a dynamic, socially mediated, and value-driven construct.

For teacher education programs, the results suggest three actionable implications: (1) embed local wisdom explicitly in course outcomes and learning activities; (2) design culturally grounded tasks such as storytelling, case analysis, and community reflection to help students connect identity with practice; and (3) cultivate learning environments where values like *sipakatau, sipakalebbi*, and *sipakainge* guide interaction and feedback.

Overall, this study highlights that professional identity is most powerfully developed when teacher education embraces local wisdom as a core pedagogical resource cultivating future educators who are not only competent, but also ethically grounded and culturally connected to the communities they serve.

Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, several suggestions can be offered for improving teacher education practices. First, teacher education programs are encouraged to integrate local wisdom values more systematically across courses, particularly those related to professional ethics, identity formation, and pedagogical practice. Embedding cultural content through case studies, reflective activities, and community-based learning projects can help pre-service teachers build stronger connections between cultural values and professional responsibilities. Second, lecturers should design learning experiences that stimulate deep reflection, allowing students to examine their personal beliefs and align them with the moral expectations of the teaching profession. Such reflective practices can support students in internalizing ethical principles and strengthening their sense of professional identity. Third, institutions should provide training and resources for teacher educators to enhance their understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy, ensuring that cultural integration is meaningful, accurate, and contextually relevant. Finally, further research is recommended to explore the long-term

impact of culturally grounded teacher education on teachers' professional practice in real classroom settings, as well as to investigate similar approaches in diverse cultural regions of Indonesia. These efforts can contribute to more holistic and culturally responsive teacher preparation programs.

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