

Teachers' Roles in Preserving Sundanese *Pupuh* in Grade 5 Elementary Classroom: A Qualitative Case

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ABSTRACT

Preserving local culture in elementary education faces challenges due to limited integration of traditional arts into formal classroom instruction. Sundanese *pupuh*, as a form of oral literature rich in cultural and character values, requires active transmission through educational practices to remain sustainable. This study aims to examine the role of teachers in preserving Sundanese *pupuh* through Art and Culture learning in a Grade V elementary classroom. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design. The research was conducted at an elementary school in Sukabumi Regency, West Java, involving a Grade V teacher as the primary participant. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation of Art and Culture learning activities. Data analysis followed an interactive model consisting of data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that Sundanese *pupuh* was integrated into classroom learning through structured activities, including the introduction of *pupuh* types, explanation of lyrical meanings, and guided practice. Teachers played a key role as cultural mediators by facilitating learning, motivating students, and integrating cultural and character values. Student engagement in *pupuh* learning was generally positive and supported cultural awareness and character development. This study is limited by its focus on a single school context and the absence of long-term analysis of students' cultural identity development. The findings suggest that strengthening teacher competence and providing institutional support are essential for sustaining local culture-based learning in elementary education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers are central figures in primary education, directly shaping students' knowledge, attitudes, and values. Legally, teachers are defined as professional educators responsible for educating, guiding, directing, and evaluating students (Law No. 14 of 2005).

This normative definition emphasizes that teaching involves not only instructional duties but also the formation of values and character. In this sense, the teacher's mandate extends beyond academic achievement to the cultivation of learners' identities and social dispositions.

Teachers are also key determinants of educational success due to their direct interaction with students. J. S. Ulfa [1] explains that teachers introduce new knowledge while deepening students' existing understanding. This perspective is particularly relevant to culture-based learning, as teaching Sundanese pupuh requires connecting artistic knowledge with students' lived experiences. Therefore, examining teachers' roles in culture-based instruction becomes essential for understanding how cultural knowledge is meaningfully constructed in classrooms.

From a humanistic education perspective, teachers function not only as instructors but also as facilitators, motivators, and cultural preservation agents [2]. This view highlights teachers' strategic position in sustaining local culture through daily classroom practices. Accordingly, the success of cultural learning in primary schools is closely linked to how teachers design learning interactions that are engaging, supportive, and value-oriented.

The preservation of local culture involves efforts to maintain cultural values, practices, and meanings so they can be transmitted across generations. Safitri et al. [3] argue that cultural preservation involves not only physical forms but also philosophical values and ways of life. This understanding implies that preserving Sundanese pupuh must focus on meaning and values, not merely on performing traditional songs. Thus, cultural preservation in education should be understood as both the transmission of forms (texts, melodies, rules) and the internalization of cultural meanings embedded within them.

Primary education is considered a strategic phase for cultural transmission because children begin forming their identity and core values at this stage. UNESCO [4] emphasizes that integrating intangible cultural heritage into formal education is an effective strategy for regeneration. This statement strengthens the rationale for introducing Sundanese pupuh at the primary school level. By embedding local cultural heritage early, schools can help students build cultural literacy alongside foundational competencies.

Primary schools serve not only as sites of knowledge transfer but also as spaces for cultural reproduction. Without early cultural exposure, local traditions risk being displaced by global popular culture [5]. This condition positions school and teachers as frontline guardians of local cultural sustainability. Consequently, classroom learning can function as a protective space where local cultural expressions remain visible, practiced, and socially valued.

Sundanese pupuh is a form of traditional oral literature governed by specific metrical rules and rich in moral and philosophical values. Purnamasari et al. [6] and Luma et al. [7] describe pupuh as a medium for character education rooted in local wisdom. This confirms that pupuh is pedagogically relevant, not merely a form of vocal art. In other words, pupuh learning can serve dual purposes: developing artistic competence and reinforcing ethical-cultural understanding.

Sundanese pupuh faces the risk of decline if it is not transmitted through formal education. Adela and Al-Akmam [8] emphasize that cultural preservation must be embedded

in primary education to ensure sustainability. This finding reinforces the urgency of integrating pupuh into the arts, culture, and skills-learning curriculum. Formal schooling, therefore, becomes a systematic pathway for ensuring continuity of pupuh knowledge across student generations.

Sundanese pupuh comprises various types, such as *maskumambang*, *kinanti*, *sinom*, and *pucung*. Each has distinct structures and meanings. These differences allow teachers to align pupuh selection with character and moral education objectives. Such diversity provides pedagogical flexibility for contextual learning. For instance, teachers can select a pupuh type whose themes and tone match the learning topic, students' developmental stage, and classroom needs.

Latipah and Lagandesa [9] state that the structured nature of pupuh supports value internalization through contextual learning. Rather than being a limitation, pupuh's structure enhances its educational potential. This structure can also help teachers scaffold learning, moving from recognition of rules (metrical patterns) to interpretation of messages (values and meanings).

Sundanese pupuh conveys values of social ethics, politeness, respect for elders, and spirituality. Other researchers argue that traditional arts are effective tools for character education at the primary level [10], [11], [12], [13]. This supports the view that pupuh plays a meaningful role in holistic character development. If pupuh is not introduced early, there is a risk of losing local cultural identity. Therefore, pupuh should be positioned as a core learning resource rather than a supplementary activity. Positioning pupuh as a core resource also aligns cultural learning with broader educational goals that emphasize character formation and social responsibility.

The preservation of Sundanese pupuh in primary schools is influenced by teachers' roles as cultural facilitators, arts, culture, and skill-learning strategis, and students' learning experiences. Teachers play a crucial role in presenting pupuh in a contextualized way so that students can internalize cultural values. Accordingly, the effectiveness of pupuh learning depends not only on what is taught (content) but also on how it is taught (strategy, guidance, and classroom interaction).

Studies by Safitri et al. [3], Latipah and Lagandesa [9], Fajri et al. [15], and Rosidi et al. [16] consistently demonstrate that successful local culture preservation in primary education depends heavily on teachers' roles and context- and culture-based learning strategies. However, these findings also suggest the need to examine concrete classroom practices to understand how such roles are enacted in real instructional settings.

However, despite the acknowledged importance of teachers in preserving Sundanese pupuh through primary education, there is still a lack of empirical studies that specifically examine how teachers' roles and instructional strategies influence students' cultural understanding and internalization of pupuh values in primary school contexts. Therefore, this study is directed to investigate the teacher's role and instructional strategies in Sundanese pupuh learning in primary school, with particular attention to how students experience, interpret, and internalize the values embedded in pupuh. By addressing this gap, the research is expected to provide practical insights into culture-based learning design and to strengthen the role of primary education as a site of local cultural sustainability.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design. A case study was chosen because it allows an in-depth exploration of teachers' roles in preserving Sundanese *pupuh* within a specific classroom context. This design is appropriate for examining culture-based learning practices that are closely related to their natural educational setting [17]. This approach allows an in-depth exploration of the teachers' role in preserving Sundanese *pupuh* through arts, culture, and craft education. Sugiyonos perspective reinforces the suitability of qualitative inquiry for examining meaning-oriented and process-based educational practices. Thus, the qualitative case study design was selected to capture the complexity of classroom interactions and cultural learning processes as they occur naturally.

Furthermore, qualitative research emphasizes a holistic understanding of participants' experiences within natural settings [18]. Moleong's view supports examining cultural learning as a lived, contextual classroom experience. Creswell [19] explains that qualitative research focuses on exploring meanings constructed by individuals or groups related to social issues. This framework positions teachers not merely as curriculum implementers, but as cultural agents. Accordingly, the study prioritizes depth of understanding by focusing on how the teacher interprets, enacts, and reflects cultural preservation efforts in daily instruction.

The study adopts an interactive qualitative design proposed by Miles and Huberman [20], in which data analysis is conducted continuously and cyclically throughout the research process. This model enables the researcher to move back and forth between data collection and analysis, allowing emerging insights to inform subsequent fieldwork.

Components of the Miles and Huberman model:

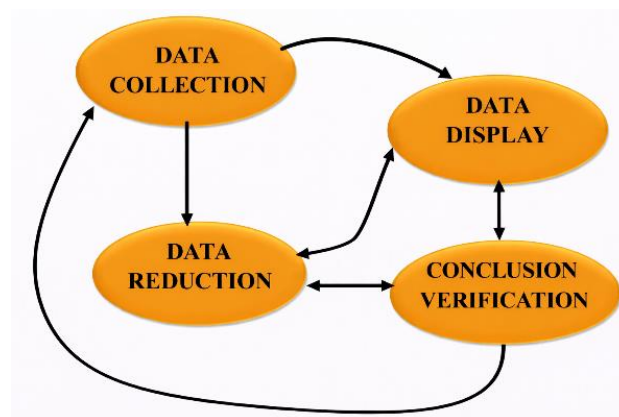


Figure 1. Miles and Huberman model

a. Data collection

Conducted through interviews, classroom observations, and documentation of arts, culture, and skills learning activities [21]. These techniques ensure the naturalistic acquisition of cultural learning data. The combination of these techniques also allows the study to capture both verbal explanations (interviews) and observable instructional practices (observations) supported by written and visual records (documentation).

b. Data reduction

Selecting, focusing, and categorizing raw data according to research objectives [22]. Data reduction helps maintain analytical focus on teachers' cultural roles. At this stage, data were filtered to retain information directly related to teachers' roles, preservation strategies, and the integration of cultural values in *pupuh* learning.

c. Data display

Organizing data in narrative descriptions and summary tables to identify patterns [23]. This stage facilitates systematic interpretation of relationships among findings. Data displays were used to make connections across sources visible, such as linking observed classroom practices with interview statements and documented lesson materials.

d. Conclusion drawing and verification

Conclusions are continuously refined and validated throughout the analysis process [24]. Ongoing verification strengthens the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. Verification was carried out by revisiting field notes, comparing across data sources, and ensuring that interpretations were supported by consistent evidence.

The research was conducted in September 2025 at SDN Sunggapan, Sukabumi Regency, West Java, Indonesia. The participant was a Grade V classroom teacher who taught Art and Culture subjects, including Sundanese *pupuh*. The students involved were fifth-grade elementary school students aged approximately 10–11 years. Participants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in *pupuh* learning activities. The research subject is a grade five teacher, while the research object focuses on the teacher's role and strategies in preserving Sundanese *pupuh*. Selecting a key informant aligns with qualitative principles, prioritizing depth over breadth. This purposive selection ensured that the participant had relevant experience and direct responsibility for implementing *pupuh* learning activities in the classroom. The research served as the primary instrument, supported by observation, interview, and documentation guidelines [20]. This approach enables flexible, responsive data collection in dynamic classroom settings. In line with qualitative principles, the researcher's role also included interpreting classroom events while maintaining systematic procedures for recording and organizing data.

Table 1. Observation instrument matrix

Aspect	Indicator
Teachers role	Facilitating culture-based learning
Pupuh preservation	Introducing pupuh values
Classroom practice	Guiding vocal practice
Cultural values	Character value integration
Learning closure	Reflection and evaluation

Table 2. Interview instrument matrix

variable	indicator
Teachers' role in arts, culture, and skills	Teachers as facilitators, motivators, and cultural models.
Pupuh preservation strategies	Teaching methods, approaches, learning media, and practical activities.
Supporting factors	School support, learning resources, and student interest.
Inhibiting factors	Time constraints, facilities, student characteristics, and teacher competence.
Learning impact	Changes in students' interests and cultural understanding.

Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model [20]. This framework supports systematic and reflective qualitative analysis. Data were collected through classroom observations, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted during several Art and Culture learning sessions to examine teaching strategies, student participation, and the integration of cultural and character values in *pupuh* learning. Observation sessions were directed to capture the sequence of learning activities, the teacher's instructional moves, and students' responses during practice and reflection. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teacher using an interview guideline focusing on teaching methods, preservation strategies, supporting and inhibiting factors, and learning impacts. The semi-structured format allowed the researcher to probe emerging issues from observations while still maintaining comparability across interview topics. Documentation included lesson plans, learning materials, and records of classroom activities. These documents were used to contextualize observed practices and to identify alignment between instructional planning and implementation. The observation and interview instruments used in this study are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Data analysis followed an interactive qualitative model consisting of data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis began by coding the data to identify meaningful units related to teachers' roles, instructional strategies, and the integration of cultural values. These codes were then grouped into categories and developed into themes. Theme development was guided by the research focus on preservation roles and strategies, ensuring that categories remained closely tied to the study objectives. Data triangulation across observations, interviews, and documentation was applied to strengthen the validity of the findings. Triangulation also enabled cross-checking between what was planned (documents), what was done (observations), and what was intended or perceived (interviews).

The study's trustworthiness was ensured through several strategies. Credibility was established through triangulation of data sources and member checking with the participating teacher. Transferability was supported by providing a clear description of the research context and participants. Dependability and confirmability were maintained through systematic documentation of research procedures and data analysis processes. An audit trail of field notes, interview summaries, coding steps, and analytic decisions was maintained to support dependability and confirmability.

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed in this study. Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the school, and informed consent was secured from the participating teacher. Students' identities were anonymized to protect confidentiality, and all data were used solely for research purposes. The researcher also ensured that classroom observations did not disrupt learning activities and that participation did not pose academic consequences for students.

A. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the results of the research are presented, and at the same time, a comprehensive discussion is provided. Results can be presented in figures, graphs, tables, and other formats that make the reader understand easily [25], [26]. The discussion can be organized into several subsections. In this study, the presentation of results is organized thematically to reflect the research focus on teachers' roles, instructional strategies, and the integration of cultural values in *pupuh* learning. The discussion subsequently interprets these themes by linking them to relevant theoretical perspectives and previous findings on culture-based education.

3.1. Results

The results of this study indicate that Sundanese *pupuh* has been consistently integrated into the Art and Culture subject in Grade V of the elementary school. The teacher guided the learning process by introducing the types of *pupuh*, explaining the lyrics' meanings, and guiding students in performing *pupuh*. This sequence shows that *pupuh* learning was not treated as a one-time activity, but as a structured learning process that combines cultural knowledge (types and meanings) with skill practice (performance).

The teacher played an active role in preserving Sundanese *pupuh* through classroom instruction. This role was reflected in providing direct demonstrations, guiding students who experienced difficulties, and motivating students to participate confidently in learning activities. The findings show that the teacher functioned not only as an instructor but also as a facilitator of local cultural preservation. These roles indicate that preservation efforts occur through pedagogical actions—such as modeling, scaffolding, and encouragement—rather than through cultural content alone. In other words, the teacher's instructional decisions served as the main mechanism through which *pupuh* was maintained and made accessible to students.

Student responses toward *pupuh* learning were generally positive. Most students showed enthusiasm and active participation throughout the learning process, though some initially lacked confidence. The teacher addressed this issue by providing individual guidance, which encouraged students to remain engaged in the learning activities. This finding suggests that participation in *pupuh* learning is influenced by students' affective readiness (e.g., confidence) and the teacher's responsiveness to students' needs. The provision of individual guidance functioned as a supportive strategy to reduce anxiety and sustain participation during practice.

In addition to developing artistic skills, the learning of Sundanese *pupuh* was found to convey cultural and character values. The teacher integrated values such as politeness,

togetherness, and respect into the learning process by relating the meaning of *pupuh* lyrics to students' daily lives. This indicates that *pupuh* learning served a dual purpose: strengthening cultural literacy and supporting character development through reflection on the meanings embedded in lyrics. By connecting lyrics to everyday situations, the teacher helped students translate cultural messages into practical social behavior.

3.2. Discussion

The integration of Sundanese *pupuh* into Art and Culture learning can be interpreted as a strategic effort to preserve local culture through formal education. This finding indicates that cultural preservation in schools is not limited to extracurricular activities but can be embedded in regular classroom learning [27]. Embedding *pupuh* within routine lessons also increases the likelihood of sustained exposure, which is essential for the continuity of intangible cultural heritage in younger generations.

The teacher's role in this study highlights educators as cultural mediators who bridge traditional cultural content with students' learning contexts. This supports previous research suggesting that teachers play a crucial role in ensuring that local cultural values remain relevant and meaningful for students in modern educational settings [28]. In practice, mediation occurs when teachers simplify complex cultural forms, demonstrate performance techniques, and interpret lyrical meanings so that students can relate them to contemporary experiences. Thus, the teacher becomes a connecting link between cultural tradition and classroom pedagogy.

Student engagement observed in this study suggests that culturally based learning materials contribute to more meaningful learning experiences. Rather than focusing solely on skill acquisition, learning activities grounded in local culture promote student involvement and cultural awareness, as also reported in recent studies [29]. This supports the view that cultural proximity—learning content that feels “close” to students' environment—can strengthen attention, motivation, and participation. Meaningful engagement is particularly important in arts learning, where confidence and willingness to perform often shape learning outcomes.

Moreover, the presence of character values within *pupuh* learning emphasizes that local cultural content functions as a medium for character education. Integrating values such as respect and togetherness into learning activities supports students' social and moral development in elementary education [30]. Because values are embedded in lyrical meanings and classroom interaction norms (e.g., listening, taking turns, respecting peers), *pupuh* becomes an applied context for practicing character, not merely discussing it.

These findings further indicate that local wisdom-based learning strengthens schools' role in shaping students' character and cultural identity. Such integration aligns with current educational perspectives that emphasize the importance of culturally responsive teaching in formal learning environments [31]. Culturally responsive teaching is reflected when local culture is treated as a legitimate knowledge source and when learning activities validate students' cultural backgrounds. Accordingly, *pupuh* learning can contribute to identity formation by positioning local culture as something to be understood, practiced, and valued.

The findings of this study have implications at multiple levels of educational practice and policy. At the teacher level, the results indicate the importance of strengthening teachers' pedagogical competence in teaching Sundanese pupuh through targeted professional development. Previous studies show that effective cultural arts instruction requires teachers to master both content knowledge and culturally responsive pedagogical strategies, such as paired practice, call-and-response activities, and formative feedback, to enhance student engagement and value internalization [32], [33]. Professional development may therefore be directed not only to vocal technique and pupuh structure, but also to instructional approaches that support confidence-building and meaning-making in classroom practice.

At the school level, institutional support plays a significant role in sustaining local culture-based learning. Research suggests that the successful implementation of traditional arts education depends on supportive scheduling policies, availability of artistic resources, and collaboration with local artists or cultural practitioners to ensure authentic learning experiences [34], [35]. Such support enables schools to function as active spaces for cultural reproduction rather than merely as sites of academic instruction. School leadership can strengthen sustainability by allocating time, providing learning resources, and offering opportunities for performances or cultural showcases that reinforce students' motivation and cultural pride.

At the policy and curriculum levels, the study aligns with educational research advocating formal curricular recognition of local cultural content to reinforce cultural sustainability practices, suggesting that explicit curriculum guidelines for integrating local wisdom can enhance cultural literacy and connectivity in formal education [36]. More explicit curriculum guidance can help teachers determine learning objectives, select appropriate pupuh types, and design assessment indicators that capture both skills and value internalization. Policy support may also encourage partnerships between schools and cultural institutions so that classroom learning remains connected to living cultural practices in the community. Overall, these implications underline that preserving Sundanese pupuh through education requires alignment between teacher capacity, school support systems, and curriculum-policy direction.

B. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that integrating Sundanese pupuh into Art and Culture learning is an effective way to preserve local culture in elementary schools. Through structured classroom learning, *pupuh* serves not only as an artistic activity but also as a medium for transmitting cultural and character values. These findings indicate that cultural preservation can be strengthened when local cultural content is systematically embedded in routine classroom instruction rather than treated as incidental enrichment.

The findings show that teachers play an important role as cultural mediators in connecting local cultural content with students' learning experiences. The integration of local wisdom into formal learning contributes to the development of students' cultural identity and supports culturally responsive education. Therefore, incorporating Sundanese *pupuh* into classroom learning is recommended as a sustainable strategy for cultural preservation in elementary education. This recommendation is grounded in the observed role

of teachers in guiding practice, interpreting lyrical meanings, and fostering student participation, which together enable the internalization of value alongside skill development.

In practice, this study recommends strengthening teachers' competence through training in *pupuh* pedagogy and culture-based learning strategies. Schools are also encouraged to provide institutional support, including adequate scheduling, learning resources, and opportunities for collaboration with local cultural practitioners. Such support is important to ensure continuity of implementation and to provide authentic learning experiences that connect classroom learning with living cultural practices in the community.

This study has limitations related to the limited research context and the focus on classroom implementation. Future research is suggested to involve a broader range of schools and to examine students' learning outcomes and long-term impacts on cultural identity development. Further studies may also compare different instructional models or media used in *pupuh* learning to identify approaches that most effectively enhance student engagement and cultural understanding.

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