

Building *Manuk Rombeng* Generations: Local Wisdom as the Foundation for Manggarai Education in the Digital Era

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Abstract. This study examines the relevance of Manggarai local wisdom in shaping educational goals amid digital-era challenges. It employs a **qualitative descriptive-analytical approach with a contextual and interpretive orientation**, drawing on in-depth interviews with traditional elders, educators, and community leaders, focus group discussions with youth, and analysis of customary narratives and educational policy documents. The findings show that Manggarai education is grounded in indigenous concepts such as *ngo podo ngasang bodok* (critical enlightenment), *dangka nuk* (multidirectional thinking), and *kudut manga uma duat* (future-oriented self-reliance). In this study, *Manuk Rombeng* refers to an educational philosophy in which success is defined not only by cognitive achievement but by integrated cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development as the basis of holistic character formation. Analysis of the digital generation reveals two key findings: high digital exposure produces superficial learning, and digital skills are weakly connected to future livelihoods. Rather than conflicting with digital culture, *Manuk Rombeng* converges with it by addressing these gaps through intellectual maturity and value internalization. The study recommends embedding reflective digital tasks, locally grounded project-based learning, and digital storytelling into curricula to operationalize *Manuk Rombeng* in digital education.

Keywords: Manggarai local wisdom; indigenous education; qualitative research; digital literacy; *manuk rombeng* philosophy

1 Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital technology has profoundly reshaped educational practices worldwide, bringing both opportunities and disruptions. While digital platforms increase access to information, they also intensify global concerns such as superficial learning, declining critical thinking, ethical erosion, and weakened character formation among young learners [1], [2]. In culturally rooted

societies, these challenges are particularly acute because digital culture often prioritizes speed, pragmatism, and instant gratification over reflection, intellectual maturity, and moral responsibility. These global trends are increasingly visible in the Manggarai context. Field observations and preliminary interviews with teachers and community leaders indicate that many Manggarai students spend extensive time on social media and short-video platforms, while reading comprehension, reflective dialogue, and critical questioning in classrooms are declining. Teachers report that students frequently seek instant answers from digital sources without evaluating credibility, reproduce information without understanding, and prioritize short-term pragmatic outcomes—such as passing examinations or obtaining certificates—over deep learning and character development. This pattern reflects not only digital dependency but also a weakening of intellectual maturity and future-oriented thinking.

Community elders further observe a declining familiarity among youth with customary life philosophies that once guided resilience, ethical judgment, and long-term life planning. Traditional practices of dialogical learning, communal reflection, and moral formation within families and customary spaces are increasingly replaced by individualized, screen-based interactions. As digital culture becomes dominant in everyday learning experiences, the intergenerational transmission of indigenous educational values has become fragmented, placing Manggarai's cultural foundations under growing pressure.

Within this context, Manggarai local wisdom should not be understood as a collection of isolated moral aphorisms, but as a coherent traditional educational system that integrates cognitive orientation, emotional discipline, ethical reasoning, practical competence, and future planning. This system is articulated through interconnected cultural concepts that function collectively as an indigenous educational philosophy guiding intellectual development, character formation, social responsibility, and personal autonomy.

Historically, Manggarai education has been embedded in the community's social life-world and articulated through principles such as *ngo podo ngasang bodok* (the pursuit of knowledge and intellectual enlightenment), *Porot uwa haeng wulang-langkas haeng ntala* (having the highest life goals, hopes, or ambitions, rather than minimal or limited ones) and *manuk rombeng* (success is defined not only by cognitive achievement but by integrated cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development as the basis of holistic character formation) [3]. Together, these concepts form a holistic educational framework integrating reflective thinking, moral awareness, emotional regulation, practical competence, and economic self-reliance. While many Indonesian local wisdom traditions emphasize harmony, obedience, or moral conformity, *Manuk Rombeng* is distinctive in its strong emphasis on intellectual maturity, autonomy, and future preparedness.

Previous studies on indigenous and local-wisdom-based education in Indonesia have largely taken three dominant approaches: documenting cultural values as heritage, integrating moral elements into character education, and aligning local traditions with national curriculum mandates [1], [4]. These studies make important contributions by affirming the cultural relevance of indigenous knowledge systems. However, they generally treat local wisdom as supplementary content rather than as a

conceptual framework for diagnosing and addressing contemporary educational problems, particularly those arising from digital learning environments.

This study complements existing research by moving beyond descriptive and normative approaches while offering a new analytical perspective. Rather than positioning *Manuk Rombeng* merely as a cultural value to be preserved, this study conceptualizes it as a value-based educational framework capable of responding directly to epistemic and ethical challenges of the digital era, such as superficial cognition, weakened critical discernment, and unclear life orientation. In doing so, the study extends previous scholarship by demonstrating how indigenous philosophy can function as a practical lens for rethinking digital learning practices.

Unlike value systems that primarily emphasize social conformity or spiritual ethics, *Manuk Rombeng* directly engages with the core deficits of digital learning by emphasizing critical evaluation of information, internalization of values, and responsible application of knowledge. When recontextualized within digital learning environments, it enables technology to function as a medium for reflective learning and purposeful character formation rather than as a source of distraction.

Although digital media offers opportunities to disseminate local wisdom more widely, without pedagogical grounding it risks reducing culture to symbolic or commercialized representations [5]. Therefore, *Manuk Rombeng* must be actively interpreted and operationalized within contemporary educational practices, not merely preserved as cultural heritage. Research on culturally responsive education indicates that integrating indigenous values into curricula strengthens motivation, identity, and learner resilience [1], [4], aligning with Indonesia's national educational goals of developing competent, ethical, creative, and responsible citizens [6].

Given these conditions, the central challenge for Manggarai education is not simply preserving local wisdom, but activating a culturally grounded educational framework that directly addresses digital-era learning problems. This study therefore positions *Manuk Rombeng* as a uniquely Manggarai educational philosophy that offers a novel and context-sensitive contribution to current debates on indigenous education and digital learning, bridging technological competence with intellectual maturity, ethical grounding, and future-oriented autonomy.

2 Method

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive–analytical research design to examine how Manggarai local wisdom—particularly the Manuk Rombeng philosophy—functions as a foundation for educational goals in the digital era. A qualitative descriptive approach is appropriate because the study seeks to describe, interpret, and analyze meanings, values, and educational practices as they are understood and experienced by participants, without constructing ethnographic cultural reconstructions or extended participant observation [7], [8].

This approach allows the research to focus on how indigenous educational concepts are articulated, interpreted, and applied within contemporary educational contexts, especially in relation to digital

learning challenges. Qualitative descriptive studies are widely used in educational and cultural research to generate context-sensitive insights that remain close to participants' perspectives while supporting analytical interpretation [9].

Research Site and Context

The study was conducted in Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, a region characterized by the continued presence of local wisdom traditions alongside rapidly expanding digital technology use among students. This site was purposively selected because it represents a setting where indigenous educational values and digital learning practices intersect, sometimes in tension. Similar contexts have been identified as critical spaces for examining the relevance of local wisdom in modern education [10], [11].

Participants and Data Sources

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure relevance to the research objectives [7]. The participants included:

1. Traditional elders and customary leaders, who provided interpretations of Manuk Rombeng and related indigenous educational values.
2. Educators (teachers and school principals), who shared observations regarding students' learning behaviors, digital engagement, and character development.
3. Community leaders and cultural practitioners, who reflected on broader socio-educational changes.
4. Students and youth, who participated in focus group discussions to describe their digital learning experiences and future aspirations.

In addition to interviews and discussions, the study analyzed customary narratives, local proverbs, and education-related documents, including curriculum guidelines and policy texts, as complementary data sources supporting descriptive and analytical interpretation [12].

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using multiple qualitative methods to enhance depth and credibility [8]:

1. In-depth Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews were conducted with elders, educators, and community leaders to explore:

- Educational meanings of Manuk Rombeng, ngo podo ngasang bodok, dangka nuk, and kudut manga uma duat
- Observed changes in students' learning and digital behavior
- Challenges in integrating local wisdom into formal education

Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to articulate their perspectives while maintaining alignment with the research focus [9].

2. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

FGDs were conducted with students and youth to capture collective patterns related to:

- Digital media use and learning habits
- Understanding and internalization of local educational values
- Self-confidence, motivation, and future orientation

FGDs are effective for identifying shared experiences and generational trends in educational research [13].

3. Document Analysis

Document analysis included customary texts, cultural narratives, and education policy documents to contextualize empirical findings within institutional and cultural frameworks [12].

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed a thematic descriptive–analytical procedure [14]. The process involved:

1. Transcribing interviews and FGDs and conducting repeated readings.
2. Coding data to identify recurring themes related to education, digital behavior, and value internalization.
3. Categorizing themes according to key indigenous concepts, with Manuk Rombeng serving as the primary analytical lens.
4. Interpreting patterns to explain how local wisdom shapes or fails to shape students' engagement with digital learning.

In this study, Manuk Rombeng is operationally defined as an educational philosophy in which success is achieved through integrated cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development, forming the basis of holistic character formation and future-oriented autonomy.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

To ensure research rigor, the study employed data triangulation across interviews, FGDs, and document analysis, as well as source triangulation involving elders, educators, and students [8]. Credibility was enhanced through peer debriefing and careful alignment between empirical data and analytical interpretations [9].

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were upheld throughout the research process. All participants provided informed consent, confidentiality was maintained, and cultural sensitivity was prioritized in the representation of indigenous knowledge. Local wisdom was treated as a living educational framework rather than merely as cultural heritage to be documented [12].

3 Findings

The findings of this study indicate that educational ideals rooted in Manggarai local wisdom remain strongly recognized at the normative level but are increasingly difficult to realize in everyday educational practice, particularly in the context of the digital era. Data collected from interviews with teachers, parents, customary leaders, and students, as well as classroom and community observations, reveal several key patterns.

First, with regard to *ngo podo ngasang bodok*—the elimination of ignorance through the pursuit of knowledge and critical awareness—most teachers report that students have unprecedented access to information through digital media, yet demonstrate limited depth of understanding. Classroom observations show that many students can recall fragmented information obtained from social media

or search engines but struggle to explain concepts, evaluate sources, or construct coherent arguments. Teachers frequently note that students tend to copy digital content verbatim, indicating that ignorance is no longer characterized by lack of information, but by insufficient critical processing of information.

Second, the findings reveal a decline in *dangka nuk*, or branching and multidirectional thinking. Although students are familiar with multiple digital platforms, learning activities show a strong tendency toward single-answer thinking. When presented with open-ended questions or problem-solving tasks, a significant number of students seek immediate answers online rather than generating alternative ideas or solutions. Educators describe this condition using the local expression *camas kaut* (remaining unchanged), suggesting that formal schooling has not significantly transformed students' ways of thinking despite prolonged exposure to education and digital tools.

Third, empirical data indicate a growing gap between educational attainment and future-oriented self-reliance, which directly affects the realization of *kudut manga uma duat*. Interviews with senior students reveal uncertainty regarding career planning and limited confidence in using their skills for productive or entrepreneurial purposes. Many student's express aspirations for formal employment but lack concrete strategies or competencies to achieve economic independence. This finding is reinforced by parental narratives that measure educational success not merely by diplomas, but by the ability to secure or create sustainable livelihoods.

Fourth, community rituals and everyday metaphors continue to reflect the ideal of *Manuk Rombeng*, understood as holistic success encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development. However, observational data suggest that contemporary schooling practices increasingly prioritize academic scores and administrative completion over character formation, work ethic, and life skills. Teachers and community elders consistently emphasize that students who excel academically but lack discipline, independence, or social responsibility are not regarded as having achieved *Manuk Rombeng* status.

Finally, the findings highlight structural challenges that further constrain these educational ideals. Economic limitations and unequal access to digital devices force many students to rely on shared smartphones, free Wi-Fi, or borrowed internet access, disrupting learning continuity. At the same time, intensive engagement with digital entertainment contributes to shallow learning habits and weak internalization of moral values traditionally emphasized in Manggarai culture, such as politeness, humility, and social responsibility.

Overall, the data show that while Manggarai educational values remain culturally authoritative, their practical realization is increasingly undermined by superficial digital learning practices, limited critical engagement, and fragile links between education and future economic independence.

4 Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the educational ideals of the Manggarai community—particularly those encapsulated in *Manuk Rombeng*, *ngo podo ngasang bodok*, *dangka nuk*, and

kudut manga uma duat—remain conceptually strong in shaping ethical and reflective engagement with digital technologies. However, empirical evidence indicates that these values are gradually losing practical influence in everyday educational contexts, especially among students immersed in instant, algorithm-driven digital culture. Similar patterns have been identified in global studies showing that digital platforms tend to privilege speed, surface engagement, and measurable performance over reflective learning and character formation [15], [16]. This section explains the causes of this erosion and proposes operational strategies for translating *Manuk Rombeng* into viable digital learning practices.

1. Why *Manuk Rombeng* Struggles in Instant Digital Culture

The weakening of *Manuk Rombeng* is not the result of cultural obsolescence, but rather of an incompatibility between its formative logic and the dominant architecture of digital platforms. Contemporary digital environments prioritize immediacy, entertainment value, and quantifiable engagement indicators such as likes, views, and completion speed [15], [18]. In contrast, *Manuk Rombeng* emphasizes long-term character formation, self-regulation, and the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development.

Moreover, *Manuk Rombeng* has traditionally been transmitted through embodied and communal educational processes—rituals, storytelling, dialogical interaction, and lived exemplars provided by elders and teachers. Digital learning spaces, however, often isolate learners from these communal contexts, transforming education into an individualized, screen-centered activity. As noted by Turkle [21], such environments reduce opportunities for sustained dialogue and moral reflection, causing learners to perceive indigenous values as symbolic cultural knowledge rather than as practical guides for navigating digital life.

2. Risks of Cultural Nostalgia Without Pedagogical Translation

When local wisdom is preserved only as discourse, ritual, or cultural identity, it risks becoming nostalgic rather than transformative. Research on culturally responsive and indigenous education consistently shows that cultural values lose pedagogical force when they are not embedded in daily learning practices, assessment systems, and learner experiences [4], [20]. In the Manggarai context, this risk becomes evident when students are able to articulate metaphors such as *manuk rombeng* but fail to demonstrate critical digital judgment, creative problem-solving, or future-oriented planning. Without systematic pedagogical translation, indigenous philosophy remains detached from learners' lived digital realities.

3. Operational Strategies: Teaching *Manuk Rombeng* Through Digital Platforms

To ensure that *Manuk Rombeng* remains a living educational philosophy, it must be translated into concrete digital pedagogical practices. Several operational strategies emerge from the findings and supporting literature.

a. Digital Storytelling and Creative Content Production

Manuk Rombeng can be reinterpreted through short digital narratives, animations, podcasts, or student-produced videos that contextualize local metaphors within contemporary digital life. Digital storytelling has been shown to enhance meaning-making, identity formation, and reflective learning when grounded in local culture [5], [21].

b. Local Value-Based Gamification

Educational games or gamified modules can embed *Manuk Rombeng* values into decision-making scenarios. Learners may be required to verify information (*ngo podo ngasang bodok*), explore multiple solutions (*dangka nuk*), and consider long-term consequences (*kudut manga uma duat*). Unlike entertainment-oriented gamification, value-based gamification emphasizes ethical reasoning, reflection, and delayed gratification [17].

c. Digital Community Dialogue and Reflective Forums

Online discussion forums and learning management systems can function as virtual communal spaces where students analyze digital dilemmas—such as misinformation, online conflict, and career uncertainty—using *Manuk Rombeng* as an interpretive lens. Research on dialogical digital pedagogy highlights the importance of guided reflection and community presence in sustaining ethical digital engagement [21], [22].

4. Project-Based Digital Learning Linked to Livelihood (*Kudut Manga Uma Duat*)

Students can be guided to use digital tools for productive purposes, including small-scale digital entrepreneurship, skill portfolios, or documentation of local economic practices. This approach aligns education with future-oriented self-reliance and echoes development theories emphasizing capability, agency, and sustainable livelihoods [19].

5. Value-Based Digital Assessment

Assessment systems should include reflective digital journals, multimedia portfolios, and peer feedback that evaluate not only knowledge mastery but also ethical awareness, creativity, resilience, and independence. Such assessments make the intangible dimensions of *Manuk Rombeng* visible and pedagogically accountable, addressing critiques of measurement-driven education [20].

6. Repositioning Teachers as Cultural-Digital Mediators

The effectiveness of these strategies depends heavily on teacher agency. Teachers must function as cultural-digital mediators who model reflective digital behavior, ethical discernment, and future-oriented thinking. Studies on Digital Citizenship education emphasize that learners' digital ethics are strongly shaped by teacher modeling and value-based guidance rather than technical instruction alone [6], [17].

7. *Manuk Rombeng* as a Living Framework for Digital Education

Taken together, these strategies demonstrate that *Manuk Rombeng* does not lose relevance because of digitalization itself, but because it has not yet been systematically translated into digital pedagogical logic. When embedded in creative content production, gamified learning, community dialogue, and authentic assessment, *Manuk Rombeng* functions as a powerful indigenous framework that regulates digital behavior, fosters critical awareness, and sustains future-oriented autonomy. Rather than resisting modernity, *Manuk Rombeng* offers a culturally grounded pathway for rehumanizing digital education—affirming that educational success lies not in speed or technical efficiency, but in the formation of whole, resilient, and responsible human beings.

5 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *Manuk Rombeng* and related Manggarai educational values constitute a coherent indigenous framework for addressing the ethical, cognitive, and developmental challenges of digital-era education. Rather than being rendered obsolete by digitalization, these values remain conceptually robust but are increasingly marginalized due to the dominance of instant, performance-oriented digital culture and the lack of systematic pedagogical translation into contemporary learning environments.

The findings affirm that *Manuk Rombeng* functions as a holistic educational orientation integrating intellectual maturity, moral responsibility, creativity, and future-oriented autonomy—dimensions that are often fragmented within mainstream digital literacy and Digital Citizenship frameworks. By situating digital engagement within culturally grounded value systems, this study extends global theories of digital education beyond technical competence and instrumental rationality toward a more integrated human development perspective.

Importantly, this research moves beyond cultural preservation discourse by offering operational pathways for revitalizing indigenous wisdom in digital education. Through value-based digital storytelling, project-oriented learning, gamification grounded in local ethics, reflective digital assessment, and teacher-mediated cultural translation, *Manuk Rombeng* can be transformed into a living pedagogical framework rather than a symbolic heritage narrative. Such strategies enable digital technologies to function as instruments for character formation, critical thinking, and sustainable livelihood preparation.

In conclusion, the relevance of *Manuk Rombeng* lies not in resisting digital modernity but in reorienting it. When consciously integrated into digital pedagogy, Manggarai local wisdom offers a culturally responsive alternative epistemology capable of counterbalancing superficial learning, ethical erosion, and weakened future orientation.

Indigenous finding: *Manuk Rombeng* represents an indigenous epistemology in which successful digital competence is meaningful only when it simultaneously develops the learner's cognitive, affective, and psychometric dimensions, leading to intellectual maturity, moral integrity, creative adaptability, and future-oriented self-reliance within a communal cultural context.

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