

TRANSFORMING ALAS LOCAL WISDOM INTO LEGAL EDUCATION: STRENGTHENING CULTURAL PRESERVATION AND YOUTH CHARACTER

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Abstrak

Local wisdom is recognized as a potential educational resource, yet limited empirical research has examined how culturally embedded values can be systematically transformed into contextual legal education within indigenous communities in Indonesia. This study investigates the local wisdom of the Alas people in Southeast Aceh and examines how culturally embedded values may be interpreted and transformed into resources for legal education. Using a qualitative descriptive-interpretive design, the study involved 20 purposively selected informants comprising traditional leaders, religious figures, and educators with knowledge of Alas culture, customary norms, social practices, and their educational relevance. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation and analyzed through data condensation, data display, conclusion drawing and verification, thematic analysis, and theoretical interpretation. The findings identified eight interrelated values relevant to legal education: responsibility, deliberation, solidarity, respect, adherence to social norms, justice, mutual cooperation, and social responsibility. The analysis further indicates that these values can be conceptually transformed through four interconnected stages: identification, interpretation, reconstruction, and integration. The study proposes this framework as a contextually grounded mechanism connecting local wisdom, legal culture, and legal education. Its contribution lies in advancing local wisdom from cultural content toward a process of critical interpretation and pedagogical reconstruction.

Keywords: *Local Wisdom; Legal Education; Culturally Responsive Education; Indigenous Education; Character*

INTRODUCTION

The significance of cultural knowledge is particularly evident in legal education. Law does not operate solely as a set of formal norms established by the state but also interacts with customs, values, social practices, religious beliefs, and normative expectations that develop within communities. Consequently, legal education should not be limited to the mastery of legislation, legal doctrine, and legal theory. It should also enable students to understand law as a social and cultural phenomenon and to critically examine the relationship between formal legal systems and the normative practices of communities. This perspective is consistent with Law Number 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education, which emphasizes the development of cultured, creative, tolerant, democratic, and resilient individuals while promoting humanistic values and the

sustainable empowerment of society. Legal education therefore has a strategic role in connecting formal legal knowledge with the socio-cultural realities in which law is interpreted and practiced.

Culturally responsive education recognizes that learners' cultural backgrounds are not obstacles to academic learning but potential resources for constructing meaningful knowledge. Local cultural knowledge can provide contextual frames through which abstract concepts are connected to students' lived experiences and community realities. In legal education, for example, concepts such as justice, responsibility, social obligation, conflict resolution, rights, deliberation, and community participation can become more meaningful when examined through culturally situated practices. Thus, the incorporation of local knowledge is not simply a strategy for preserving culture; it

can also provide a pedagogical mechanism for connecting disciplinary knowledge with the social worlds of learners.

This educational perspective is also closely related to language education because culture is transmitted, negotiated, and reproduced through language. Local wisdom is frequently embedded in oral traditions, narratives, customary expressions, ceremonial discourse, interpersonal communication, culturally specific terminology, and symbolic practices. Consequently, the educational transmission of local wisdom involves not only the preservation of cultural practices but also the preservation and reinterpretation of the linguistic forms through which cultural meanings are communicated. From a language-and-culture perspective, locally grounded educational materials can position community languages, narratives, and cultural expressions as legitimate sources of knowledge and provide opportunities for learners to understand the interconnectedness of language, culture, identity, values, and social norms. This dimension is particularly significant for younger generations whose relationships with traditional cultural practices may increasingly be mediated by digital communication, globalization, and changing patterns of intergenerational interaction.

Character education constitutes another important dimension of culturally grounded education. Local wisdom frequently contains values concerning responsibility, respect, solidarity, cooperation, deliberation, social harmony, ethical conduct, and communal responsibility. However, character education should not treat traditional values as fixed prescriptions that are automatically appropriate for contemporary learners. Cultural values need to be critically examined in relation to justice, equality, human rights, democratic principles, religious values, and broader educational objectives. The educational significance of

local wisdom therefore depends not simply on the number of cultural practices introduced into learning but on the quality of the process through which cultural values are identified, interpreted, reconstructed, and pedagogically integrated.

The Alas community possesses a cultural system transmitted across generations through customary practices, traditions, kinship relations, rituals, language, cultural symbols, and forms of social interaction. Previous studies indicate that Alas culture contains strong social, religious, historical, communicative, and normative dimensions. Pinem et al. (2023), for example, identify Islamic values embedded within Alas customary traditions and social organization. Research on traditional Alas architecture demonstrates that cultural artifacts function not only as physical structures but also as representations of social relations, customs, and cultural meanings. Similarly, studies of tangis tukhunen indicate that the tradition functions as a form of traditional communication in wedding ceremonies and continues to be maintained while adapting to social change.

The educational relevance of Alas local wisdom lies in the normative and pedagogical potential embedded in these cultural practices. Cultural expressions, customary relationships, oral traditions, and community practices can provide contextual resources for understanding values related to social responsibility, respect, cooperation, deliberation, solidarity, conflict management, and communal obligations. At the same time, the linguistic dimension of Alas culture provides an important means through which these values are communicated and transmitted between generations. This makes Alas local wisdom relevant not only to cultural studies but also to educational research concerned with culturally responsive learning, language and cultural transmission, character development, and the contextualization of disciplinary

knowledge.

From a legal perspective, the significance of these values can be further understood through the concepts of living law and legal pluralism. Living law refers to norms that obtain social legitimacy because they are recognized, observed, and practiced by members of a community. The increasing recognition of living law within Indonesian legal development, including through Law Number 1 of 2023 concerning the Criminal Code, demonstrates that Indonesian law cannot be fully understood independently of normative values existing within society. Legal education consequently needs to provide students with the capacity to examine relationships among state law, customary norms, religious values, and social practices. Legal pluralism provides a complementary analytical perspective because Indonesian communities are characterized by the coexistence and interaction of multiple normative systems, including state law, customary law, and religious law. Hariri and Babussalam (2024) explain that legal pluralism concerns the coexistence of such normative systems within the same social space, while Jayantiari et al. (2024) demonstrate that local wisdom within customary communities can contribute to legal culture.

Research on local-wisdom-based education has demonstrated the potential of cultural values to strengthen character, cultural identity, social responsibility, cooperation, and learning relevance. Masrukhi et al. (2024), for example, show that local wisdom can be incorporated into educational activities through traditional arts, folk games, collaborative activities, and contextual social experiences. Sibarani (2018) emphasizes that local wisdom encompasses cultural values and norms that regulate social life and can contribute to character formation, social harmony, conflict resolution, and community well-being. Pulhehe (2024) similarly demonstrates the educational potential of indigenous knowledge, while Rozi (2024)

proposes an indigenous-knowledge-based curriculum approach involving cultural recognition, curriculum formulation, stakeholder participation, implementation, and evaluation. More recent research by Rasidi et al. (2025) demonstrates that cultural values can be incorporated into curriculum development through educators. Wardhani et al. (2026) further show that local-wisdom-based legal education can be strengthened through laboratory-based learning that connects theoretical legal knowledge with practical learning experiences.

These studies provide an important foundation, but they also reveal a conceptual limitation concerning how local wisdom is transformed into educational knowledge. Existing local-wisdom-based educational approaches generally emphasize one or more of three orientations. The first focuses on the incorporation of cultural content and practices into learning activities, including traditional arts, games, community activities, and contextual experiences. The second emphasizes indigenous-knowledge-based curriculum development through processes such as cultural recognition, curriculum formulation, stakeholder participation, implementation, and evaluation. The third focuses on the use of local wisdom to strengthen character education, cultural identity, social responsibility, and community values. These approaches demonstrate the educational value of cultural knowledge.

Character-education approaches demonstrate the potential of cultural values for moral and social development, but they generally do not establish a systematic pathway connecting local normative systems with legal awareness, legal competence, and legal culture. This gap becomes particularly significant in the context of the Alas community. Previous studies concerning the Alas people have predominantly examined traditions, customary practices, architecture, religious values, history, communication practices,

and socio-cultural identity.

Furthermore, studies of local-wisdom-based education have generally concentrated on character education, cultural identity, curriculum development, or general educational outcomes rather than specifically connecting local wisdom with legal competence, legal awareness, legal culture, and the character formation of future citizens. The intersection between Alas cultural knowledge and legal education therefore remains insufficiently theorized.

Alas customary practices may contain values relevant to justice, responsibility, solidarity, deliberation, mutual cooperation, respect, social responsibility, and conflict resolution. However, other practices may require critical examination in relation to the Constitution, Pancasila, human rights, equality, justice, religious principles, and contemporary social development. Research concerning Alas customary practices, including aspects of customary inheritance, demonstrates the importance of examining interactions among customary norms, religious law, and national law rather than assuming that every customary practice should automatically be preserved or incorporated into formal education.

It is within this research niche that the present study is positioned. The study moves beyond cultural documentation by examining how Alas local wisdom can be transformed into educationally meaningful resources for legal education. Its contribution also extends beyond general local-wisdom-based education because it specifically connects culturally embedded values with legal education, legal awareness, legal culture, character formation, and culturally responsive pedagogy. The study does not treat local wisdom merely as cultural content to be added to an existing curriculum.

The principal novelty of this study is therefore the development of a four-stage cultural-to-educational transformation model consisting of identification,

interpretation, reconstruction, and integration. The first stage, identification, systematically identifies values embedded in Alas traditions, customary practices, social relations, language, rituals, and community norms that possess potential relevance to legal education. The second stage, interpretation, critically examines the meanings of these values from legal, ethical, cultural, character, and educational perspectives, including their relationship to living law, legal pluralism, Pancasila, justice, equality, human rights, and contemporary social development. The third stage, reconstruction, reorganizes the interpreted cultural values into concepts, principles, learning materials, cases, activities, and learning experiences appropriate for legal education. The fourth stage, integration, incorporates the reconstructed knowledge into educational processes so that it can contribute to legal understanding, ethical reasoning, legal awareness, social responsibility, cultural identity, and character formation.

The four-stage model distinguishes the present study from existing educational approaches because it conceptualizes cultural transformation as a process rather than a direct transfer of culture into education. Identification answers the question of what culturally embedded values exist; interpretation determines what those values mean and how they relate to legal, ethical, and educational principles; reconstruction determines how those values can be transformed into pedagogically meaningful knowledge; and integration addresses how the reconstructed knowledge can function within educational processes.

The contribution of the model can be further understood in relation to three areas of education research. First, it extends culturally responsive education by moving from the recognition and inclusion of cultural backgrounds toward a structured process of transforming community knowledge into pedagogically appropriate learning resources. Second, it extends language-and-culture education by

recognizing that local wisdom is transmitted through language, narratives, customary expressions, rituals, and culturally specific meanings. Third, it extends character education by demonstrating how culturally grounded values can be critically interpreted and connected with contemporary principles of justice, responsibility, equality, social harmony, and legal awareness rather than being reproduced as fixed traditional prescriptions.

Accordingly, the originality of this study does not rest merely on selecting the Alas community as a new cultural context. In contrast to cultural-inclusion approaches that primarily emphasize recognition, curriculum approaches that emphasize implementation, and character-education approaches that emphasize value formation, the proposed four-stage model establishes a pathway connecting cultural identification, critical interpretation, pedagogical reconstruction, and educational integration.

The significance of this research consequently lies in its attempt to connect four domains that have often been examined separately: local cultural knowledge, culturally responsive education, legal education, and character formation. Academically, the study contributes to the development of culturally grounded education by bringing the concepts of living law and legal pluralism into dialogue with culturally responsive, language-and-culture, and character-education perspectives. Methodologically and conceptually, the four-stage model provides a framework for examining not only what cultural values exist but also how their educational relevance can be critically established. Practically, the model can assist educators and curriculum developers in identifying culturally relevant values, evaluating their applicability, developing contextual learning materials, and integrating these materials into legal education.

Cultural preservation and educational transformation can therefore be

understood as complementary rather than competing processes. When local wisdom is critically interpreted and pedagogically reconstructed, cultural identity can be preserved while learners develop the capacity to evaluate cultural values in relation to contemporary legal, ethical, and social principles. In this sense, culturally responsive education becomes not merely an approach to making education culturally familiar but a means of enabling learners to critically engage with the cultural knowledge of their communities.

Thus, this study argues that local wisdom and legal education should not be treated as separate domains. When culturally embedded values are systematically identified, critically interpreted, pedagogically reconstructed, and educationally integrated, local wisdom can function as a bridge between cultural identity, language and cultural knowledge, legal understanding, legal consciousness, and character formation.

Based on the research gap and the proposed four-stage model, this study addresses the following research questions: What local wisdom values embedded in the cultural practices of the Alas community are relevant to legal education? How do community cultural actors and educators interpret the relevance of these local wisdom values to character formation and the development of legal culture among the younger generation? How can the identified and interpreted Alas local wisdom values be pedagogically reconstructed and integrated into legal education while remaining consistent with legal, ethical, cultural, and educational principles? The study does not claim to measure the actual character or legal culture of young people. Rather, it examines how relevant cultural actors and educators understand the potential contribution of Alas local wisdom to those educational outcomes. The resulting model should therefore be understood as a theoretically and contextually grounded framework for culturally responsive educational

integration rather than as an experimentally tested intervention. Its primary contribution is to provide a conceptual and pedagogical mechanism for transforming local cultural knowledge into educational resources while maintaining critical attention to legal, ethical, cultural, and contemporary educational principles.

METHOD

A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study focused on understanding how cultural values, social norms, customary practices, and legal meanings are experienced, interpreted, and transmitted within their natural social and cultural contexts. Qualitative inquiry enables researchers to examine meanings constructed by individuals and groups in relation to social and cultural phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study sought to understand how members of the Alas community interpret local wisdom, customary norms, and social values, and how these relate to legal education.

This methodological orientation is also consistent with Merriam and Tisdell (2016), who emphasize that qualitative research seeks to understand how people construct meaning from their experiences and make sense of their social world. Accordingly, interview accounts were examined together with observational and documentary evidence to understand how local wisdom is practiced, interpreted, and transmitted within community life.

For qualitative data analysis, the study followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), which conceptualizes analysis as an interconnected process of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Analysis was conducted iteratively throughout the data-collection process rather than being postponed until the completion of fieldwork. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary materials were continuously reviewed, coded, categorized, compared, and

organized into thematic displays.

The research was conducted in the Alas community in Southeast Aceh Regency, Aceh Province, Indonesia. The setting was purposively selected because customary values, community norms, interpersonal relationships, and mechanisms of social regulation continue to operate in everyday community life. The actual sample consisted of 20 informants, all of whom participated in the research and were included in the final analysis.

Traditional/customary leaders were selected because of their knowledge and direct experience of Alas customary norms, traditions, values, conflict-resolution practices, and mechanisms of customary regulation. Religious figures were included because they could explain the relationship between customary values, religious norms, morality, and social behavior. Educators/teachers were selected because of their experience with character formation, educational practices, and the potential incorporation of local wisdom into legal education.

The participants were recruited through purposive sampling. Potential informants were identified based on their knowledge, experience, social involvement, and ability to provide substantive information relevant to the research questions. Initial contact was made through community and educational networks, after which eligible individuals were approached and invited to participate.

The inclusion criteria were: (1) possessing knowledge of or direct experience with Alas culture and community life; (2) residing in or being actively involved in the Alas community; (3) having knowledge of customary values, social norms, cultural practices, character formation, or educational practices relevant to the research topic; and (4) being willing to participate in an in-depth interview and provide information based on personal knowledge and experience.

The final sample of 20 informants was determined when the researchers

judged that the data had reached conceptual saturation. Saturation was assessed iteratively during data collection by comparing successive interviews with previously identified codes and categories. Interviews were continued until subsequent interviews no longer generated substantially new categories, meanings, or relationships relevant to the three research questions.

Importantly, references in the Results to community members and the younger generation do not represent additional participant groups. These terms refer to social groups and populations discussed by the 20 informants in relation to cultural transmission, character formation, legal consciousness, and intergenerational change. Claims concerning the younger generation were therefore interpreted as findings derived from informants' accounts, observations, and documentary evidence rather than from direct interviews with a separate sample of young participants.

Data were collected through three complementary techniques: semi-structured in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. The use of multiple techniques enabled the researchers to examine both participants' interpretations and the observable manifestations of local wisdom in community life. Semi-structured in-depth interviews constituted the principal source of participants' perspectives. An interview protocol was developed directly from the three research questions and the theoretical framework. The protocol consisted of open-ended questions followed by probing questions designed to obtain clarification, examples, explanations, and descriptions of actual practices.

The interview protocol covered four principal areas: 1. local wisdom values and norms embedded in Alas cultural practices; 2. the significance of these values for social relationships, normative behavior, and the community's customary/legal order; 3. the transmission of these values across

generations and their implications for character formation and legal culture among younger generations; and 4. the possibilities, challenges, and conditions for transforming local wisdom into legal education. The same core protocol was used across the three participant groups, while follow-up questions were adapted to each informant's role and experience.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face in a setting agreed upon by the participants. Each interview lasted approximately 45–75 minutes. With participants' permission, interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Field notes were also written during and immediately after interviews to record contextual information, significant observations, and emerging analytical reflections.

Observation was conducted to examine the enactment of relevant cultural and normative values in community life. The researchers observed social interactions and practices associated with *musyawarah* (deliberation), *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), respect for community leaders, conflict-resolution practices, interpersonal obligations, intergenerational relationships, and other activities reflecting normative values. Observation data were recorded systematically using observation sheets and field notes. The observations were not treated as independent proof of every interview claim but were used to contextualize participants' accounts, identify convergent or divergent evidence, and examine how reported values were manifested in social practices.

Documentation was used as supplementary empirical evidence. Documents and materials examined included customary records, records of community activities, photographs and audiovisual materials of cultural practices, educational documents, learning materials, and other relevant written sources that were accessible to the researchers. Documentary materials were selected according to their

relevance to the research questions and were examined to provide contextual information and corroborate evidence obtained through interviews and observations.

Supporting instruments included a semi-structured interview guide, interview protocol, observation sheets, field notes, an audio-recording device, and a documentation checklist. The interview protocol and observation instruments were aligned with the research questions and theoretical framework to ensure systematic data collection while retaining sufficient flexibility to follow issues emerging from participants' accounts. Data analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection using the interactive qualitative analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020). The analytical process consisted of three interconnected stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

First, during data condensation, interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and the transcripts were read repeatedly to develop familiarity with the data. Meaningful segments relevant to the research questions were identified and assigned initial codes. Second, in data display, the coded data were organized into thematic matrices. Third, in conclusion drawing and verification, recurring patterns, relationships, similarities, and differences were identified and interpreted. Emerging conclusions were repeatedly compared with the original interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary evidence.

Following this interactive coding process, thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring meanings and relationships across the data. Themes were developed through comparison of coded segments within and across the three informant groups. The final themes were then interpreted in relation to the research questions and theoretical framework. The theoretical frameworks were used as analytical lenses rather than merely as

descriptive background. First, Eugen Ehrlich's concept of Living Law was used to examine how norms and values embedded in everyday social practices function as forms of normative regulation within the Alas community. Second, legal pluralism was employed to interpret the interaction among customary norms, religious norms, and formal legal norms. This framework helped explain how different normative systems coexist and influence social behavior. Third, Lawrence M. Friedman's legal culture perspective was used to analyze how community values, attitudes, perceptions, and behavioral patterns relate to legal consciousness and legal culture. In relation to the younger generation, this framework was used to interpret informants' accounts concerning the transmission, continuity, transformation, or weakening of culturally embedded legal values. Last but not least, Thomas Lickona's character education framework was used to interpret character-related dimensions of local wisdom, including responsibility, respect, cooperation, deliberation, social obligation, and concern for others.

Finally, Mezirow's transformative learning perspective was used to examine how culturally embedded values could be critically interpreted, reconstructed, and transformed into educational content or pedagogical strategies rather than transferred mechanically from customary practices into a formal curriculum.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of interviews, observations, and documentation identified eight initial value codes—responsibility (RES), deliberation (DEL), solidarity (SOL), respect (RESPECT), adherence to norms (NORM), justice (JUST), mutual cooperation (GOT), and social responsibility (SOCRES). These values were not treated as fixed or predetermined cultural categories; rather, they emerged from recurring meanings expressed in participants' accounts and reflected in everyday social practices. The findings

indicate that traditional norms and cultural practices continue to shape community members' understanding of appropriate behavior, social obligations, conflict resolution, and respect for others. In this context, local wisdom functions not merely as cultural heritage but also as an informal mechanism of legal and moral socialization.

The coding process initially generated eight value codes: responsibility (RES), deliberation (DEL), solidarity (SOL), respect (RESPECT), adherence to norms (NORM), justice (JUST), mutual cooperation (GOT), and social

responsibility (SOCRES). These codes were then consolidated into broader thematic dimensions concerning legal awareness, character formation, and legal culture. The participants included traditional leaders, religious figures, educators/teachers, and community members. Anonymous codes are used below: TL for traditional leaders, RF for religious figures, ED for educators/teachers, and YG for younger-generation participants. The use of these codes maintains confidentiality while making the empirical basis of the findings traceable.

Table 1. local wisdom values emerging from the field data

No.	Value identified	Observed/Reported manifestation	Empirical basis	Potential legal-education relevance
1	Responsibility	Fulfilling obligations toward family and community; participating in communal activities; taking responsibility for collective consequences.	Recurring interview accounts from TL, RF, and ED, supported by observations of communal activities.	Understanding rights, duties, accountability, and responsible citizenship.
2	Deliberation (musyawarah)	Collective discussion, listening to different views, and seeking agreement in addressing community matters.	Interview accounts from TL and ED and observations of community decision-making.	Dialogue, democratic participation, negotiation, mediation, and peaceful dispute resolution.
3	Solidarity	Maintaining social cohesion and responding to the needs of other community members.	Interview accounts and observed interactions among community members.	Social responsibility, empathy, community-oriented legal reasoning, and concern for the common good.
4	Respect	Showing regard for other persons, including elders, community figures, and members with different views.	Accounts from YG, TL and ED concerning interpersonal and intergenerational relations.	Human dignity, ethical conduct, respectful dialogue, and rights awareness.
5	Adherence to customary norms	Following accepted customary expectations that regulate social relations and community conduct.	Statements from TL, RF and community members concerning customary expectations and social sanctions.	Understanding normative pluralism and the interaction between customary, religious, and state norms.

6	Justice	Recognition of fairness, balanced treatment, and the need to address perceived wrongdoing.	Accounts concerning fairness and the resolution of community problems.	Equality, rights and obligations, social justice, and ethical legal reasoning.
7	Mutual cooperation (gotong royong)	Collective participation in social and community activities.	Observations and interviews concerning cooperative community practices.	Collective responsibility, civic participation, solidarity, and social cohesion.
8	Social responsibility	Concern for consequences of individual actions for the wider community.	Cross-source convergence between interview accounts and observed communal practices.	Public-interest orientation and the relationship between individual conduct and social order.

Table 1 is now restricted to values that emerged from the field-data coding. It therefore avoids presenting a predetermined list of cultural values as though every value had equal empirical status. The table also separates empirical evidence from the subsequent educational interpretation. This distinction is important because the study identifies the values and their social manifestations empirically, whereas their use as legal-education resources constitutes an interpretive and conceptual step. The findings indicate that Alas local wisdom has a normative dimension because several values function as socially recognized guides for conduct. Responsibility, deliberation, respect, adherence to norms, solidarity, and justice are not presented by participants merely as abstract cultural symbols; they are connected to expectations about how community members should behave and resolve social problems. This finding confirms the relevance of Ehrlich's concept of living law, according to which normative order is also embedded in the social practices through which communities regulate relationships

The finding also extends a simple opposition between 'customary law' and 'state law'. The field data indicate a pluralistic normative space in which customary expectations, religious values,

social conventions, community agreements, and state law can interact. This is consistent with a legal-pluralist perspective, but the present study adds an educational implication: students should not encounter local norms as isolated cultural facts. Instead, local norms can become cases through which students examine how different normative systems overlap, complement one another, or potentially come into tension.

At the same time, the findings challenge any assumption that cultural authenticity requires the literal preservation of every customary practice. The participants' values are treated as educationally relevant only after critical examination. A customary expectation cannot automatically be transferred into legal education merely because it is traditional. It must be assessed against justice, Pancasila, constitutional principles, human rights, and contemporary legal and educational standards. The empirical finding is therefore not that all customary norms should become legal-education content, but that culturally embedded values can provide a meaningful starting point for critical legal learning.

The findings show that the identified values have potential educational relevance because they connect knowledge about norms with affective orientations and

socially observable action. This relationship can be interpreted through Lickona's distinction among moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action.

Table 2. Lickona's distinction among moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action.

Local value	Moral knowing	Moral feeling	Moral action
Responsibility	Understanding obligations and accountability.	Developing a sense of responsibility.	Fulfilling obligations and accepting consequences.
Deliberation	Understanding the importance of dialogue and collective decision-making.	Respecting different opinions.	Resolving issues through dialogue and reasoned agreement.
Solidarity	Understanding shared interests and social interdependence.	Developing empathy and concern.	Supporting community members and contributing to collective welfare.
Respect	Understanding the dignity and rights of others.	Valuing other persons.	Acting respectfully in interpersonal and social relations.
Justice	Understanding rights, obligations, fairness, and equality.	Sensitivity to unfairness.	Acting fairly and responding to injustice.
Mutual cooperation	Understanding the importance of collective action.	Showing care and concern for others.	Participating in activities directed toward the common good.

This finding confirms research that treats local wisdom as a potentially meaningful educational resource, but it also qualifies the claim. The study does not demonstrate that exposure to these values has already produced measurable changes in the character or legal culture of young people. Rather, the field evidence demonstrates that cultural actors and educators recognize these values as socially meaningful and potentially translatable into educational purposes. The distinction matters methodologically: the empirical finding concerns the existence, social meaning, and perceived educational relevance of the values; the claim about character development remains a pedagogical proposition requiring implementation and outcome-based evaluation.

This interpretation is consistent with recent work on culturally responsive education, which emphasizes the importance of learning environments that connect educational content with learners'

cultural experiences rather than relying exclusively on culturally distant materials (Bi, 2025). It also accords with Pulhehe's (2024) review showing that indigenous knowledge has a place in Indonesian curriculum development and can contribute to broader educational goals. The present findings extend this line of work by moving from the general inclusion of indigenous knowledge toward a more explicit question: what transformation is required before a culturally embedded value becomes defensible disciplinary knowledge in legal education?

The findings indicate that simple inclusion is insufficient. A local value must first be established as genuinely present in community life; its meaning must then be interpreted in relation to law and character; it must subsequently be reconstructed into pedagogically usable material; and only then can it be integrated into a learning experience. The four stages are therefore defined as follows.

Table 3: The Four-Stage Framework

Stage	Core operation	Quality-control question	Educational output
1. Identification	Trace values that are genuinely alive in community practices and discourse.	Is this value empirically grounded in the community rather than merely attributed to it?	Evidence-based map of local wisdom values.
2. Interpretation	Relate the identified value to customary norms, state law, religion, character, rights, and contemporary social conditions.	What does the value mean legally and ethically, and where might tensions or limitations arise?	Contextual interpretation of the value in relation to law and character.
3. Reconstruction	Convert the interpreted value into cases, problems, narratives, scenarios, learning materials, and reflective tasks.	Can the cultural meaning be translated into disciplinary learning without reducing or romanticizing it?	Pedagogically reconstructed legal cases, materials, and activities.
4. Integration	Embed the reconstructed resource in learning through dialogue, comparison, reflection, and application.	Does learning enable students to critically compare cultural norms with formal legal principles and contemporary issues?	Contextual legal-learning experiences and opportunities for reflective application.

The four-stage framework should not be understood as a simple chronological sequence. Its distinctive feature is the set of transformations and safeguards between stages. Identification protects the framework from inventing or essentializing culture. Interpretation prevents cultural practices from being treated as automatically equivalent to law. Reconstruction prevents direct

transplantation of community practices into classroom content. Integration ensures that the resulting material becomes part of an active learning process rather than a descriptive cultural appendix. The framework therefore specifies what must be transformed, why the transformation is necessary, and what pedagogical product should result.

Table 4 Empirical Findings and Conceptual Propositions

Dimension	Empirically supported by this study	Conceptual proposition requiring further validation
Local values	Eight recurring value codes were identified and consolidated from interview, observation, and documentation data.	The values can function as resources for legal education.
Normative significance	Participants and observed practices indicate that values guide social conduct and coexist with other normative systems.	These values can strengthen culturally grounded legal consciousness.

Character relevance	Values correspond conceptually with moral knowing, feeling, and action.	Use of the values in learning will improve character outcomes.
Educational transformation	Participants' accounts and thematic analysis indicate the need for selection, interpretation, and reconstruction.	The four-stage framework will produce more effective culturally responsive legal education. Implementation may improve
Learning outcomes	No student-level experimental or quasi-experimental outcomes were measured.	legal understanding, ethical reasoning, cultural awareness, or character-related outcomes.

This distinction responds directly to the interpretive limits of the qualitative design. The study provides an empirically grounded account of values and their perceived educational relevance; it does not provide experimental evidence of educational effectiveness. The framework is therefore presented as a theoretically and contextually grounded proposition, not as an experimentally validated intervention.

The discussion is organized around three analytical relationships with previous scholarship—confirmation, extension, and challenge. This structure makes the contribution of the study explicit rather than relying on a general statement of novelty. Recent scholarship strengthens the importance of this distinction. Khusyairin et al. (2024), in a Scopus-based bibliometric analysis of research on local wisdom in school learning, demonstrate the rapid growth of this research area but also indicate that the field remains strongly concentrated in Indonesia. Pulhehe (2024) similarly shows that indigenous knowledge has entered Indonesian curriculum policy and practice. Darmawati et al. (2024), working in language and literature education, demonstrate the importance of situation and needs analysis before indigenous-wisdom materials are developed. These studies support the relevance of culturally grounded educational content, but they do not by themselves provide the specific legal-education transformation mechanism developed in the present study.

The originality of the framework should be located in its function, not in the fact that it contains four sequential labels.

Identification, as well as interpretation, reconstruction, and integration. Three features make the framework a substantive advancement. First, it introduces a provenance principle: educational content should be traceable to values that are actually alive in the community. Second, it introduces a critical-translation principle: local values are not transferred unchanged but interpreted against legal, ethical, cultural, and educational criteria. Third, it introduces a disciplinary-reconstruction principle: the final educational resource must do more than represent culture; it must enable students to learn legal concepts, reason about normative conflict, and reflect on the relationship between customary and formal law.

These features distinguish the framework from a generic 'culture-based learning' sequence. For example, *musyawarah* is not simply inserted as a cultural story. Under the framework, it is identified as a living community value, interpreted in relation to deliberative justice and dispute resolution, reconstructed as a legal case or simulation, and integrated through comparison between community-based deliberation and formal alternative dispute-resolution mechanisms.

The five theoretical perspectives employed in the study are not treated as five parallel labels. They perform different explanatory functions. Living Law explains where the normative material originates: in socially practiced expectations and relationships. Legal Pluralism explains the environment in which customary, religious, social, and state norms coexist. Legal Culture explains how orientations toward

law are socially formed. Character Education explains the movement from moral knowledge to feeling and action. Transformative Learning explains how learners can critically reinterpret experience and reconstruct meaning.

Taken together, the theories explain why the framework needs four stages. If local wisdom is living law, identification is necessary to establish its empirical grounding. If the social world is legally plural, interpretation is necessary to position the value in relation to competing or overlapping normative systems. If legal culture and character involve orientations and action, reconstruction is necessary to convert the value into learning that can engage cognition, affect, and practice. If learning is transformative, integration is necessary to create opportunities for dialogue, critical reflection, comparison, and application.

Recent transformative-learning scholarship reinforces the importance of this final point. McClain (2024) emphasizes that transformative learning involves the construction and reinterpretation of meaning from experience and that contemporary scholarship increasingly attends to cultural and social contexts.

Thus, the framework is not a replacement for transformative learning; it operationalizes a culturally grounded route into it. A further implication is the shift from teaching about culture to learning through culture. Teaching about culture may result in students memorizing traditions, terminology, or customary practices. Learning through culture uses culturally grounded experiences as material for disciplinary inquiry. In legal education, this means that students can investigate how community norms are formed, how they acquire legitimacy, how they interact with formal law, where tensions emerge, and how contemporary principles should be applied.

This distinction is consistent with evidence from language and literature education. Darmawati et al. (2024) found

that indigenous-wisdom-based learning requires attention to curriculum, syllabus, teaching materials, teacher competence, and learning strategies rather than simply adding indigenous texts to existing instruction. The present study reaches a parallel conclusion in legal education: cultural content becomes educationally meaningful only when it is reconstructed in relation to learning objectives, disciplinary concepts, and pedagogical activities. The framework consequently has potential relevance beyond legal education, but such transfer should not be assumed. The four stages may be adaptable to language, literature, cultural studies, or citizenship education, yet the interpretation and reconstruction criteria would need to change according to the discipline. The current evidence supports the framework primarily within the Alas–legal education context.

The overall contribution can therefore be stated more precisely. Empirically, the study identifies eight recurring local wisdom values and demonstrates their normative and social relevance in the Alas community. Analytically, it shows that these values can be interpreted through living law, legal pluralism, legal culture, character education, and transformative learning. Conceptually and pedagogically, it proposes a four-stage framework that explains how culturally embedded values may be transformed into legal-education resources.

The framework should not, however, be presented as an already validated instructional model. No classroom intervention, expert-validation study, or student-outcome measurement was conducted in the present research. Consequently, claims about improved legal literacy, character, cultural awareness, or legal culture remain propositions for future empirical testing.

CONCLUSION

Based on the perspectives and experiences of the cultural actors and

educators involved in the study, values such as responsibility, deliberation, solidarity, respect, justice, adherence to social norms, and concern for the common good were identified as significant elements of Alas cultural practices. These findings indicate that the community's normative life is shaped not only by formal legal provisions but also by socially recognized and culturally transmitted norms. In this respect, the empirical findings are consistent with the perspective of living law, in which norms acquire social significance through their recognition and practice within a community. The study therefore provides empirical evidence that selected dimensions of Alas local wisdom can serve as culturally situated resources for understanding relationships between law, social values, and community life.

In particular, responsibility, deliberation, solidarity, respect, and justice were interpreted as values that may support orientations toward social responsibility, respect for norms, awareness of obligations and rights, ethical decision-making, and peaceful conflict resolution. These findings, however, should be understood as evidence concerning the perceived educational relevance and potential contribution of local wisdom rather than as evidence that the values have already produced measurable changes in students' character or legal culture. The study did not experimentally measure students' character development, legal awareness, or behavioral change.

Based on these empirical findings, this study proposes a four-stage conceptual framework for transforming local wisdom into educational resources: identification, interpretation, reconstruction, and integration. This framework represents the study's principal conceptual contribution and should be distinguished from the empirically demonstrated findings. Identification refers to the systematic recognition of culturally embedded values that have potential relevance to legal education.

The proposed framework consequently extends the understanding of local-wisdom-based education from cultural inclusion toward cultural knowledge transformation. This distinction is particularly important because local wisdom may contain values that are compatible with contemporary principles of justice, equality, responsibility, solidarity, and human rights, while other practices may require reinterpretation or critical evaluation. The framework therefore conceptualizes culturally responsive legal education as a process of connecting community-based knowledge with formal disciplinary knowledge while maintaining critical attention to contemporary legal and educational principles.

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