



The Effect of Problem-Based Learning with Map Props on Fifth-Grade Students' Cultural Literacy

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the effect of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model assisted by map props on the cultural literacy of fifth-grade students at SDN 1 Rejosari. A quantitative approach was employed using a quasi-experimental design with a pretest-posttest control group. The sample consisted of 38 students, divided into two groups: an experimental group and a control group, each with 19 students. An essay-based test was used to measure students' cultural literacy before and after the instructional intervention. Data were analyzed using prerequisite tests, an independent-samples t-test, and N-Gain analysis. The results showed that the experimental group achieved an average N-Gain of 53.23%, which was categorized as moderate. In comparison, the control group achieved an average N-Gain of 11.16%, which was categorized as low. The t-test results indicated a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), demonstrating a statistically significant difference between the two groups. It can be concluded that implementing the PBL model, supported by map media, is effective in improving students' cultural literacy through active, contextual, and meaningful learning, thereby enhancing their understanding and awareness of cultural diversity.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pengaruh penerapan model *Problem Based Learning* (PBL) berbantuan alat peraga peta terhadap literasi budaya siswa kelas V di SDN 1 Rejosari. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain *quasi-experimental* tipe *pretest-posttest control group*. Sampel penelitian berjumlah 38 siswa yang terbagi ke dalam dua kelompok, yaitu kelompok eksperimen dan kelompok kontrol, masing-masing terdiri atas 19 siswa. Instrumen penelitian berupa tes esai yang digunakan untuk mengukur kemampuan literasi budaya siswa sebelum dan sesudah perlakuan. Data dianalisis menggunakan uji prasyarat, uji *independent samples t-test*, dan analisis N-Gain. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa rata-rata N-Gain kelompok eksperimen sebesar 53,23% dengan kategori sedang, sedangkan kelompok kontrol memperoleh rata-rata N-Gain sebesar 11,16% dengan kategori rendah. Hasil uji *t* menunjukkan nilai signifikansi 0,000 ($p < 0,05$) yang menandakan adanya perbedaan signifikan antara kedua kelompok. Berdasarkan temuan tersebut, dapat disimpulkan bahwa penerapan model PBL berbantuan media peta efektif dalam meningkatkan literasi budaya siswa melalui pembelajaran yang aktif, kontekstual, dan bermakna serta mampu memperkuat pemahaman dan kesadaran siswa terhadap keberagaman budaya.

A. Introduction

Recent studies have increasingly emphasized the importance of integrating Problem-Based Learning (PBL) models with culturally responsive instructional tools in elementary education. The application of PBL has been shown to enhance students' understanding of local culture by engaging them in contextually and meaningfully inquiry-based learning activities (Astuti et al., 2023). Through problem-oriented learning situations, PBL not only promotes academic achievement but also strengthens students' cultural identity. In a similar vein, the use of concrete visual learning aids, particularly maps, has been shown to improve students' spatial and cultural literacy. Sudrajat (2024) reported that map-based props in social studies classrooms enhance students' ability to relate geographical features to cultural traditions, supporting the use of thematic maps as effective cognitive and cultural tools in elementary education.

Primary education holds a strategic role in shaping students' intellectual, emotional, and social development. Beyond academic knowledge, elementary education is fundamental for instilling character and cultural values that shape national identity. Within the framework of national education goals, strengthening cultural literacy is essential for preparing students with 21st-century skills, particularly in culturally diverse and globalized societies. Cultural literacy refers to the ability to identify, understand, value, and apply both local and national cultural norms in everyday life. According to Jumari et al (2024), cultural literacy involves not only familiarity with cultural knowledge but also a conscious commitment to preserving and respecting cultural diversity. This competence has become increasingly important in the context of globalisation, which tends to homogenise cultures and gradually erodes local identities. Jumari et al (2024) emphasize that embedding cultural literacy in primary education is crucial for fostering students' sense of identity and belonging from an early age.

Despite its recognized importance, the implementation of cultural literacy in elementary education remains limited. Many schools in Indonesia continue to rely on conventional, teacher-centred instructional approaches that lack contextual engagement. Teachers predominantly use lectures and textbooks, with minimal integration of instructional media or learning strategies that actively involve students in cultural exploration. Arsyad et al (2024) argue that such instructional practices lead to superficial learning outcomes, in which students merely memorise cultural facts without understanding their relevance to real-life contexts. This condition was also evident in classroom observations at SDN 1 Rejosari, where fifth-grade students demonstrated low awareness of local cultural traditions. Many students were unable to identify cultural symbols, explain the meanings of traditional ceremonies, or express pride in their regional heritage, indicating that existing instructional approaches have not effectively facilitated meaningful cultural learning.

In response to these challenges, innovative instructional models such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL) have emerged as effective alternatives in elementary education. PBL encourages students to participate actively in real-world problem-solving, fostering critical

thinking, collaboration, and exploration. [Setiawan](#) (2023) note that PBL enhances learning experiences by linking abstract concepts to authentic contexts, which is particularly relevant in cultural education. To further optimize PBL's effectiveness in fostering cultural literacy, integrating appropriate visual learning tools is essential. Among various instructional media, maps function not only as geographical references but also as visual representations of cultural diversity across regions. [Sari et al](#) (2023) demonstrated that thematic maps help students associate cultural practices with specific spatial locations, thereby deepening their understanding of the relationship between culture and place.

Furthermore, maps promote inquiry-based learning by encouraging students to explore cultural issues through guided questions related to regional traditions, geographical characteristics, and cultural diversity. This learning process supports the development of empathy and respect for cultural differences, which are core components of cultural literacy. In addition, visual learning aids such as maps facilitate differentiated instruction by making complex cultural content more accessible to students with diverse learning abilities. Visual materials help bridge linguistic and conceptual barriers, particularly for learners who experience difficulty with text-based resources. [Defi & Hadi](#) (2024) emphasize that integrating visual media with active learning strategies significantly enhances students' comprehension and retention of complex cultural Material.

However, despite the documented effectiveness of PBL and map-based media when implemented separately, empirical studies that explicitly examine their integration to enhance cultural literacy in elementary education remain limited. Most existing Research has focused on scientific literacy or general problem-solving skills, leaving a Research gap related to cultural literacy development through the combined use of PBL and visual media. Therefore, this study offers a novel contribution by systematically integrating the Problem-Based Learning model with map props as contextual visual tools to enhance cultural literacy among upper elementary students.

Based on this background, the Research question addressed in this study is: Does the implementation of a Problem-Based Learning model supported by map props significantly Influence the cultural literacy of fifth-grade students at SDN 1 Rejosari?. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the effect of applying the PBL model, supported by map-based visual media, on students' cultural literacy development. It is hypothesised that integrating Problem-Based Learning and map props will have a significant positive effect on the cultural literacy competencies of fifth-grade students.

B. Method

According to [Sugiyono](#) (2021), Research methodology is a scientific approach used to obtain valid data to discover, develop, and validate knowledge. In educational Research, the selection of an appropriate methodology is essential to ensure the reliability, validity, and accountability of Research findings. Accordingly, this study adopted a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design, specifically the pretest-posttest control group design. This design was selected to examine the effect of an instructional treatment by

comparing learning outcomes between an experimental group and a control group without random assignment.

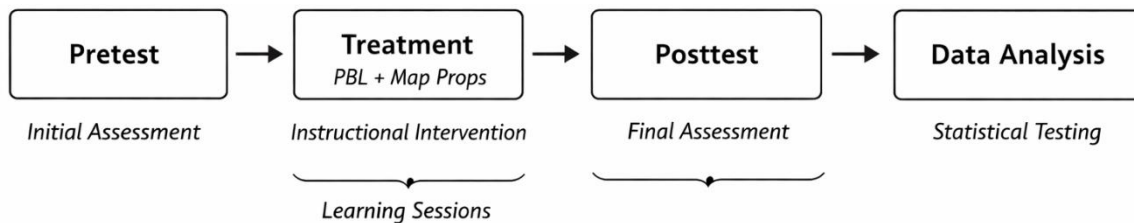


Figure 1. Research Flow of the Study

The Research design involved two intact groups: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received instruction using the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model assisted by map props, while the control group was taught using conventional instructional methods. This type of quasi-experimental design is considered appropriate for identifying causal relationships in non-randomized educational settings (Arikunto, 2021).

The participants of this study were fifth-grade students from SDN 1 Rejosari. A total of 38 students were selected through purposive sampling based on similar academic characteristics and accessibility. Class V A was assigned to the experimental group, and Class V B to the control group, with each class consisting of 19 students.

Data were collected using an essay-based test designed to measure students' cultural literacy, including their understanding of cultural symbols, awareness of cultural diversity, and appreciation of local cultural heritage. The instrument consisted of 15 open-ended questions developed in accordance with established cultural literacy indicators. The instrument underwent validity and reliability testing using Pearson's product-moment correlation and Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to ensure consistency and accuracy of measurement. In addition to test instruments, classroom observations were conducted to monitor student engagement during the implementation of the PBL model assisted by map props. These observations were guided by a structured checklist aligned with indicators of active and contextual learning.

Instructional activities in the experimental group were supported by map props depicting cultural elements from various regions across Indonesia. These materials included printed interactive maps, images of traditional houses, regional clothing, and cultural symbols. The use of visual media aligns with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes knowledge construction through active engagement with spatial and symbolic representations (Arsyad et al., 2024).

The Research procedure followed a systematic flow, consisting of four instructional sessions conducted over two weeks, each lasting approximately 70 minutes. In the first session, both the experimental and control groups were administered a pretest consisting of 15 essay questions to assess students' initial level of cultural literacy. This pretest served as a baseline measurement prior to the implementation of the instructional intervention.

During the second and third sessions, the experimental group participated in learning activities using the PBL model assisted by map props. Students worked collaboratively in small groups to solve real-world cultural problems by utilizing visual materials depicting regional cultural features such as traditional houses, clothing, and dances. The learning process followed the main stages of the PBL model, including problem orientation, data collection, analysis, presentation of findings, and conclusion. In contrast, the control group received instruction through conventional, textbook-based methods accompanied by teacher explanations, without the use of visual media or collaborative problem-solving activities.

In the fourth session, both groups were administered the same posttest used in the initial session. This posttest aimed to measure students' cultural literacy after the instructional intervention and to enable a direct comparison of learning outcomes between the two groups. Throughout all sessions, both groups received equal instructional time and content coverage, with the only difference being the instructional model and learning media applied. This design ensured that any observed differences in learning outcomes could be attributed to the treatment provided. The study focused exclusively on quantitative test outcomes; therefore, no qualitative reflections or observation scores were included in the data analysis.

The collected pretest and posttest data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive analysis included calculating mean scores, standard deviations, and gain scores to describe students' learning performance. Inferential analysis involved conducting normality and homogeneity tests as prerequisite analyses, followed by an independent samples t-test to determine the significance of differences between the experimental and control groups. Additionally, N-Gain analysis was employed to evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional model based on normalized improvements in students' scores. The integration of test results and classroom observation findings provided a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of the Problem-Based Learning model assisted by map props on students' cultural literacy development.

C. Results

This study aimed to investigate the Influence of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model assisted by map media on the cultural literacy of fifth-grade students at SDN 1 Rejosari. The Research employed a quasi-experimental design with two groups: an experimental class and a control class, each comprising 19 students. The experimental group received instruction through the PBL model supported by map media, while the control group was taught using conventional instructional methods. Both groups completed a pretest prior to the intervention and a posttest following its conclusion to assess students' cultural literacy development.

Validity Test

The instruments utilized in this study were pretest and posttest essay questions designed to assess students' cultural literacy skills. The content validity of the instrument was established through expert judgment, involving content specialists and fifth-grade teachers. The validation process focused on the alignment of test items with instructional indicators, content coverage, language clarity, and the appropriateness of difficulty level for elementary school students. Since the instrument had been validated and applied in previous studies, additional empirical validity testing was deemed unnecessary. Consequently, the instrument was considered valid for use in this study.

Table 1. Content Validity of Cultural Literacy Instrument

No	Validity Aspect	Validation Criteria	Validator	Result
1	Content relevance	Alignment of items with cultural literacy indicators	Content expert	Valid
2	Content coverage	Representation of cultural symbols, diversity, and local heritage	Content expert	Valid
3	Language clarity	Suitability of language for fifth-grade students	Elementary teacher	Valid
4	Difficulty level	Appropriateness of item difficulty for the elementary level	Elementary teacher	Valid
5	Instructional alignment	Consistency with learning objectives and curriculum	Content expert	Valid

Based on the results shown in Table 1, the cultural literacy instrument demonstrated adequate content validity. The validation process, conducted through expert judgment, confirmed that all test items were aligned with the cultural literacy indicators, instructional objectives, and curriculum requirements. In addition, the language clarity and level of difficulty were deemed appropriate for fifth-grade elementary school students. These findings indicate that the instrument sufficiently represents the intended constructs of cultural literacy and is suitable for use in this study.

Reliability Test

Instrument reliability refers to the consistency of measurement outcomes. As the test had previously been employed in similar studies, yielding reliability coefficients exceeding 0.70, and had been collaboratively refined with classroom teachers to ensure contextual appropriateness, it was regarded as both conceptually and practically reliable for this Research.

Table 2. Instrument Reliability

Instrument	Number of Items	Reliability Method	Reliability Coefficient	Criteria	Decision
Cultural Literacy Essay Test	15 items	Cronbach's Alpha (previous studies)	> 0.70	Reliable	Reliable

Based on the results presented in Table 2, the cultural literacy essay test demonstrated acceptable reliability. The instrument demonstrated a reliability coefficient exceeding the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating consistent measurement. Supported by its previous empirical applications and refinement in collaboration with classroom teachers, the instrument was considered reliable and appropriate for assessing students' cultural literacy in this study.

Normality Test

The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to assess whether the pretest and posttest data conformed to normality, given the relatively small sample size (less than 50 participants). The test results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Normality Test Results

Group	Test Type	Sig. Value
Experimental Pretest	Shapiro-Wilk	0.993
Experimental Posttest	Shapiro-Wilk	0.912
Control Pretest	Shapiro-Wilk	0.527
Control Posttest	Shapiro-Wilk	0.827

All significance values obtained were greater than 0.05, indicating that the data from both groups followed a normal distribution. As a result, further analysis using parametric tests was considered appropriate.

Homogeneity Test

Levene's test was used to assess variance homogeneity between the experimental and control groups. The test produced a significance value of 0.590, which exceeds the 0.05 threshold. This result confirms that the variances of the two groups were homogeneous, thereby meeting the assumption required for conducting an independent samples t-test.

Independent Samples T-Test

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between the posttest scores of the experimental and control groups. The results are presented in the following table:

Table 4.

Table 4. Independent Sample T-Test

Variable	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Remarks
Student Cultural Literacy	0.000	19.053	Significant

The p-value obtained was less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference in the posttest cultural literacy scores between the two groups. The experimental group demonstrated significantly higher scores compared to the control group.

N-Gain Analysis

To further assess the intervention's effectiveness, a normalised gain (N-Gain) analysis was conducted. The descriptive statistics of the N-Gain scores are presented in the following table:

Table 5. N-Gain Descriptive Statistic

Group	N-Gain (%)	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Category
Experimental	53.23	6.99	45	70	Moderate
Control	11.16	4.51	5	23	Low

Based on the data presented in Table 5, the average N-Gain score for the experimental group was 53.23%, which falls within the moderate range. In contrast, the control group achieved an average gain of only 11.16%, placing it in the low category. These findings demonstrate that the use of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model, supported by map media, led to greater improvement in students' cultural literacy than conventional teaching methods.

D. Discussion

Recent Research increasingly highlights the significance of integrative and interactive approaches in enhancing cultural literacy among primary school students. [Setiawan \(2023\)](#) assert that implementing the PBL model in elementary education improves not only academic performance but also students' cultural awareness and reflective thinking. Their findings affirm that learning models grounded in contextual exploration help bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and students' everyday experiences. Additionally, PBL's emphasis on collaboration and inquiry aligns with the competencies demanded by 21st-century education.

The use of map-based learning tools in shaping students' spatial and cultural understanding has also attracted considerable attention. According to [Sari et al \(2023\)](#), thematic maps function not only as tools for geographic orientation but also as instruments for cultural reflection. Their study revealed that when students engage with thematic maps to explore traditional houses, local arts, and regional attire, their appreciation for and retention of cultural knowledge improve significantly. This supports the notion that visual tools grounded in local and contextual realities are instrumental in transforming abstract cultural knowledge into tangible and relatable experiences.

[Jumari et al \(2024\)](#) further elaborated on the integration of cultural literacy into the 2013 Curriculum, emphasizing the need to embed cultural values into everyday learning.

Their case study indicated that students consistently exposed to cultural themes in their curriculum developed greater empathy and a stronger connection to their cultural identity. This reinforces the argument that cultural elements should be systematically integrated as core content, not merely supplementary Material. When combined with interactive approaches like PBL and enhanced through visual supports such as maps, these curricular initiatives become even more impactful and sustainable.

The results of the present study confirm that implementing the PBL model, supported by map media, significantly enhances students' cultural literacy compared to conventional learning methods. This is evidenced by the t-test results, which indicate a p-value of 0.000 and a substantially higher average N-Gain in the experimental group. PBL promotes active engagement through authentic, contextual problem-solving, while map media enhances students' spatial awareness and deepens their understanding of cultural diversity.

Theoretically, contextual learning that positions students as active participants is rooted in modern constructivist theory (Romdhon, 2024), which holds that learners construct knowledge through direct experience and social interaction. In PBL, students are not passive recipients; they are engaged in real-life situations that require investigation, analysis, and decision-making. The integration of map media helps bridge abstract cultural concepts into concrete, visual representations, reinforcing both geographic and cultural understanding (Fadliyah et al., 2024).

Several recent studies support this finding. Nofitri et al (2024) reported that PBL enhances students' critical thinking skills and intercultural awareness through problem-oriented discussion. Likewise, Pangestu (2021) demonstrated that visual media such as maps contribute to cultural literacy by strengthening spatial comprehension and cultural connections. Similarly, Defa et al (2020) confirmed that the use of visual media in Social Studies learning, particularly those rooted in local cultural contexts, effectively enhances students' understanding and appreciation of regional cultural values. Arsyad et al (2024) also concluded that map-based digital learning in elementary schools significantly improves students' understanding of both local and national cultural identity.

Furthermore, problem-based learning supported by visual media not only influences students' cognition but also shapes their social attitudes. Learning that emphasizes local cultural exploration fosters students' openness, tolerance, and appreciation of diversity. This is essential in building pluralistic character, which is one of the fundamental goals of 21st-century education (Barsihanor et al., 2024).

In primary education, cultural literacy plays a vital role in strengthening national identity and cultivating empathy among diverse cultural groups. Introducing students to cultural diversity from an early age lays the foundation for multicultural awareness. This view aligns with Riyanto et al (2025), who argue that cultural literacy in elementary education should aim to develop a generation capable of coexisting harmoniously in diverse environments. The PBL model, complemented by map media, proves to be an effective approach as it bridges cognitive learning with students' social experiences.

Moreover, enhancing cultural literacy also contributes to the development of essential 21st-century competencies such as collaboration, communication, and problem-solving. Handoyo & Safran (2025) further confirmed that PBL effectively enhances problem-solving skills among fifth-grade students, particularly when addressing ethnic diversity-related issues. Takiddin et al (2025) found that PBL improves students' interpersonal skills, including empathy and tolerance. Takiddin et al (2025) found that PBL improves students' interpersonal skills, including empathy and tolerance. The use of maps in learning further enables students to recognize cultural differences, understand regional interrelationships, and derive valuable lessons from Indonesia's cultural diversity.

Notably, problem-based learning assisted by map media creates a more meaningful and engaging learning environment. The instructional process becomes increasingly contextual and interactive, as students engage not only with textbooks but also with spatial data and real-life situations. This aligns with contextual learning theory, which emphasizes connecting academic Material with students' lived experiences (Lubis et al., 2025).

In addition to reinforcing the efficacy of PBL in social studies education, this study also highlights the value of using tangible media to deliver abstract and value-based content, such as culture. The use of map media as a visual learning aid effectively helps students connect cultural information to geographic locations. This finding corresponds with the conclusions of Haq et al (2025), who stated that visual learning media significantly improve memory retention and comprehension in thematic education.

The findings also underscore the important role of teachers as facilitators of learning. Educators are expected to design activities that prioritize not only cognitive outcomes but also the development of students' cultural awareness and social competencies. Teachers must be creative in selecting instructional models and media appropriate to students' needs and local contexts. By adopting PBL supported by map media, educators can better harness learning opportunities to foster students who are both academically competent and culturally sensitive.

This study contributes empirical evidence to the growing literature on the effectiveness of PBL assisted by map media in enhancing cultural literacy and supports the development of contextual, meaningful, and adaptive learning strategies to address the challenges of globalization and cultural diversity in early education.

E. Implications

The findings of this study have several important implications for elementary education practice and instructional design, particularly in the development of cultural literacy. First, the results indicate that integrating the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model with map-based visual media can be an effective instructional approach to support contextual and meaningful learning in primary schools. Teachers are encouraged to design learning activities that incorporate real-world cultural problems and visual representations of regional diversity to foster students' active engagement and deeper cultural understanding.

Second, this study suggests that visual media, such as maps, play a strategic role in strengthening students' cultural awareness by linking cultural concepts to spatial contexts. The use of map props helps students better understand the relationship between culture and place, thereby enhancing not only cognitive learning outcomes but also students' appreciation of local cultural values. Consequently, educators should consider integrating culturally relevant visual media into daily classroom instruction, particularly in social studies and thematic learning at the elementary level.

Third, at the curriculum and school levels, the findings support the inclusion of culturally responsive and problem-based instructional strategies to foster 21st-century competencies, including critical thinking, collaboration, and cultural awareness. The application of the PBL model, assisted by map media, provides an alternative instructional strategy that aligns with national education goals, emphasizing character education and multicultural understanding. Therefore, schools and curriculum developers may consider adopting and adapting this approach to promote students' multicultural character development from an early age.

F. Limitation and Suggestion for Further Research

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the sample was limited to a single elementary school with a relatively small number of participants, which may limit the generalizability of the results to broader educational contexts. Second, the implementation of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model, assisted by map media, was conducted over a relatively short instructional period, limiting the ability to examine the intervention's long-term effects and sustainability on students' cultural literacy development. In addition, this study focused primarily on quantitative learning outcomes, without exploring students' learning processes or perceptions in greater depth.

Based on these limitations, several recommendations for future Research are proposed. Future studies are encouraged to involve a wider range of schools across different geographical and sociocultural settings to enhance the external validity of the findings. Longitudinal Research designs with extended implementation periods are also recommended to examine the sustained impact of the PBL model assisted by map media on students' cultural literacy over time. Furthermore, future Research may explore integrating digital media and interactive maps to enrich learning experiences and investigate how technological innovations can further support the development of cultural literacy in elementary education. Incorporating qualitative methods, such as interviews or reflective observations, may also provide deeper insights into students' engagement and learning processes.

G. Conclusion

This study concludes that the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model, supported by map media, has a significant positive effect on the cultural literacy of fifth-grade students at SDN 1 Rejosari. Students who were taught using the PBL model supported by map props demonstrated higher learning gains than those who received conventional instruction. This finding was supported by the independent-samples t-test and N-Gain analysis, which revealed statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups.

The improvement observed in the experimental group extended beyond cognitive achievement to include students' enhanced understanding of cultural values, critical thinking skills, and attitudes of tolerance and appreciation for cultural diversity. These results indicate that integrating problem-based learning with visual media, such as maps, provides a meaningful, context-rich learning experience that supports the development of cultural literacy in elementary education.

Therefore, the implementation of the PBL model, supported by map media, can be considered a relevant and effective instructional strategy for fostering students' multicultural character from an early age. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of contextual learning models and to serve as a reference for educators and researchers in designing instructional practices oriented toward cultural literacy and 21st-century skills.

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