
TEACHING ECONOMICS ROOTED IN THE LOCAL WISDOM OF BATU CITY



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Abstract

The main issue raised in this study is how the local economic wisdom of the community is influenced by cultural bonds and unique traditional values that are often overlooked in economic dynamics measurements, as well as how economic learning is implemented in Batu City. This study aims to explore the identity and dynamics of local wisdom within the community of Batu City, East Java, which reflects a balance between productive and normative elements. Using a phenomenological approach and qualitative methods, this research uncovers the meanings of identity and socio-economic dynamics through in-depth interviews and observations with several key informants. The findings indicate that the economic dynamics of Batu City's community include elements rooted in agricultural activities, such as the principles of shared sustenance, labor as a form of indebtedness, sharecropping practices, and cultivating land and planting as sources of livelihood. In addition, the application of traditional values such as three-dimensional harmony also plays an important role in their economic life. Spiritual bonds, social solidarity, and harmony with nature serve as the main pillars shaping their local economic identity. The implication of this study highlights the need for culturally grounded policies to support the socio-economic dynamics of the community in the region.

Keywords: Local Economic Wisdom, Batu City, Economic Learning, Three-Dimensional Harmony

INTRODUCTION

The presence of apple plantations can be utilized to study the concepts of production, distribution, and consumption, as well as the potential for processing derivative products such as apple chips, juice, and vinegar. Teachers employ these contexts through field observations, value chain analysis, and engagement with business actors who are expanding alongside the rapid growth of tourism in culinary industries, handicrafts, and transportation services. This enables students to learn about entrepreneurship, innovation, small business management, while fostering creativity, risk-taking, and problem-solving skills. Furthermore, the advancement of digital technology has transformed the marketing of horticultural products and local souvenirs through online platforms, which teachers leverage to teach principles of trade. At the same time, the existence of tourist destinations serves as instructional material for understanding demand and supply, employment opportunities, externalities, as well as the dynamics of prices and household income. On the other hand, agricultural-based cultural identity, preserved through agro-tourism practices, continues to be a medium of learning that emphasizes the balance between economic growth, cultural preservation, and sustainable development. Thus, economics learning in Batu City is not solely rational and data-driven but also grounded in social and moral values to cultivate students' awareness in appreciating local potential and their roles in community development. The perspectives of local economics teachers can be understood as a synthesis between formal academic knowledge and lived experiences within the cultural identity and socio-economic dynamics of Batu City, where agrarian traditions and tourism realities shape how teachers interpret and teach economic literacy. Previous studies have highlighted that economics teachers' perspectives are influenced by professionalism (Hanushek, 2011; Amiruddin et al., 2018), connections with the labor market (Shaytura et al., 2019), the relevance of learning to local socio-cultural contexts (Simatupang et al., 2022), and adaptability to digitalization (Dečman & Rep, 2022; Imran et al., 2025). Consequently, economics teachers function as guardians of local values and mediators between tradition and modernity in economics education

Previous studies have noted that the progress of a nation and improvements in human development cannot be separated from the role of economic indicators such as income, poverty, and economic growth (Anindya Rahardian & Tony Seno Aji, 2021; Suryani et al., 2024). These findings provide a foundation for economics teachers, emphasizing that understanding economic indicators is crucial for interpreting the dynamics of development and fostering awareness from an early stage in schooling. The comprehension of economic concepts can be enhanced through learning activities that integrate game elements into teaching materials, thereby creating deeper and more meaningful learning experiences (Martín-Lara, Altmajer, & Muñoz-Batista, 2025). Nevertheless, indicators of teaching success are not solely determined by teachers' ability to design engaging learning media, as such efforts are insufficient to fully represent the development of students' economic thinking and knowledge (Hillmayr et al., 2020). Economics teachers are therefore required to bring the socio-economic realities of society into connection with the business and industrial world. This context aligns with the situation of economics teachers in Batu City, who coexist with the local tourism and horticultural industries. In line with this, Ovelia et al. (2021) highlight the importance of teachers' roles in shaping students' economic character through the integration of local cultural values into the learning process. Understanding

economics further enables students to grasp the dynamics of markets and economic policies that directly influence their everyday lives and communities (Emmanuel Olusol Adu, 2023).

The experiences and interpretations possessed by local teachers in understanding and linking economic concepts with students' real-life contexts and community dynamics play a crucial role (Hanushek, 2011; Amiruddin, Zakaria, & Arvianita, 2018; Shaytura, Ordov, & Manitaeva, 2019). The perspectives of economics teachers are shaped by their lived experiences within the local community, which makes their teaching practices deeply connected to local identity and socio-economic realities. Preliminary observations in Batu City indicate that the majority of its residents live within a family-based economic structure, relying on land and small- to medium-scale enterprises located around the tourism area. In earlier times, their daily activities were centered on farming, upholding traditional values, and maintaining harmony with nature. In this context, the fulfillment of economic needs was not determined solely by economic measures, but was also influenced by environmental, cultural, and spiritual dimensions. This condition reveals a departure from earlier economic learning theories as reflected in the national curriculum (Joshi & Koirala, 2023). At present, most Batu residents work in the tourism sector or as traders of vegetables, fruits, and flowers to sustain their livelihoods. As one of the largest tourism cities in East Java, Batu—situated on the slopes of Mount Panderman and Mount Arjuno—possesses a rich cultural heritage and unique traditions. Within the framework of economics education, teachers are expected to develop sensitivity toward local economic opportunities. Teaching materials should therefore be linked with the surrounding environment, such as creative industries and natural resources like mountains and forests (Budiningsih, 2012). Such sensitivity is reflected in teachers' ability to observe, analyze, and utilize local economic dynamics as instructional resources, including shifts in consumption patterns and transformations in the regional economic structure.

In recent years, however, apple production has declined due to land-use conversion, climate change, and the decreasing interest of younger generations in the agricultural sector. This situation has driven many farmers to shift into the tourism industry. Such a shift marks the transformation of Batu City's economic structure from agrarian to service- and tourism-oriented, gradually diminishing its identity as the "Apple City" while reinforcing its new image as a "Tourism City." Ironically, high-quality apples are now more often sourced from other regions. Based on preliminary observations, this study seeks to uncover the factors contributing to the declining number of farmers and the decreasing production of fruits—particularly apples—which once served as the city's primary icon. This economic transformation provides a valuable source of contextual learning. Economics teachers can utilize it to encourage students to analyze local economic dynamics, foster awareness of the significance of economics in community life, and promote efforts toward regional sustainability. In response, economics teachers are required to be more creative and sensitive to local changes (Shaytura, Ordov, & Manitaeva, 2019). The ability to adopt technology and remain attentive to local socio-economic dynamics constitutes an essential competence for keeping economics education relevant, for instance, by integrating Batu's ecotourism potential into the curriculum. Accordingly, it is necessary to formulate the characteristics of economics teachers who are capable of responding to social, economic, and cultural change. A deeper examination of the roles and competencies of economics teachers in the local context of Batu City is crucial, given that the city is undergoing an economic transformation.

Such understanding supports sustainable local economic development through contextual education rooted in community realities. Teachers' lived experiences in interpreting this phenomenon further underscore the urgency of economics education that cultivates critical and reflective awareness of ongoing socio-economic dynamics.

Several previous studies have examined the dynamics of socio-economic change in Batu City. One such study, titled "*Dari Menanam Buah menjadi Menanam Rumah: Transformasi Sosial Ekonomi Masyarakat Kota Batu*", found that Batu's transformation from an agrarian-based community toward modern tourism was marked by the conversion of agricultural land into housing and business areas (Al-Fath, E. D., 2016). Another study indicated that the rapid development of tourism in Batu has triggered changes in land use and forest degradation, which pose risks of disasters such as flooding. At the same time, these activities were shown to support both economic and tourism sustainability while promoting environmental conservation and providing a foundation for evaluating and monitoring disaster risk management (Amiruddin et al., 2024). In discussing the tourism sector's impact on the local economy, the study "*Analisis Total Economic Value Perkembangan Pariwisata di Kota Batu (Studi Kasus di Desa Wisata Bumiaji)*" highlighted tourism's contribution to community income and job creation. However, it also identified challenges to sustainable tourism management, particularly the conversion of agricultural land into tourism areas, which may affect food security and environmental sustainability. Tourism planning and management, therefore, need to balance economic, social, and environmental aspects to ensure long-term benefits for local communities and tourism stakeholders in Bumiaji Tourism Village (Amini, A. H., 2020).

This study addresses a research gap in economics education by focusing on the perspectives of economics teachers native to Batu, Indonesia. Unlike general studies on regional development and economic literacy, these teachers combine theoretical knowledge with a deep understanding of local culture, traditions, and economic values. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, the research explores how they interpret and deliver economic concepts rooted in Batu's unique social, cultural, environmental, and spiritual contexts. The findings enrich theoretical discourse on economic fulfillment in education and provide empirical insights that support the development of contextualized learning strategies. This contribution is particularly relevant for local governments and educational institutions in designing policies and pedagogical practices that are effective, culturally aligned, and responsive to local dynamics.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The shift in social interaction patterns among young people in the digital era, which tends to prioritize online communication over physical participation in collective activities, can be analyzed through rational choice theory and social capital theory. These two theories provide a framework for understanding social behavior within changing economic and cultural contexts. According to rational choice theory, as proposed by Becker (1976), individuals make decisions by weighing the costs and benefits to maximize personal gain. In the context of social interaction, young people tend to choose communication through social media because it is perceived as more efficient, time-saving, and less risky compared to participating in physical activities such as communal labor or collective community work. This choice indicates that the social behavior of the younger generation is not merely

neglecting the value of togetherness but represents an adaptive strategy in response to limitations in time, energy, and resources.

Meanwhile, social capital theory, developed by Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988), emphasizes the importance of networks, trust, and cooperation as foundations for building social value. Traditional social capital in agrarian societies is usually built through direct interaction—such as joint harvesting, communal land cleaning, or village social activities—which strengthens community cohesion and solidarity. However, the shift of social interaction to the digital realm has transformed the nature of social capital. Contemporary social capital is more bridging in nature, characterized by broader, more pragmatic networks focused on relationships that can provide economic or informational benefits, rather than the bonding type rooted in solidarity and collective responsibility. This phenomenon is highly relevant to the economic transformation of Batu City. Historically, Batu's community relied on the agricultural sector, especially horticulture like apples, which required physical cooperation and communal labor. Social interaction in this context served as a medium for building traditional social capital and reinforcing community identity. However, with the development of tourism and service sectors, the community's economic structure began to change. Economic activities are now more individualistic, profit-driven, and dependent on market dynamics. Young people, as an integral part of the tourism workforce and creative industries, adjust their social strategies to align with the demands of the modern economy. They tend to leverage social media to build networks, market products or services, and access economic opportunities more quickly and efficiently, consistent with the principles of rational choice.

As a result, the way young people build social relationships in Batu today is more pragmatic and economic, emphasizing efficiency, gain, and adaptation to the dynamics of the tourism industry. While social capital is still formed, its form has shifted from physical interactions that foster community solidarity to digital interactions that are more transactional and opportunistic. This shift reflects the interplay between changing economic structures and social behavior, where the modern economy and digitalization shape how young people perceive, choose, and manage their social relationships. Thus, the economic transformation of Batu City from agriculture to tourism has not only changed people's livelihoods but also shifted the social interaction patterns and social capital of the younger generation, creating a new form of social interaction that is more efficient, pragmatic, and aligned with contemporary economic needs.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs an inductive approach with qualitative methods and a phenomenological strategy, aiming to reduce lived experiences into descriptions that capture the universal essence of how economics teachers perceive the economic life of Batu society. The inductive approach was chosen because the study departs from empirical realities encountered by the researcher in the field, making it effective for uncovering deeper meanings embedded in the experiences of native economics teachers regarding efforts to sustain livelihood and economic practices. Through rigorous qualitative inquiry, the research focuses on the objectivity of the phenomena as well as the thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors of the participants. The findings are expected to reveal the categories of meaning attributed

by the participants to their lives, social environment, and the values embedded in Batu society.

The participants of this study consist of a selected group of native economics teachers from Batu, as well as local farmers. Participant selection was carried out purposively, preceded by observation and several direct communications. In total, five informants were involved: four whose primary profession is teaching economics and two engaged in farming. The key informants included economics teachers and local community figures in Batu. Data were collected primarily through in-depth interviews and observation. Individual and small group interviews were conducted, for instance, during teachers' breaks in the staffroom, while observations of farmers were conducted during farming activities, and of teachers during their teaching routines. Observation served as a complementary technique to verify interview findings with the everyday economic practices of Batu society. In addition, document analysis was employed to gather supporting data and enhance the efficiency of the overall data collection process.

Data analysis was carried out using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which emphasizes an in-depth interpretation of individual experiences within their social and cultural contexts. This method is particularly suitable for uncovering how participants construct meaning in both personal and social domains by focusing on subjective perceptions of events or objects. IPA seeks to understand "what" from the perspective of the participants, thereby enabling the researcher to position themselves within the participants' lived world. The notion of "understanding" in IPA entails a dual meaning: on the one hand, it involves empathic engagement with participants' perspectives, and on the other hand, it requires interpretative efforts to make sense of those perspectives. Consequently, IPA underscores the co-construction of meaning between participants and researchers, situating cognition as the central focus of analysis. This reflects a theoretical alignment with cognitive paradigms often applied in contemporary psychology to explain mental processes.

To enhance the validity of the findings, triangulation was employed (Meydan & Akkaş, 2024) through three main strategies. First, data source triangulation was conducted by comparing and cross-verifying interview results from key informants, including economics teachers, community leaders, and local farmers in Batu, thereby identifying convergent patterns. Second, methodological triangulation combined in-depth interviews, direct field observations, and document analysis. Observations were undertaken during teaching activities in schools and farming practices in the fields, while document analysis included supporting literature as well as local archives and records. Third, theoretical triangulation was applied by contrasting the findings with learning constructivism theories in economics education and the concept of culture-based economics proposed by Gowdy (2005). The integration of these approaches strengthened the interpretive process, demonstrating that the well-being of Batu society, as perceived by native economics teachers, is shaped by the interplay between local cultural values and broader economic dynamics. This ensured that the data generated were valid, credible, and trustworthy as the foundation for interpreting the research results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on observations, interviews, and documentation in Kota Batu, senior high school economics learning is developed contextually by integrating local economic potential

and community values. Teachers leverage horticultural agriculture, creative tourism, and small businesses to design co-curricular projects that foster creativity, collaboration, independence, financial literacy, and ecological awareness. This model includes small-scale entrepreneurship, eco-entrepreneurship, character education, and digital literacy, linking economic theory to local socio-economic realities. It aligns with community-based entrepreneurship, local knowledge systems, and cultural landscape theory, emphasizing social networks, local wisdom, and socio-ecological sustainability.

Economic Learning Practices in Co-Curricular Activities

These activities emphasize the integration of economic theory with local wisdom through a deep and collaborative learning approach, where students are given opportunities to apply economic concepts in real-world contexts, such as processing local products, digital marketing, and cost-benefit analysis of MSME products. Pedagogically, teachers act as activators, cross-disciplinary collaborators, and facilitators of a learning culture, in line with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, which highlights social interaction as a means to build meaningful knowledge. Research by Ryu and Lee (2023) indicates that cross-disciplinary integration is effective when conceptual links between fields are explicitly designed, while Liu et al. (2024) emphasize that clarity in the role of each discipline enhances student competency achievement. The learning environment is supported by active partnerships with the local community, consistent with findings by Herlina, Widodo, & Madhakomala (2020), which show that school-community engagement improves educational quality; however, successful partnerships require systematic planning, as suggested by Pennington et al. (2024).

The use of digital technology strengthens economic literacy and entrepreneurial skills, in line with studies by Getenet et al. (2024) and Nov (2023), though teacher guidance is necessary to avoid distractions (Pérez Juárez, González Ortega, & Aguiar Pérez, 2024). Collaborative co-curricular planning with documented teaching modules facilitates alignment with learning outcomes and supports Piaget and Vygotsky's theories on active experience and social interaction. Implementation includes field observations, business simulations, and reflections emphasizing meaningful learning, but still requires teacher scaffolding to prevent passive field experiences, as Neville & Petrass (2022) highlight the importance of external partner support. Assessment uses an eight-dimensional scale to provide a general overview, but it remains subjective and limited, as research by Heidari, Ghanbari, & Abbasi (2022) and Calcagni et al. (2021) stresses the need for more valid, reliable assessment methods that support sustainable development. Overall, these co-curricular practices strengthen the link between economic theory and practice, promoting economic literacy, creativity, collaboration, and contextual understanding of the socio-economic dynamics of Batu City.

Socio-Economic Dynamics of the Batu City Community

Productive Elements

The productive elements in local economic dynamics encompass all factors that directly contribute to the creation of economic value and the sustainability of the community, including social norms, cultural practices, and distinctive groups that shape the identity of the society.

Wages Do Not Have to Be Money

The tradition of gotong royong, such as labor debt during *ngerampes*, house construction, or helping at celebrations (*rewang*), demonstrates that compensation is not always monetary but is mediated through reciprocity mechanisms embedded within the social structure. This phenomenon aligns with Marcel Mauss's Reciprocity Theory (1925/1990), which emphasizes that the practice of giving and receiving fosters solidarity and social cohesion, and is reinforced by Homans's Social Exchange Theory (1961), which views social interaction as a reciprocal process. However, in Batu City, labor exchanges are more normative and bound by moral obligation than the voluntary exchanges assumed by Homans. The obligation to "repay" assistance makes reciprocity in this region structured and serves as a social mechanism that maintains the continuity of relationships among community members. This perspective is consistent with Becker's Human Capital Theory (1964), which considers labor, time, and skills as human capital that generate economic value even when not measured monetarily. Findings by Boudreaux, Clarke, & Jha (2021) indicate that social capital enhances business productivity through trust networks, informal financing, and customer relationships, demonstrating that gotong royong practices also provide tangible economic benefits. In the informal economy, as noted by Charmes (2017) and Nzolameso (2021), non-monetary exchanges—such as giving one apple for every eight harvested function as symbolic compensation that balances labor and reduces production risk. Thus, labor exchange practices without formal contracts in Batu City are not merely expressions of social solidarity but also trust-based economic mechanisms that ensure the continuity of productivity and the well-being of local communities.

Honor Arises from Respecting Others

In Batu City, honor is not determined by formal employment or education level but by hard work, creativity, and the ability to manage resources effectively—particularly in agriculture, making individual productivity the primary measure of social recognition. This phenomenon aligns with Gary Becker's Human Capital Theory (1964), which states that skills, experience, and diligence are forms of human capital that enhance productivity and income, regardless of formal education. Farmers who can plan harvests, manage risks, and exploit market opportunities demonstrate that investment in skills and experience can generate better well-being while elevating social status. The creativity and innovation of Batu City farmers also reflect the principles of entrepreneurship as described by Joseph Schumpeter, where resource-based innovation can create new economic value. The philosophy of "prosperity together," evident when a successful apple harvest benefits middlemen, traders, transporters, and street vendors, illustrates that community well-being depends on the harmony between humans, the environment, and the values of gotong royong. This is reinforced by the concept of social capital, where networks of trust, reciprocal norms, and solidarity strengthen the flow of economic benefits among community members. Practices such as village feasts, *tayuban*, and rotating contribution systems (*buwuh*) are forms of an informal, reciprocity-based economy that maintain social cohesion while facilitating resource circulation. Research by Zhang & Nadolnyak (2018) shows that social capital improves rural communities' access to financing, while Yu, Nilsson, Zhan, & Cheng (2023) demonstrate that cooperative social networks enable farmers to obtain bank credit more easily. Therefore, social recognition for Batu City farmers is built through a combination of human capital, innovation, and social capital, which not only improves

individual well-being but also creates collective prosperity through cooperation, environmental care, and sustainable economic interdependence.

Normative Elements

Among Tegal

The normative element in the dynamics of the local economy is strongly reflected in the practice of Among Tegal in Batu City, which is the tradition of maintaining and caring for agricultural land as a form of social, cultural, and economic responsibility. This practice emphasizes that land is not merely a production factor but an intergenerational asset preserved through hereditary inheritance, in line with accounting principles that classify land as a fixed asset with 0% depreciation (Article 11, Income Tax Law), meaning its value does not decrease and may even increase over time.

This perspective aligns with Romer's Endogenous Growth Theory (1990), which emphasizes that economic growth is primarily driven by human capital, innovation, and long-term investment. However, the Among Tegal practice demonstrates that socially-embedded capital based on customs and community norms plays an equally important role. Batu's cool climate, fertile soil, and high rainfall strengthen the normative function of Among Tegal as a socio-ecological framework that ensures sustainable agricultural productivity. Consistent with the findings of Mingyang Han et al. (2022) and Estelle & Wagner (2024), farmers practicing among Tegal rely not only on technical skills but also on social capital in the form of strong ties with nature, local trust, and community networks that provide labor support, knowledge, and solidarity when needed. They are respected for their ability to maintain a balance between economic practice and sacred customary norms, which in turn enhances productivity and agricultural resilience at the community level. Therefore, among Tegal demonstrates that local economic success is determined not only by human or financial capital but also by social norms, the strength of community networks, and harmony between culture and the environment.

".....meskipun ora ana pekerjaan tetep saben dina, kabeh iso nampa tambahan penghasilan. Saliyane iku, awake dhewe uga nandur sayur-sayuran cilik kaya sawi, selada, lan lombok, dadi nek panen apel kurang, isih ana sumber penghasilan liyane. Kabeh padha kerja bareng, saling bantu. Rejeki sing entuk dibagi, kabeh seneng, gotong royong tetep lestari. Masyarakat kene pancen percaya, nek kerja bareng, urip dadi luwih tentrem lan kabeh kebutuhan iso kecukupi." (SF)

Nggegem Lemah

For the people of Batu City, well-being is not measured by the amount of money one possesses but by the size of land (tegal) that serves as the main source of livelihood, reflecting a subsistence agrarian economic system in which land is the most fundamental production factor. This view aligns with classical economic theories of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, which consider land as a primary production factor alongside labor and capital, yet differs from modern capitalist logic that treats land as an investment commodity. For the Batu community, land holds social, cultural, and spiritual significance as a symbol of self-sufficiency, family sustainability, and social identity. This perspective can be explained through Douglass North's Institutional Economics (1990), which asserts that economic behavior is shaped not only by market mechanisms but also by informal institutions such as customs, traditions, and cultural values. The social norm that each individual ideally possesses 500 m² of land for livelihood security, plus an additional 500 m²

upon marriage or having children, serves as an institutional mechanism to ensure equitable and sustainable resource distribution, replacing the market's role in regulating access to productive assets.

This system reflects a “moral economy,” as described by E. P. Thompson (1971), an economic system governed by values of solidarity, social balance, and moral responsibility rather than purely profit calculation. This perspective is reinforced by Social Accounting Theory and Elkington's Triple Bottom Line concept (1997), which assess economic success across the dimensions of people, planet, and profit. In the context of Batu, land serves as a non-monetary measure of well-being that emphasizes social and ecological sustainability. Land functions as a social asset ensuring food security, intergenerational continuity, and harmony between humans and nature, while also serving as a fixed asset with economic value from a modern accounting perspective. The practice of passing land to married children constitutes a redistribution of social assets, creating long-term family security, in line with the concept of social reporting in social accounting, which emphasizes intergenerational responsibility. Research on local institutions and community-based economies—such as Ostrom's (1990) study on resource management based on social rules and Zeller & Sharma's (2000) research on the role of productive assets in rural economic security—supports the notion that land ownership is the principal capital for traditional economic stability. Thus, Batu's economic system illustrates resilience based on social institutions and cultural values, where land serves as a measure of well-being, identity, and sustainable life, integrating classical economic principles, institutional theory, and social accounting into a consistent and sustainable cultural practice.

“.....Nggegem lemah iku prinsip rejeki wong Mbatu. Rejeki ora diitung saka dhuwit, nanging saka luas tegal sing diduweni. Minimal saben wong kudu nduwé 500 meter kanggo cukup kebutuhan urip. Nek arep omah-omah, kudu nambah 500 meter, lan nek anak lair, ditambah maneh 500 meter. Jadi nek nduwé 1.500 meter, cukup kanggo uripé, pasangan, lan siji anak. Iki semacam ekonomi tradisional kene. Malah nek wong luar omah-omah karo warga asli, keluarga biasané nyiapake tanah lan omah kanggo pasangan anyar supaya diterima dadi bagian saka trah. Papan panggonan dadi prioritas utama, kadang luwih penting tinimbang sekolah dhuwur. Iki nuduhake carane wong Batu mikir lan ngatur uripé kanthi praktis lan strategis” (RN)

Three-Dimensional Harmony

The concept of Three-Dimensional Harmony in the Batu community emphasizes that true well-being is determined not only by material aspects but also by the balance between labor, life challenges, and spiritual values. Although neoclassical economic theory, developed by Marshall, Jevons, and Walras, explains that individuals act rationally to maximize profit and resource efficiency, this approach only partially accounts for the economic behavior of the Batu people. Rationally, they do apply efficiency principles, for example, through the minimum land ownership rule of 500 m² as a subsistence productivity threshold, reflecting logical resource management. However, unlike the material-profit orientation of modern economies, the primary motivation for the Batu community is maintaining social, spiritual, and life harmony. Therefore, neoclassical theory is useful as an analytical tool for observing their rationality, but the economic goals of the Batu community are much broader, rooted in cultural and spiritual values that persist even as their environment has evolved into a modern tourist city.

Tegal iku guru

In accounting and business economics, land is categorized as a fixed asset because it is used for long-term operations and provides sustainable economic benefits, even though it does not depreciate like other fixed assets. In modern economic frameworks, land is also considered fixed capital, an important production factor that generates output and economic value. However, within the cultural context of Batu, the land's function extends far beyond this formal definition: *tegal* serves as an informal institution for socio-spiritual learning, teaching patience, responsibility, and harmony with nature through intergenerational agricultural practice. This perspective aligns with Douglass North's Institutional Economics Theory (1990), which emphasizes that both formal and informal institutions, such as customs, traditions, and cultural values, shape economic behavior and regulate social interactions. *Tegal*, as a teacher, is not a hollow metaphor; it is an informal institution transmitting ecological knowledge, work ethic, and sustainability values from one generation to the next, linking economic practice with morality and local wisdom. Research by Ostrom (1990) on common-pool resources and Cox et al. (2010) on community-based resource management supports that agrarian practices rooted in local norms foster social and ecological resilience, as cultural values reinforce compliance, cooperation, and sustainability. Thus, although land is formally a fixed asset in economics and accounting, in Batu it also functions as a social institution shaping character, knowledge, and economic behavior, making it valuable not only materially but also socially and spiritually.

"...wong sing nduwé lan ngelola ladang minangka sumber panguripan. Tegal ora mung kanggo nandur sayur, buah, utawa kembang, nanging dadi simbol kesejahteraan lan jaminan urip. Wong sing among tegal kudu kuwat fisik, konsisten ngrawat tanduran, lan pinter milih komoditas miturut kebutuhan pasar supaya ora rugi." (MR)

Pasar iku cobaan

The market can be understood as a "trial" for farmers. As explained in Stiglitz's market failure theory, market mechanisms often fail to function ideally due to information asymmetry, externalities, and power imbalances. This is evident among Batu farmers, who face price fluctuations, dependency on middlemen, crop failure risks, and limited market access. However, through Soros' Reflexivity Theory, the market is also seen as a dynamic space where the perceptions and actions of economic actors mutually influence each other, opening opportunities for innovation for those who adapt. This is evident in research on young farmers managing agro-tourism in Tulungrejo Village, Batu (2022), which shows that while the market presents various challenges, young farmers leverage these challenges to diversify through agrotourism, such as apple-picking and educational tours. These findings underscore that for the Batu community, the market is not only a life trial but also a platform for transformation and the creation of strategies that enhance economic resilience.

Donga iku panglipur

The expression "*donga iku panglipur*" for Batu farmers signifies that prayer serves as an inner support, maintaining calm and optimism when facing agricultural economic uncertainty. Rituals such as *slametan kebun* (garden ceremonies), harvest prayers, and the *Kirab Tumpeng Sura Ageng Mamayu Hayuning Bawana* (July 14, 2025) are integral to the production process. From the perspective of Institutional Economics (North, 1990), prayer functions as an informal institution shaping how farmers make decisions and interpret economic risks. In Behavioral Economics, prayer provides emotional utility that stabilizes

emotions and improves clarity of thought, allowing farmers to act rationally despite price fluctuations, weather conditions, and pests. Research supports prayer's role as consolation: Froese et al. (2024) show that prayer enhances mental health and reduces stress; Wnuk et al. (2023) find that prayer reduces anxiety more effectively when a strong spiritual relationship exists; and Del Castillo (2023) demonstrates that prayer provides a sense of safety, comfort, and coping strategies to manage life pressures. Thus, for the Batu community, prayer is not merely a spiritual practice but also a psychological and social mechanism that strengthens mental resilience, social cohesion, and stability in economic decision-making within an uncertain agricultural environment.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the local economic wisdom of the Batu community encompasses both productive and normative elements. Productively, this wisdom is reflected in practices such as collective prosperity, profit-sharing systems, labor reciprocity without monetary payment (*gotong royong*), and land cultivation and planting as the primary means of meeting daily needs. Normatively, cultural values such as *among tegal* (managing and maintaining land), *nggegem lemah* (upholding the importance of land), and social harmony form the foundation supporting the community's work patterns and livelihoods. The implications of this study emphasize the need for a local culture-based approach in designing regional economic development policies, as such an approach can strengthen the spiritual, social, and environmental dimensions that are often overlooked in policies focusing solely on modern economic logic. Furthermore, this local economic wisdom can be integrated into high school economic education in Batu, both in formal subjects and co-curricular activities. In economics classes, practices such as profit-sharing, *gotong royong*, and sustainable land management can serve as concrete examples for microeconomics, development economics, behavioral economics, and entrepreneurship topics. In co-curricular activities, students can engage in hands-on learning, such as through entrepreneurship clubs, agricultural projects, or agro-tourism activities, where they manage land, plan marketing strategies, and arrange the distribution of yields.

This approach not only makes economic learning more contextual but also fosters students' character, including solidarity, environmental awareness, responsibility, innovation, and teamwork. Therefore, integrating local wisdom with formal and co-curricular learning provides a holistic economic education experience, where modern theory is enriched by traditional practices deeply rooted in the Batu community. The study finds that Batu's local economic wisdom includes productive elements, such as profit-sharing and land management, as well as normative elements, such as social harmony, which simultaneously serve as a medium for high school students to learn economics through formal lessons and co-curricular activities like agricultural projects and agro-tourism. However, the study is limited to the cultural and geographical context of Batu, influenced by the subjective perceptions of informants, and employs qualitative methods and secondary data, so quantitative analysis and generalization of results are limited. Recommendations for teachers include building harmonious communication with the community and providing explanations before student visits to ensure collaborative interactions and respect for local knowledge. For future researchers, it is recommended to explore culture-based economic practices in other regions and compare practices across communities to broaden

understanding of local economic dynamics and support socio-economic policies that respect local values and enhance holistic.

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