

# Integrating Culture in Primary Education's Quality Assurance: Demography Perspective

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** It has been argued in literature that culture has significant influence on the education implementation. While it is undeniable that education quality is the most important in the education implementation, many attempt to ensure quality assurance at all levels of education. Hence this Study investigates the culture approach in Quality assurance in Elementary School. **Design:** A Qualitative approach was applied in this study. Using explorative research with a naturalistic phenomenon exposure in Elementary school in Bangkalan city, Madura Island, East Java Province, Indonesia. Data collection using in depth interview while data analysis using descriptive with deductive methods. **Findings:** Teachers showed a strategic approach with an integrated culture in quality assurance as the students' good grade is the focus of the teaching. Support system in developing a more cultural, independent, self-reliant approach in teaching to achieve good quality in education is needed. Teachers perceive themselves doing well in their job, however teachers need close guidance and support when undertaking quality assurance assessment.

**Keywords:** quality assurance, primary education, culture, demography, perspective.

Education is a basic human right, while the first education in a person's life is obtained in the family, but it cannot be denied that education in a family is greatly influenced by the customs and culture in society. This is because culture refers to shared ways of being, knowing, and doing (Kana'iaupuni, 2007) Therefore, in formal education, cultural approaches are often applied (Anderson-Levitt, 2003; Boerema, 2005; Fitriani et al., 2020; Sipuan et al., 2022).

In terms of education services, all parties, especially the government, ensure that education services run well. This is proven by the existence of quality assurance institutions in the government such as in the Ministry of Education,

independent quality assurance institutions and quality assurance groups in various levels of education units (Barnawi & M.Arifin, 2017). The existence of a quality assurance institution or group functions to ensure that the quality of educational services in schools can meet the criteria or standards and achieve the goals of education itself.

In Indonesia, in the implementation of education in elementary schools, there is no quality assurance team particularly, however, quality assurance has been included in the responsibility of the school elements, namely in the performance of teachers, principals or supervisors (Barnawi & M.Arifin, 2017).

Teacher performance is ensured to be under the supervision of the principal, and schools are ensured to be supervised by school supervisors in each respective region (Hasnawi, 2020; Yuswanto et al., 2022). This is to ensure that the education received by students can run well and achieve the educational standards set by the government.

Previous educational researches results show that a cultural approach in education can improve student learning outcomes (Morales-Obod et al., 2020; Lengam et al., 2023; Siskawati; Lestari, Tri Ayu; Handayani, 2023), as well as many studies on the importance of implementing quality assurance in education in elementary school (Budhi Susilowati et al., 2022; Rahminawati & Supriyadi, 2023; Susilowati et al., 2022), however, there has been no research on the cultural approach in implementing quality assurance at the elementary school education level. Therefore, this study aims to create a profile of the implementation of quality assurance using a cultural approach in elementary education.

In this article, we will discuss quality assurance implementation in elementary school classes using a culture approach based on the perspective of teachers as implementers as seen from the following variables.

- a) Seniority (tenure 1-10, 11-20, 21 and more)
- b) Gender
- c) Employment status (Tenure, Substitute, Paid time)
- d) Education level (second degree, Bachelor, Master, Ph.D.)
- e) Expertise (general/classroom teacher, physical education teacher, foreign language teacher, Music teacher)
- f) Administrative/structural position (Principal/Director, Deputy Director, Person in Charge).

## Research Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with an exploratory research type where this

research reveals natural phenomena (naturalistic) which the subject does when carrying out learning with the main instrument being the researcher himself. Data collection techniques using observation, documentation and in-depth interviews with teachers in elementary schools based on demographics.

The qualitative approach is a research strategy that involves the use of one or more cases to create theoretical constructs, propositions and/or midrange theories. This approach can be considered powerful and comprehensive (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

The location of the research was chosen based on the recommendation of the district education office in Bangkalan Regency, East Java, Indonesia. The subjects of this study were teachers as implementers of quality assurance in the fourth grade at the selected elementary school level. The selection of research subjects were based on variables, namely Seniority that teachers who have work period of 1-10, 11-20, 21 and more; Gender classification; Employment status seen from the office tenure, namely whether as a permanent teacher, substitute, or part-time; Education level, whether the teacher has a degree such as Bachelor's, Master's, Ph.D; Expertise, namely only as a general/class teacher, concurrently as a physical education teacher, foreign language teacher, music teacher, etc.; having an Administrative/structural position such as principal/director, deputy director, or person in charge.

The researcher asked the research subjects, various reasons for the actions taken related to internal quality assurance. Furthermore, the researcher investigates the subject's intentions, the subject's act and attitude related to the quality assurance. Thus, the meaning of the teacher behavior in teaching were drawn by the respondent's subjective, and not based on researchers' perspective.

The adapted research instrument consists of three parts, the first of which asked a general question on what learning is with a range of culture and a second part of questions designed

to identify teaching as deep, surface or strategic approach in quality assurance based on the culture respond. A final question allowed subject to give an opinion on their overall performance as teacher (Lestari et al., 2021).

The data obtained were analyzed descriptively with deductive techniques and using data reduction methods, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification where data validation was carried out using triangulation.

Result and Discussion

In this study, the profile of teachers from Gili Timur 1 Elementary School was selected as the research subject since she met all the demographic criteria, and she was also selected as *Guru Penggerak* and attended *Sekolah Penggerak* which is one of the programs of *Merdeka Belajar* from Indonesian Ministry of Education(KEMENDIKBUDRISTEKDIKTI) to ensure the quality of education and teaching in schools by improving the competence of teachers and principals (Kemendikbudristek, n.d.; Nurhalisa et al., 2023; Sibagariang et al., 2021). It is the duty of a teacher who is one of the elements of the school as an implementer of teaching and education to ensure the quality in the classroom. And what is more important in this study is that the respondents are willing to be research subjects. The following anonymous demographics of the educators are described as follows.

Table 1. Teacher’s Demography

No	Variable	Acquired
1	Seniority (years of service 1-10, 11-20, 21 dan lebih)	Over than 21 years
2	Gender	Female
3	Employment status (Tenure, Substitute, paid time)	Full
4	Education level (second degree, Bachelor, Master, Ph.D)	Magister
5	Skills (general/class teacher, physical teacher, foreign	Classroom teacher

	language teacher, music teacher)	
6	Administrative/structural positions (Principal/Director, Deputy Director, Person in Charge).	Headmaster

Quality assurance in education

On one hand, a criticism on total quality management systems is that they lead to an organization putting all its energy into compliance. In order to get accreditation with one of the total quality management systems, instead of thinking creatively and consciously about quality. Linked to this, the criticism is that many of the available total quality management systems are very time-consuming and complex (Stephanie Matseleng Allais, 2014). Onthe other hand, education improvement is not only a matter of resources particularly financial in terms of inputs, but also a matter of processes and procedures for gained outputs. Therefore, quantity in education cannot by itself guarantee educational excellence if education’s quality is excluded.

Hence, education aspects should be developed for educational improvement. These are, the curriculum, the teaching language, the students’ guidance and streaming, the management, the teacher student ratio, the physical surroundings, and the teacher education (Cheng, 2003; Doherty, 2008; Stephanie Matseleng Allais, 2014).

In the elementary school level in Indonesia, there is no elite team in quality assurance in school management or independent team outside school management. However, quality assurance element in elementary schools has been included in the management duties of the school elements which at least consists of representatives of the head of the educational unit, educators, and other educational personnel and committees in the educational unit. These can be seen clearly as follows.

Table 2. Description of School Elements Tasks

No	Position	Task
1	Supervisor	Accompany, monitor and evaluation school activities.
2	Principal as Person in Charge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Responsible for school quality activities.</li> <li>2. Forming a Subject Teacher Deliberation Team (MGMP)/School Activities or equivalent.</li> <li>3. Conducting coaching for Teachers.</li> <li>4. Evaluating Teacher performance.</li> <li>5. Making reports and follow-ups.</li> <li>6. The school coordinates with the School Committee.</li> </ol>
3	School Committee	Facilitating schools in achieving improvements in the quality of education.
4	Teacher	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Responsible to the principal or person in charge of the activity.</li> <li>2. Together with the team, prepare programs and schedules, budget plans related to the implementation of learning, and prepare reports.</li> <li>3. Coordinate all class activities.</li> <li>4. Checking completion by ensuring that all activities have been carried out by students and all types of evaluations have been carried out using instruments according to the number of classes/subjects that have been set.</li> <li>5. Delivering information on the progress of data collection at school to the principal and supervisor and school committee.</li> </ol>

### Cultural Approach in Education

In elementary schools in Indonesia, various kinds of Indonesian culture are taught, such as various regional dances, regional musical instruments, regional clothing, traditional houses, and so on, through subjects such as Social Sciences so-called *Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial* (IPS), *Bahasa Indonesia* and others as an effort to teach tolerance and prevent cultural conflicts if students have entered society in the future.

Education implemented in Elementary Schools should not only focus on understanding academic aspects but should also include cultural richness because local culture is a vital element in shaping students' identities and by understanding their cultural heritage, they can enrich their learning experience (Mawati et al., 2023; D.E. Indriani et al., 2019; Dian Eka Indriani et al., 2019, 2020). Moreover, when learning uses local identity, students feel more connected to the subject matter and understand its relevance in the context of everyday life and teach students about the values, traditions, and

social norms that exist in their community and are able to encourage a spirit of love for human life and the universe (Zahrika & Andaryani, 2023; Budi Setyaningrum, 2018).

From a Psychology perspective, cultural approach in education should be regarded as global in its vision but local in its solutions in the future education (Marsico & Dazzani, 2024). Based on the literature, there are five basic elements that comprise culture-based education namely language (Morales-Obod et al., 2020), family and community, context or structure of the school and class, data & accountability to ensure student performance progress. The look and feel of these five varies from setting to setting, depending on cultural ways of being, knowing, and doing (Kana'iaupuni, 2007; Eka Indriani et al., 2019).

As stated by Fensham (1972) prior knowledge for subsequent learning is significance in learning (Fensham, 1972; Brien et al., 2013), culture-based education has great potential to encourage cultural diversity and strengthen students' understanding to be able to

maintain and preserve local identities, including language, culture, traditions, and values in local communities. Students can feel a sense of connection with their own cultural roots so that it becomes more relevant in students' daily lives (Zahrika & Andaryani, 2023).

Quality Assurance within cultural approach

The initial question on the teacher "perception of what quality assurance in education is", reveals that the subject believe that quality assurance is the way to ensure a student receiving a good education that could develop a student as a person and by gaining the proper knowledge teach by the teacher and meet the competency standards set by government.

The deep approach questions revealed the importance of understanding and meaning of what is being learnt for students, the importance of meaning in culture, and last was the need to understand what lies behind the task or project when facing it. It is interesting to observe that the teacher acknowledges the student's necessity to understand and know the meaning of what is being learnt. However, not eager to encourage students to fully engaged in seeking the meaning in their tasks. This affect students' capability in doing assignment itself particularly in generating ideas.

The result of Surface approach questions showed that teacher was curious of all the teacher's task purpose in the school. However, there was not much creativity nor more cultural approach unless the language showed by the teacher and since assignments mostly were repeating and memorizing work.

In Strategic approach questions, teacher showed how to organize learning materials and

manage time, furthermore, showed teacher's program effectiveness and performance evaluation. The most interesting results is the teacher admitted that by following *Guru Penggerak*, part of program in *Merdeka Belajar* program from Indonesia education ministry (KEMENDIKBUDRISTEKDIKTI), teacher felt the importance in doing an assignment and gain the best performance and had chance in using culture in teaching namely using language and local customs.

## Conclusions

Generally, teachers perceive themselves doing well in their job, however the subject felt that teachers need close guidance and support when undertaking quality assurance assessment. Teachers also feel sometimes overwhelmed by the amount of work they must cope with and questioned the purpose of the work. The teacher also apprehensions not able to present the best performance which leads drawbacks to the students. Furthermore, teachers proven a strategic approach with integrated culture in quality assurance with focus on students' performance. However, teachers need support system in developing more cultural, independent, self-reliant approach in teaching, namely materials and methods in any subject to achieve good quality in education.

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