An Innovative Management Model for Early Childhood Education Learning Based on a Culture of Self-Reliance in the Digital Era

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Abstract:

This study aims to develop and analyse an innovative management model for early childhood learning grounded in local culture, leveraging digital technology. The research focuses on developing a learning management system integrated with the values of cultural wisdom "Kedirian" through an interactive digital storytelling application. The approach used is research and development (R&D) with the ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation). Data were collected through observation, interviews, and pre- and post-tests. The results of the study indicate that implementing this innovative management model significantly increases children's active participation, strengthens their understanding of character values, including honesty, cooperation, and patience, and develops their socio-emotional skills in early childhood. The main product of this research is the Dongeng Digital Nusantara Kediri application, which uses Generative AI to present local fairy tales such as the Legend of Mount Kelud and Calon Arang in interactive visual and audio formats. These findings emphasise the importance of integrating technology and culture in early childhood learning management to shape a young generation with character, rooted in local culture, in the digital era.

Keywords: *Learning Management, Self-Culture, Generative AI, Digital Storytelling*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengembangkan dan menganalisis model manajemen inovatif pembelajaran anak usia dini berbasis budaya lokal dengan memanfaatkan teknologi digital. Fokus penelitian diarahkan pada pengembangan sistem manajemen pembelajaran yang terintegrasi dengan nilai-nilai kearifan budaya "Kedirian" melalui aplikasi media dongeng digital interaktif. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah penelitian dan pengembangan (R&D) dengan model ADDIE (*Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation*). Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan pre– post test. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan model manajemen inovatif ini secara signifikan meningkatkan partisipasi aktif anak, memperkuat pemahaman nilai karakter, antara lain kejujuran, gotong royong, dan kesabaran, serta mengembangkan aspek sosial-emosional anak usia dini. Produk utama penelitian ini berupa aplikasi *Dongeng Digital Nusantara Kediri* yang menggabungkan teknologi *Generative AI* untuk menghadirkan dongeng-dongeng lokal seperti Legenda Gunung Kelud dan Calon Arang dalam bentuk visual dan audio interaktif. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya integrasi

teknologi dan budaya dalam manajemen pembelajaran PAUD untuk membentuk generasi muda yang berkarakter dan berakar pada budaya lokal di era digital.

Kata Kunci: *Manajemen Pembelajaran, Budaya Kedirian, AI generatif, Digital Storytelling*

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (PAUD) is the primary foundation for developing children's character, identity, and cultural awareness (Rohman, 2024; Suratmi & Hartono, 2024; Zheng & Guo, 2024). In the digital era, the challenges of educating children are increasingly complex, as children are more closely connected to global technology than to the local values that shape national identity. This phenomenon is evident in Kediri Regency, East Java, where global digital media penetration has increased rapidly since 2020 (BPS Kediri, 2024). However, digital media containing local cultural content remains limited, especially in formats suitable for children aged 4–6.

Fairy tales, as part of an oral cultural heritage, play a significant role in instilling moral and cultural values (Aishwarya & Sylus, 2024). Folktales such as Calon Arang, The Legend of Mount Kelud, and Kedung Cinet convey messages about self-control, honesty, and patience. However, research in kindergartens throughout the Mojo District showed that 82% of children were more familiar with global characters such as Elsa, Spider-Man, and Doraemon than with local figures (Kediri PAUD Observation Data, 2025). This highlights the need for innovative, culture-based learning to remain relevant amidst the development of digital technology.

While previous research has found numerous studies on the development of local wisdom-based learning media using technology, without a focus on learning management (Aini & Yanti, 2023; Fadhilah & Sumarni, 2025), the development of textbooks as a development media (Kassymova et al., 2023; Rosário & Dias, 2023), and the development of culture-based digital storytelling (Humairoh, 2023; Zort et al., 2023) This study, in addition to focusing on the technological aspect, also emphasizes the importance of adaptive, collaborative, and participatory learning management between teachers, parents, and educational institutions in implementing the model. Through this synergy, the desired cultural values are not only taught but also revived in the context of early childhood learning in the digital era.

Based on the field needs analysis and the results of previous research, the development of an Innovative Management Model for Early Childhood Education (PAUD) based on Kediri Culture is an urgent research need. The model developed in this study seeks to combine the power of digital technology with local Kediri cultural values to create a meaningful, contextual learning process. One of its key innovations is the Dongeng Digital Nusantara Kediri application, which uses generative AI to present Kediri folktales in an interactive audiovisual format. It is hoped that this research will bring benefits and contribute to the development of a national character that increasingly loves its homeland's culture.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a Research and Development (R&D) approach with the ADDIE model, comprising Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation stages (Chan et al., 2023; Mudjisusatyo et al., 2025). In the analysis stage, a literature review was conducted based on observations at five early childhood education institutions in the Mojo District and on interviews with 12 teachers and eight parents. The goal was to identify the need for Kediri culture-based learning media and management patterns appropriate to the characteristics of early childhood.

Next, the design was carried out through the creation of a digital storytelling-based learning model, selecting Kediri folktales such as Calon Arang, Mount Kelud, and Kedung Cinet. Each story is structured in an interactive narrative format with branching plots, illustrations, and audio narration. The learning management design also encompasses teachers as cultural facilitators and parents as learning companions.

During development, the Dongeng Digital Nusantara Kediri application used Generative AI to generate story text, visual illustrations, and audio narration. This stage also included developing a teacher and parent guidebook to facilitate integration into the RPPH. Following the development phase, data were collected through observation, interviews, and pre- and post-tests. A limited pilot study was conducted at two early childhood education (PAUD) institutions in Mojo District, Kediri. A total of 30 children, 4 teachers, and 8 parents participated. After revisions based on the results of the limited trial, a broader trial was conducted at four other PAUD institutions, involving 112 students, 7 teachers, and 26 parents.

Finally, an evaluation was conducted using qualitative and quantitative approaches. Content validation was conducted by three experts (media, PAUD, and culture). Quantitative data were obtained from pre- and posttest results and observations of child Engagement. The following diagram illustrates the ADDIE development model.

Figure 1. ADDIE (Development Model)

Based on Figure 1, this research is expected to yield findings on the development of a digital media–based learning management model. The model is designed to support more effective planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning processes in early childhood education institutions. Through the integration of digital media, learning activities are expected to become more interactive, accessible, and adaptive to the needs of children and educators. Ultimately, the results of this research are expected to improve the quality of early childhood education practices and support the advancement of early childhood education in the Kediri area.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results
Products Produced

The main product of this research is the Kediri Nusantara Digital Fairy Tales application, a local culture-based learning innovation specifically designed for children aged 4–6. This application was developed by combining Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) with a character-based pedagogical approach to create an engaging, developmentally appropriate learning experience. The primary objective of this product is to introduce cultural and moral values in a way that resonates with young learners through an interactive and enjoyable platform.

Conceptually, this application integrates five main features to support children's learning and development. The first feature, Cerita Dongeng Kediri, offers a collection of local fairy tales, such as *the Legend of Calon Arang*, *the Origin of Mount Kelud*, and *the Legend of Kedung Cinet*. These stories are digitally visualised with unique characters and settings from Kediri, ensuring the content is not only culturally relevant but also visually engaging for young children. This feature strengthens children's connection to their local culture by presenting simple yet meaningful narratives that introduce traditional folklore in a fun, accessible way.

Additionally, the application's user interface is designed to be intuitive for young users, encouraging them to engage with the stories and participate in active learning. Through these features, the application fosters an early appreciation of cultural heritage and moral values, while supporting the development of literacy, emotional intelligence, and cultural awareness in early childhood education.

Second, the Generative AI feature enables the system to generate different variations of fairy tale text and illustrations each time it is played. This ensures each reading experience is unique and adapts to the child's learning style. Third, the Interactive Audio-Visual feature provides voice narration, light animations, and child-friendly illustrations that stimulate children's cognitive and emotional aspects in a balanced manner. Fourth, Value Reflection serves as a character-building tool at the end of the story, inviting children to reflect on the meaning of morals and good behaviour in everyday life. This feature encourages critical thinking, empathy, and awareness of values. Finally, Teacher and Parent Mode provides educators and families with a space to monitor children's progress, review learning activities, and access application implementation guides in accordance with the Daily Learning Implementation Plan (RPPH).

Overall, the Dongeng Digital Nusantara Kediri application functions as a digital learning ecosystem rooted in local culture that strengthens the roles of schools and families in developing character, social-emotional skills, and cultural literacy in early childhood in the digital era. By integrating digital storytelling, interactive features, and culturally relevant content, the application supports teachers and parents in delivering meaningful, engaging, and age-appropriate learning experiences.

In addition, the application facilitates collaboration between educators and families, enabling consistent character education both at school and at home. By incorporating local folklore and cultural values from the Kediri region, the platform also helps introduce and preserve local wisdom while adapting learning practices to the demands of digital transformation in education.

Figure 2. Product Structure of the Dongeng Digital Nusantara Kediri Application

Based on Figure 2, the product structure of the Dongeng Digital Nusantara Kediri application comprises Kediri folk tales presented as interactive videos that children can select as learning resources. These digital stories are designed to be engaging and easy for young learners to understand, allowing them to explore local folklore in a more enjoyable and meaningful way. In the learning process, children are expected to access and watch the stories with guidance from teachers and adults around them. This guidance helps ensure that the values, moral messages, and cultural elements contained in the stories are properly understood, while also encouraging discussion, reflection, and character development in early childhood learning activities.

Quantitative Analysis

Table 1 presents the improvement in early childhood learning outcomes, particularly in the aspects of social-emotional development and understanding of cultural values. The data illustrate the changes in children's learning achievements after the implementation of the Dongeng Digital Nusantara Kediri application as a digital learning medium.

The results indicate that the use of interactive digital storytelling contributes positively to children's ability to recognize emotions, develop empathy, and understand social interactions. In addition, exposure to Kediri folk tales through the application helps children become more familiar with local cultural values, moral messages, and traditional narratives. Overall, the quantitative findings demonstrate that the integration of culturally based digital media can effectively support improvements in both social-emotional competencies and cultural literacy in early childhood learning.

Table 1. Table of Improvements in Early Childhood Learning Outcomes in Social-Emotional Aspects and Understanding ff Cultural Values

Indicator	Pre-Test (Mean)	Post-Test (Mean)	Improvement
Mentioning local figures	2.3	4.4	91%
Explaining the origin of the story	1.9	4.1	116%
Mentioning moral values	2,1	4,2	100%

The data presented in Table 1 demonstrate significant improvements in children's understanding of local culture and moral values following the implementation of the digital storytelling program. The post-test scores indicate substantial gains across all indicators, with the greatest improvement in explaining the story's origin (116%), followed by mentioning moral values (100%) and local figures (91%). These results suggest that the intervention effectively enhances children's social-emotional development and cultural literacy, supporting the potential of digital stories as a meaningful educational tool in early childhood learning. The following is also a graphic illustrating children's social-emotional development.
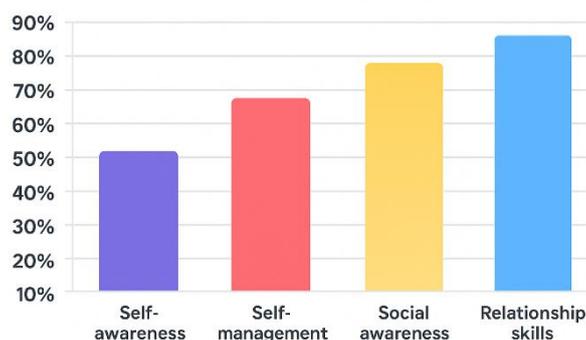

Figure 3. Children's Socio-Emotional Improvement

Figure 3 illustrates the children's socio-emotional development across four dimensions: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship skills. The observed improvements highlight that the digital storytelling approach not only fosters cognitive understanding of cultural content but also promotes essential socio-emotional skills. The highest gains were noted in relationship skills, indicating that interactive storytelling can effectively support children in building positive interactions and emotional competencies. Overall, these findings confirm the positive impact of culturally relevant digital stories on holistic child development.

Qualitative Analysis

Observations showed an increase in children's engagement during the learning activities. Most children demonstrated a strong interest while listening to the digital stories. Approximately 86% of the children listened to the stories for more than 10 minutes, indicating sustained attention during the storytelling session. In addition, 93% of the children showed positive emotional expressions, such as smiling, laughing, and responding enthusiastically to the story content.

Furthermore, 78% of the children were able to repeat or retell parts of the story, indicating that they understood and remembered the main messages conveyed. These findings suggest that the *Dongeng Digital Nusantara Kediri* application helps create a more engaging learning environment while supporting children's comprehension, emotional involvement, and narrative recall during early childhood learning activities.

Teachers stated that this application facilitates the integration of cultural values into the RPPH (Lesson Plan and Lesson Plan). A focus group discussion

(FGD) with 10 teachers and 8 parents in Mojo District on September 3, 2025, showed that 92% of respondents considered this application very suitable for use. The following is a schematic diagram of the Innovative Learning Management Model.

Figure 4. Innovative Learning Management Model Scheme

Based on Figure 4, implementing an innovative learning management model involves several key stages: planning, implementation, mentoring, and evaluation. Each of these stages plays an important role in ensuring that the learning process runs effectively and achieves the intended educational goals.

In this study, all of these stages were carried out through a series of structured activities, starting from the preparation of learning plans, the application of digital storytelling media in classroom activities, continuous guidance for teachers and children during the learning process, and evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the model. Through these stages, the research ultimately led to the development of a learning management model rooted in Kediri culture, integrating digital media to support early childhood learning in the modern educational context.

Discussion

The research results indicate that implementing a local culture-based management model through interactive digital media significantly enhances children's understanding of Kediri's cultural values. Digitising local content enables the integration of culturally relevant materials into early childhood education, fostering a deeper connection to cultural heritage. This finding aligns with Suryana's research, which emphasises that digitising local content can strengthen cultural literacy in early childhood (Suryana & Kurnia, 2025; Yetti, 2024). The ability to present local stories, traditions, and values in a digital format not only engages children but also helps preserve and transmit cultural heritage effectively to younger generations.

In addition, the model encourages active collaboration between teachers and parents, promoting a participatory learning system. This innovation places local culture at the core of the Early Childhood Education (PAUD) curriculum, creating a holistic educational environment where children not only acquire academic skills but also develop social, emotional, and cultural competencies. The results of the teacher-parent Focus Group Discussion (FGD) highlight the approach's positive impact, with teachers and parents recognising its value in

reinforcing cultural teachings. The model strengthens the connection between school and home, ensuring that cultural learning is consistent and meaningful across both settings.
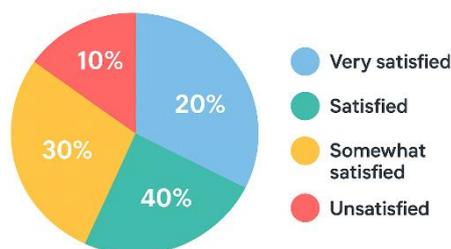

Figure 5. Diagram Teachers and Parents FGD Results

Based on Figure 5, the results of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving teachers and parents indicated a positive response toward the implementation of the local culture–based learning management model through interactive digital media. Both teachers and parents expressed high satisfaction with the Dongeng Digital Nusantara Kediri application as a learning support tool.

Participants in the discussion noted that interactive digital storytelling made the learning process more engaging for children and helped them better understand the cultural values embedded in Kediri folklore. In addition, the model was considered effective in fostering collaboration between schools and families to support children's learning and character development. Overall, the FGD results suggest that integrating local cultural content with digital media can strengthen children's cultural awareness while making early childhood learning more meaningful and enjoyable.

Local Culture-Based Learning Planning Management

Planning is the initial stage in the learning management cycle, determining the direction and success of learning activities. In the context of Kediri's culture-based Early Childhood Education (PAUD), planning involves teachers, principals, and parent representatives in discussion forums to determine themes, values, and learning materials appropriate to the children's characteristics and the local cultural context. Based on the results of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in Mojo District, teachers designed learning activities that emphasise Kediri's unique values, such as cooperation, simplicity, patience, and religiosity. These values are integrated into weekly themes and daily activities, for example, through the Legend of Mount Kelud, which illustrates the importance of emotional control and patience.

According to Daramola et al., effective learning planning must take into account students' socio-cultural context and be carried out collaboratively to achieve educational goals holistically (Daramola, 2024; Haux, Maget Dominicé, & Raspotnig, 2021). Improving the quality of learning depends heavily on how the cultural climate for learning development in schools is implemented and pursued by the entire school community and stakeholders (Ramli, Abidin, & Waeduereh, 2025). In this innovative management model, teachers act as planners, not only determining learning content but also selecting approaches, media, and evaluation

strategies. The Kediri Nusantara Digital Fairy Tale application is then used as the primary medium to enrich children's learning experiences. Thus, planning is no longer merely administrative but becomes a creative activity oriented towards cultural values and the character development of early childhood.

Innovative Learning Implementation Management

Learning implementation is the stage in the plan's implementation. In this model, the teacher acts as a learning manager, directing the flow of activities, from the introduction of the story and the exploration of the digital fairy tale to post-viewing reflective activities. Each session begins with an appreciation of local culture, followed by a screening of an interactive digital fairy tale, and concludes with a discussion with the children about the story's values.

The use of digital media powered by generative AI has been proven to capture children's attention, increase engagement, and strengthen emotional connections with local figures such as Dewi Kilisuci or the children's version of Calon Arang. Based on observations, approximately 86% of children were able to focus on the story for more than 10 minutes, and 93% showed a positive emotional response to the visual narrative. This demonstrates the effectiveness of managing the implementation of learning that combines technology and culture.

Successful management occurs when teachers create a participatory and meaningful learning environment (Alam, 2023; Andriyani et al., 2025; Kinnula et al., 2023). In this context, teachers act not only as conveyors of information but also as facilitators, helping children construct meaning through interaction and exploration (Aisyah et al., 2023; Samosir et al., 2025). This approach aligns with the principles of learning by doing and learning with culture, hallmarks of the Kedirian culture-based PAUD learning model.

Collaborative Management and Community Participation

The collaborative aspect is a key pillar of this innovative management model (Liu et al., 2023; Spieth et al., 2025; Tekic & Füller, 2023). The learning, development, and implementation process involves collaboration among teachers, parents, and local community leaders. Collaboration is realised in two forms: (1) collaboration in planning, where parents and cultural leaders help teachers select appropriate folktales; and (2) collaboration in implementation, where parents accompany children while using the application at home.

The results of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on September 3, 2025, showed that 92% of teachers and parents stated that this model improves communication and family involvement in children's learning. The family involvement in early childhood education has a positive impact on children's social, emotional, and academic development (Aisyah, 2024; Hardika et al., 2023; Opoku et al., 2025). In this culture-based management model, local community involvement also helps sustain cultural values amid the rapid flow of digital globalisation.

Furthermore, reflection activities with children after using the application provide an important collaborative space. Teachers and parents engage in dialogue about the meaning of stories and help children understand cultural values such as loyalty, honesty, and responsibility. This demonstrates that the

management model is not only structural but also fosters a collaborative, values-based educational culture.

Continuous Evaluation and Development Management

The evaluation stage in this model is continuous, assessing both children's learning outcomes and the effectiveness of the learning management system. Evaluation is conducted using three main instruments: (1) observations of children's engagement, (2) interviews with teachers and parents, and (3) analysis of children's pre- and post-tests. The results showed significant improvements in three socio-emotional indicators: recognising cultural figures (91%), understanding the origins of stories (116%), and identifying moral values (100%).

This data demonstrates that a structured, collaborative, and technology-based learning management system can improve the effectiveness of early childhood education. Evaluation is also used to refine application content and develop future learning strategies. This approach aligns with the principle of continuous improvement in educational management (D'Brot & Brandt, 2024; Fatihin et al., 2023; Hidayat et al., 2024; Samosir et al., 2025), which requires that each stage of implementation generate feedback used for continuous improvement.

Conceptually, the results of this study indicate that the innovative management model of Kedirian culture-based PAUD has the following main characteristics: (1) integration between technology and culture, (2) collaboration between teachers, parents, and the community, and (3) adaptation to children's learning needs. This model can serve as a reference for other PAUD institutions in East Java to develop learning that is grounded in their respective regional cultures, with a contextual and meaningful digital approach.

Figure 6. Conceptual Model of Culturally-Based Innovative Learning Management (Kediri Model)

Figure 6, it was found that the concept of successful implementation of the development of character and social-emotional values of children in PAUD through the management of a learning model based on a cultural approach to self-esteem went through a planning process that involved parents, community support, innovation in digital utilisation, and also the leadership of a teacher in implementing the learning process.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the *Model of Culturally-Based Innovative Learning Management (Kediri Model)* offers a transformative approach to early childhood education management by integrating cultural wisdom, digital technology, and participatory learning practices. The model's distinctive strength lies in its holistic management system, encompassing four key stages: planning, implementation, collaboration, and continuous evaluation, which enable teachers, parents, and communities to actively co-manage learning environments. The research findings demonstrate that this model not only enhances children's engagement and comprehension of local cultural values but also strengthens their socio-emotional development and character formation.

Through the *Dongeng Digital Nusantara Kediri* application, children experienced emotionally rich, culturally grounded, and digitally adaptive learning. Teachers benefited from structured guidance in lesson design, while parents developed stronger cultural awareness and involvement in their children's education. From a management perspective, this model contributes to a broader framework of sustainable educational innovation, one that balances technology and tradition. It provides a replicable model for other early childhood institutions to develop culturally responsive, digitally empowered learning ecosystems across Indonesia. Continued refinement and expansion of this model are expected to foster future generations who are technologically literate yet deeply rooted in local wisdom.

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