

Fostering creativity and cultural bonds: revitalizing *kasab* crafts through arts education and community engagement in West Aceh, Indonesia



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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the school's efforts in introducing and preserving Kasab in West Aceh through art education and community collaboration. Kasab is gold thread embroidery on velvet cloth which is widely used in Acehnese weddings as a cultural product. Kasab was introduced to art education at the West Aceh High School through arts and culture subjects. This study used a qualitative approach. The research was conducted in five high schools in West Aceh District, Indonesia. Data collection techniques were carried out through interviews with students, teachers who teach arts and culture, and Kasab craftsmen. In addition, observations were also conducted to observe the collaborative learning process of the community and teachers, as well as literature studies on community collaboration and art education in the field of crafts. The results of the study show that collaborative art education in schools and communities regarding the introduction and process of making Kasab crafts is taught in the fine arts course, which begins with making decorative motifs. Next, the Kasab crafts were embroidered with gold thread. Students and teachers performed field studies at the Kasab craftsmen's place to observe the process of making Kasab. Later on, the students practice making Kasab at school, guided by the teacher and Kasab craftsmen. This activity is very important to be performed in every high school as an effort to preserve the Kasab craft in the West Aceh district.

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1. Introduction

Education is an inseparable part of human beings, who undergo a lifelong learning process. Education is an integral aspect of human existence, with individuals engaged in a continuous journey of learning throughout their lives. The concept of lifelong learning signifies the ongoing process of acquiring knowledge, both within and beyond formal educational institutions. This underscores the existence of various everyday avenues through which learning occurs [1]. Similarly, education and culture are two interconnected elements that cannot be detached from each other. Education is even regarded as a means of passing culture from one generation to the next [2]. Art education can be acquired through formal, non-formal, and informal means. Two perspectives exist regarding art education: Firstly, it's seen as skills-based instruction for students who need to acquire proficiency in various artistic abilities (art education as an educational discipline). Secondly, it involves developing skills in creating art that may have commercial value. Although not the primary objective, this can still offer valuable learning experiences in artistic creation as an integral part of a comprehensive education (education via art) [3]. Art educators in schools have the option to bring in practicing artists or craftsmen for interactive sessions. Alternatively, students themselves can organize field trips to visit skilled artisans or artists.

These experiences offer students more than just academic knowledge; they provide hands-on learning opportunities. This method can also be successfully introduced in schools in West Aceh to play a role in safeguarding Kasab, which is a cherished tradition of Acehese craftsmanship. Kasab encompasses an artistic process where intricate patterns are crafted onto velvet fabric using gold thread. Illustrations of Kasab creations encompass items such as wall hangings, chair cushions, tablecloths, handheld fans, ornamental umbrellas, dais curtains, and various other elements utilized in traditional Acehese ceremonial platforms. Kasab is categorized within the realm of surface textile design [4].

Okonkwo conducted previous research on collaborative education between communities and schools. His findings show collaborative arts education between communities and schools presents challenges and opportunities. Among these challenges is the negative perception of arts education held by students, parents, and society, which diminishes its perceived value [5]. Feen-Calligan explores the intersection of art, education, and activism in society with a particular focus on the experiences and outcomes of service-learning participants [6]. Pamela Harris Lawton explores the intersection of community-based arts education, community engagement, and social practice arts through social interaction and collaboration. In this research, the intersection of ideology and practice within community engagement, social practice arts, and community-based arts education is examined through social interaction and work. Additionally, Lawton investigates the interconnections between community engagement and practical art [7].

Vitulli researched the involvement of teachers and educators from elementary, secondary, and higher education institutions in the southeastern United States metropolitan area in the Arts in Education Program, which aims to train teachers to more effectively integrate the Arts in the classroom using dance music, theater, and the arts visual aids for teaching the arts of the English language. Presenters provide Art training to participants through a combination of hands-on participation, frequent demonstrations, and lectures. Participants work with artists, artist-teachers, and content specialists who provide thorough training where knowledge in the Arts is combined with content knowledge taught in the classroom through extensive and intensive professional development and individual mentoring classroom teachers have the opportunity to collaborate with educators across the field main learning.

This results analysis and program description can assist those wishing to pursue university-community collaboration through professional development and grants and thus provide insight into the characteristics of long-term, successful, and collaborative ventures [8]. Community engagement has been used for many years to enhance and strengthen teacher education courses, preparing student teachers with real-life learning experiences as they work with community groups on mutually beneficial projects. The outcomes of this project included increased confidence and competence in terms of teaching skills, knowledge, and strategies by students as they engaged in the community engagement action-reflection cycle. The school community also benefits from this project as children develop creative arts skills and knowledge when they work with students, and teachers gain new ideas regarding the application of creative arts in their classrooms [9].

Collaborative research between teachers and artists aims to contribute to knowledge that can influence the planning, implementation, and advancement of collaborative projects between schools and professional artists [10]. An arts-based approach to educational design research teams may involve the engagement of teachers, artists, and researchers within a pedagogical environment. Interactions with professional artists can motivate teachers to incorporate or sustain the utilization of artistic skills in their teaching. These individuals possess profound expertise in the arts and are motivated by their eagerness to engage with students and impart their knowledge and expertise in the arts field [11]. In this case, the teachers and artists have their respective roles, but with the same goal, which is to provide knowledge to students as much as possible so that students can understand and practice it properly. Research on Kasab related to the collaboration between school and community is still rarely found. Therefore, this study should be the latest research studying the Acehese dais that uses Kasab embroidery as decorations. Should there be no inheritance to the next generation, this gold thread embroidery

craft will become rare, just like woven handicrafts in Aceh, where only a few weaving craftsmen are still working [12].

The existence of Kasab craftsmen in West Aceh has decreased from year to year compared to the 1990s when almost every village had a business in the Kasab sector, which was usually required for Acehnese wedding decorations. This can be caused by several factors, including the need for more public interest in using Acehnese dais at weddings because Kasab crafts are widely used at Acehnese dais. For this Kasab craft to be maintained, there needs to be an effort to introduce Kasab crafts from one generation to the next through collaborative education between schools and the community, which can be applied to Cultural Arts. This study aims to describe the efforts made by schools and communities in introducing and practicing Kasab crafts to high school students in the West Aceh district.

2. Method

Research focused on revitalizing Kasab handicrafts through art education adopts a qualitative research approach. This qualitative approach facilitates a profound and comprehensive comprehension of the phenomenon under investigation [13]. In the case of Kasab craft revitalization, intricate cultural and educational elements are involved, and employing a qualitative approach enables an in-depth exploration of these intricacies. This study acknowledges that the revitalization of traditional crafts like Kasab is heavily contingent on contextual factors. Therefore, qualitative research allows for an exploration of the specific cultural, social, and educational context in West Aceh, which is instrumental in devising effective revitalization strategies.

Data were collected through unstructured interviews, with the study's participants drawn from five high schools: Meulaboh 1st High School, Meulaboh 2nd High School, Arongan High School, Bubon 1 High School, and Wira Bangsa High School. The data sources in this study encompassed teachers instructing arts and culture subjects, Kasab craftsmen, and eleventh-grade students. The primary objective of data collection was to unearth the perspectives and experiences of individuals engaged in the artistic process, including students, teachers, and craftsmen. This approach aids in uncovering their motivations, challenges, and personal insights.

The observation technique involved scrutinizing the learning processes enacted by teachers and Kasab craftsmen, both within the school environment and at the craftsmen's workshops. Prior to initiating observations, the researcher established clear research objectives and questions pertaining to the Kasab craft learning process in the two observation settings (schools and craftsmen's workshops). The aspects under observation encompassed teaching methods, interactions between teachers and students, material utilization, and the overall learning environment. Throughout the observation process, the researcher employed a checklist that covered categories such as teaching techniques, student engagement, and progress in skill development.

During visits to the craftsmen's workshops, the researchers placed emphasis on documenting the crafting process itself, including the techniques employed, materials used, and the intricacies of Kasab embroidery. They also observed interactions between teachers and students who were engaged with the craftsmen, noting how they acquired and honed their skills. Subsequent to the collection of interview and observation data, the researchers scrutinized the findings for patterns, trends, and disparities between school-based and craftsman-based learning processes. These results were then analyzed in alignment with the research objective, which was to comprehend and elucidate the involvement of schools in introducing and preserving Kasab in West Aceh through art education and community collaboration. The resultant analysis is expected to yield valuable insights into the Kasab craft learning process within educational settings and aid in identifying strengths, weaknesses, and areas in need of improvement within the traditional craft revitalization approach through art education, Fig. 1 is the steps of the research method.

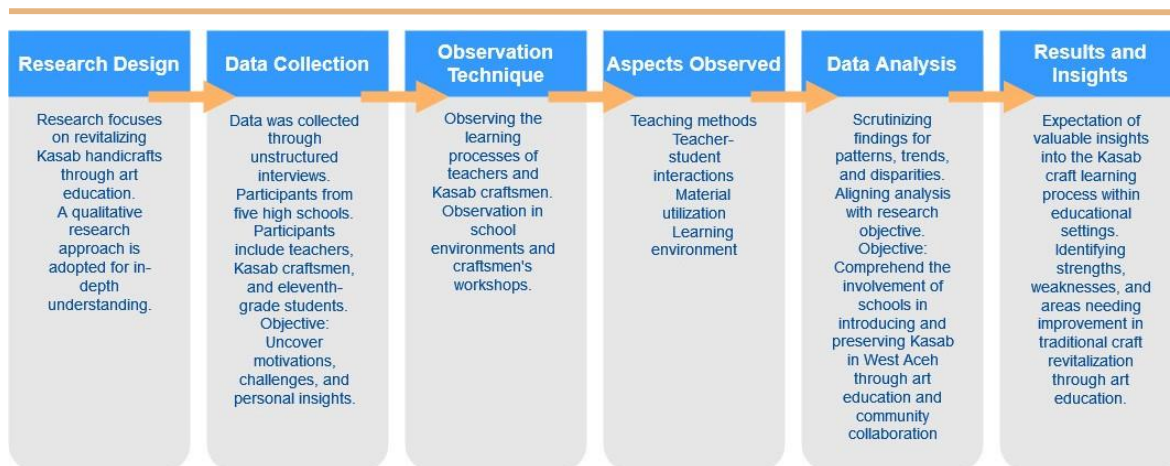


Fig. 1. The steps of the research method

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The Existence of Kasab Crafts as a Cultural Product of the Acehnese People

Kasab is one of the Acehnese traditional crafts in the form of gold thread embroidery on velvet cloth. The motifs used in this embroidery tend to use floral and geometric motifs [14]–[16]. The motifs with realistic depictions of human and animal shapes are very rarely used to decorate craft objects. The motifs used are generally stylizations of plants, including leaves, petals, flowers, fruit, and tendrils. Apart from plant motifs, there are also those which are combined with geometric motifs. The choice of motifs in the form of plants and natural objects is related to the beliefs or religion of the Acehnese people, namely Islam [17]. This craft first appeared in a residential area, namely the Meuraxa Ulee Lheue sub-district from the descendants of the Teuku M. Yusuf family in the village of Dayah Glumpang Ulee Lheue in the city of Banda Aceh [18]. As time passed, the Kasab craft spread to other areas such as West Aceh, South Aceh, North Aceh, East Aceh, and other parts of Aceh province. This can be seen on the Acehnese altar, which uses Kasab on its decorations, which can be found in the samples of traditional houses from each region in Taman Ratu Safiatuddin Aceh.

Kasab, as a cultural product of the Acehnese people, needs to be preserved. Cultural heritage is rooted in its original place, and historical, ethnic memory and the cultural connotations it carries are important aspects of placement. As emphasized in the Ethical Principles for Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) [19], communities, groups, and, where applicable, individuals should not be alienated from their own intangible cultural heritage. The sustainable development of intangible cultural heritage can help preserve its meaning and function by promoting local protection, and its economic potential can be realized through local economic practices and industrial development. Combining cultural heritage with commercial production [20]. Such as the application of gauze to adult women's shoes. Advances in contemporary digital technology offer the possibility of preserving ancestral motifs and symbols for the next generation [21]. There are many things that can be done to introduce and preserve traditional regional crafts, one of which is by holding collaborations between schools and the community, especially craftsmen.

There are two types of Kasab in the Acehnese tradition: *First*, Kasab from the south coast of Aceh province. This type of Kasab has a very diverse characteristic motif. This technique can create various motifs as requested because the gold thread can be applied to various motifs. This type of Kasab can be found in the Aneuk Jamee and Alas tribes. The Flat Couching type of sewing of South Coast Kasab includes; (1) Common stitches are cotton thread stitching to strengthen the gold or silver thread; (2) Stitches in a pattern like a brick arrangement on Kasab of the south coast of Aceh; (3) Chili flower stitches are cotton thread stitching to strengthen the gold or silver thread; (4) Stitches in the form of a pattern like a chili tree flower on Kasab of the

south coast of Aceh; (5) Halwa iris stitches are cotton thread stitching to strengthen the gold or silver thread; (6) Stitches in the form of a pattern like slices of halwa on Kasab of the south coast of Aceh; (7) Keris twist stitches are cotton thread stitching to strengthen the gold or silver thread; (8) Stitches in the form of a pattern like a broken beam on Kasab of the south coast of Aceh; (9) Stitches in the form of Rumbia scales is the stitching of cotton thread to strengthen the gold or silver thread; (10) The stitches in an octagonal pattern, like the sides of a Rumbia tree trunk cut on Kasab of the south coast of Aceh; *Second*, Kasab is on the east coast of Aceh. This Kasab can be found on the Acehnese east coast, consisting of the Acehnese and Malay tribes. This type of Kasab has a unique characteristic of the thickness of its texture, see Fig. 2. The embossed texture is made of cardboard covered with gold thread. This technique embroiders gold thread on cardboard, where the cardboard serves as the filling to create a unique texture. The gold thread is strengthened with ordinary sewing thread. Making Kasab on the east coast of Aceh is slightly different from that of the south coast of Aceh. After the base cloth is tightened, the cardboard paper is arranged on the cloth [22].



Fig. 2. Kasab Craft

Kasab handicrafts are one of the characteristics of the Acehnese wedding dais, see Fig. 3. All Acehnese wedding dais frames are covered with Kasab with various colors of velvet cloth, such as red, yellow, and green, which are the distinctive colors of the Acehnese wedding dais. The motifs that tend to be used are floral motifs with different designs in each aisle structure. Gold thread embroidery was also used on the altar in Pariaman, West Sumatra, which used mirrors and naturalist plant motifs [23]. What is different is the embroidery technique; the Pariaman wedding dais uses full embroidery, while Kasab uses gold thread which is sewn using red thread according to the motif and forms a motif on the gold thread.



Fig. 3. Acehnese wedding dais

3.2. Collaboration School and Community to Introduce Kasab Crafts

Teaching arts education in schools is usually done in arts and culture, crafts, and entrepreneurship subjects. The art education taught is dance, music, drama, and fine arts. But in practice, not all of those subjects are taught. This is related to the agreement with the MGMP (Subject Teacher Deliberation) and the availability of teachers in each of those subjects. In teaching arts and culture on fine arts subjects, the teacher can introduce Kasab to students through the introduction of decorative motifs, which is the first step in making gold thread embroidery (Kasab). After students make motifs, the teacher and students pay a visit to the Kasab craftsmen to see the process of making Kasab crafts. Students continue the process of making kasab at school, guided by teachers and craftsmen. Based on observations, the five high schools carried out the same stage in the process of introducing Kasab, which began with the introduction of decorative motifs used on fabrics or textiles.

The introduction of Kasab crafts to high school students is an effort to preserve Acehese traditional crafts. As mentioned by Lungu, historical and cultural heritage must be preserved and passed on to the next generation [21]. Specific cultural heritage includes textiles and traditional costumes, such as Kasab, which is a traditional Acehese craft whose authenticity must be maintained. Products made from the Kasab embroidery technique are in the form of souvenirs and decorative umbrellas, which are done in groups. This is because the media or materials used require substantial funds for the costs of individual practice, such as velvet cloth, gold thread, beads, and fabrication (which is used to attach velvet cloth so that it is easy to embroider). While the Kasab is used for the wedding dais, only the parts as a whole are introduced. Arts education partnerships have been an important tool for developing and sustaining school arts programs that engage students, teachers, and the community. Leveraging additional perspectives, resources, and support from arts institutions and secondary education institutions, arts education partnerships strengthen arts education infrastructure in schools and develop a network of sustainable relationships where stakeholders benefit mutually [24].

Partnership in education, as stated by Ki Hadjar Dewantara, there are three education centers or education tri centers, namely, family, community, and school. The collaboration of the three educational centers will be a tremendous force to maintain, preserve, utilize, and develop educational facilities [25]. This collaboration can be implemented in the introduction and preservation of Kasab in West Aceh, which is carried out through collaboration between teachers and the community, especially Kasab craftsmen, in delivering learning materials both at school and at home industry. Lessons about Kasab are taught more in vocational schools than high schools, but only in certain vocational schools. In the past, SMIK (Craft Industry Middle School) and SMKK (Family Skills Middle School) taught both traditional and applied Kasab crafts. The products produced vary, from decorative umbrellas wall hangings, pillowcases, and table mats. In contrast, the Kasab on the wedding dais cannot be made at school because the shape is too big, so there is not enough time to complete the Kasab at school.

The results of this study are expected to be useful for schools and the community to make innovations in conveying material about Kasab crafts so that students are interested in learning and practicing making Kasab crafts. It is hoped that this will continue to be sustainable with the aim that this Kasab craft can be applied in various media other than velvet cloth while continuing to introduce Kasab as a traditional Acehese craft. Apart from being a lesson in schools, it can also be applied in informal or non-formal learning in their environment. Collaboration between schools and the community was not well coordinated, so efforts to collaborate between schools and the community in teaching Kasab were not optimal, as was the case in the study of Collaborative Arts Education Strategy School and Society Socio-Cultural Based conducted by Eko Sugiarto on learning woven crafts [26]. This can be caused by the woven handicraft products produced for daily needs, while Kasab is needed as decoration, which is made only if there is an order. A teacher-artist partnership framework within the maker space to support shared professional growth and opportunities to foster a conducive learning environment for creative expression. The framework consists of three non-linear and iterative processes, namely; (1) developing craft knowledge; (2) building shared knowledge; and (3) reflection and research supported by a community of practice and internal and external

communities. The expected results of the partnership for students, teachers, artists, and recommendations are discussed [27].

There are several ways to introduce traditional crafts in learning, such as strengthening the relevance and meaningfulness of craft education in schools. Teachers are challenged to provide more authentic instructional contexts and activities beyond the traditional curriculum to cope successfully in today's society. One solution is to contextualize this teaching with the help of a pedagogical model that embodies the holistic concept of craft. This pedagogical model is based on published curricula, printed materials, and research [28]. The learning provided by artists, designers, and craftsmen allows all students to develop attitudes, knowledge, and skills, and these teaching strategies can be utilized [29]. This can be used as a way to pass down the Kasab craft to the next generation. This activity can create students' creativity in creating and recognizing their own responsibility in creating awareness and cultural, environmental, and social change and encourage them to become agents of change in their own communities [30]. From this learning process, the students made gold embroidery with different motifs, so they gained experience in embroidering gold thread with different levels of difficulty and creativity. This experience helps students understand the importance of passing on traditional crafts to the next generation. The establishment of arts-based school-community partnerships has become a popular strategy to address the decline in arts resources. The programs are usually based on coalitions between local artists and organizations under observation [31]. Collaboration between schools and the community is essential in advancing arts education, especially in inheriting Kasab crafts to the next generation. Here are some of the benefits of this collaboration:

- Fostering students' artistic interests and talents: Through collaboration between the school and the community, students can be given the opportunity to develop their artistic interests and talents through extracurricular activities, art workshops, and art programs organized by the community. This can be done by holding a Kasab motif design competition.
- Providing better facilities and resources: Collaboration between schools and the community can help provide better facilities and resources for artistic activities, such as bringing in resource persons who are experts in how to make delicate and attractive embroidery.
- Improving the quality of art education: Through collaboration between schools and communities, students can learn from different experiences and perspectives, thereby improving the quality of their art education.
- Enriching the community's cultural life: Through collaboration with schools, communities can more easily access arts and cultural activities that enrich their lives. So that students know which areas produce a lot of Kasab crafts.
- Promoting social and cultural values: Collaboration between schools and communities can help promote important social and cultural values, such as tolerance, diversity, and creativity.

In this collaboration, schools can work with various parties in society, such as art groups, community organizations, or competent individuals in the arts. In this way, arts education can become more inclusive and integrated with society.

4. Conclusion

The process of improving art education and collaboration with the community, especially craftsmen, is a new activity at the West Aceh district high school. Field study activities are usually more appealing to them. Involving the community in the learning process of introducing Kasab to students takes work, especially in terms of time and funds. Hence, the implementation of this activity needs to be maximally prepared. Making Kasab crafts goes through several stages, from designing motifs, sewing motifs on the fabric, attaching the fabric to the embroidery hoop, embroidering, attaching beads, and finally finishing. These steps, if applied in learning at

school, require a long time. In order to save time, teachers and Kasab craftsmen can plan to make simple Kasab crafts, but all of the steps have to be applied in the work process. Further research can be carried out on other rare Acehese traditional crafts.

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