

Research Manuscript



## Contextualizing Colonial History: Designing a Booklet on Local Dutch Heritage as an Alternative Teaching Resource for Indonesian Secondary Education

Nova Cahyo<sup>1✉</sup>, R Soeharso<sup>1</sup>, Novel Anak Lyndon<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> History Education Programme, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> Anthropology and Sociology Programme, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

### ABSTRACT

This study developed a booklet on Dutch colonial heritage buildings in Cepu as an alternative teaching resource for historical research learning in Indonesian high schools. Using a Research and Development (R&D) approach, the study identified a lack of locally relevant teaching materials under the new Merdeka Curriculum. The booklet was designed to provide contextual examples of historical research using nearby heritage sites. Expert validation by material and media specialists yielded high feasibility scores (90.3% and 86%, respectively). Limited trials with 36 students showed positive reception, with an 83% approval rating indicating the booklet was engaging and effective. The study concludes that locally anchored, visually rich booklets can enhance historical literacy, support curriculum flexibility, and foster student connection to regional history. This contributes to discourse on Curriculum and Media Innovation for Historical Literacy, offering a replicable model for developing context-sensitive resources in post-colonial educational settings.

### KEYWORDS

Local History; Teaching Materials; Colonial Heritage; Historical Research; History Education Indonesia

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Submitted:  
30 July 2024  
Revised:  
23 July 2025  
Accepted:  
28 July 2025

### ABSTRAK

Studi ini mengembangkan sebuah buklet tentang bangunan warisan kolonial Belanda di Cepu sebagai sumber pengajaran alternatif untuk pembelajaran riset sejarah di sekolah menengah atas Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan Riset dan Pengembangan (R&D), studi ini mengidentifikasi kurangnya materi pengajaran yang relevan secara lokal di bawah Kurikulum Merdeka yang baru. Validasi ahli oleh spesialis materi dan media menghasilkan skor kelayakan yang tinggi (masing-masing 90,3% dan 86%). Uji coba terbatas dengan 36 siswa menunjukkan penerimaan yang positif, dengan tingkat persetujuan 83% yang menunjukkan bahwa buklet tersebut menarik dan efektif. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa buklet yang berakar pada konteks lokal dan kaya visual dapat meningkatkan literasi sejarah, mendukung fleksibilitas kurikulum, dan menumbuhkan keterkaitan siswa dengan sejarah regional. Hal ini berkontribusi pada wacana tentang Inovasi Kurikulum dan Media untuk Literasi Sejarah.

### KATA KUNCI

Sejarah Lokal; Bahan Ajar; Warisan Kolonial; Penelitian Sejarah; Pendidikan Sejarah Indonesia

### SEJARAH ARTIKEL

Submit:  
30 Juli 2024  
Revisi:  
23 Juli 2025  
Diterima:  
28 Juli 2025

## Introduction

The provision of quality teaching materials constitutes a fundamental pillar of effective history education. Teaching materials, defined as all forms of systematically organized content designed to support teachers in facilitating learning experiences, play a critical role in shaping how students engage with historical knowledge (Geshere et al., 2025; Gibson et al., 2025). Beyond merely transmitting information, well-designed materials scaffold students' historical thinking, connect abstract concepts to tangible evidence, and foster the disciplinary literacy essential for understanding the past (Wineburg, 2001; Barsch, 2025). In the Indonesian context, where history education serves both cognitive and civic functions cultivating national identity while developing critical historical consciousness the quality and availability of teaching materials carry particular significance (Hasan, 2012; Andriyati et al., 2025).

Indonesia's recent curriculum transition to the Merdeka Curriculum, initiated in 2022, has fundamentally altered the landscape of teaching material provision. Unlike its predecessors, the Merdeka Curriculum deliberately grants teachers and students greater flexibility in selecting and developing learning resources aligned with local contexts, student interests, and *bakat minat* (talents and interests) (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). This philosophical shift toward decentralized, context-responsive pedagogy reflects broader international trends recognizing that effective learning emerges when curriculum connects to students' lived experiences and local environments (Pang-Montroos & Duarte, 2025). However, this flexibility simultaneously creates challenges: teachers accustomed to centrally-provided textbooks must now exercise professional judgment in selecting, adapting, or developing materials often without adequate institutional support or resources (Andriyati et al., 2025).

The implementation challenges are particularly acute in history education. History teaching requires rich, diverse resources including primary sources, visual materials, and locally relevant examples that enable students to grasp the discipline's distinctive modes of inquiry (Wineburg, 2001; Fahrudin & Saefudin, 2025). Yet early Merdeka Curriculum implementation has revealed significant gaps in available materials. Teachers report limited access to curriculum-aligned textbooks, insufficient supplementary resources, and difficulties locating locally contextualized examples that make historical concepts tangible for students (Andriyati et al., 2025). These challenges are magnified in regions with rich local heritage that remains underrepresented in nationally-distributed materials.

SMA Negeri 1 Cepu, located in Blora Regency, Central Java, exemplifies these implementation struggles. Preliminary observations and interviews conducted in October 2023 revealed that tenth-grade history instruction faces multiple constraints: limited textbooks aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum, reliance on outdated Curriculum 2013 materials, and difficulty providing concrete examples that connect historical concepts to students' immediate environment. Students expressed frustration with abstract presentations and expressed desire for materials that would help them visualize historical phenomena using local evidence. These findings resonate with broader research documenting how resource scarcity undermines student engagement and historical understanding (Fahrudin & Saefudin, 2025).

The Dutch colonial heritage of Cepu presents an untapped pedagogical resource. The

city contains numerous surviving colonial-era buildings including churches, post offices, hospitals, and administrative structures that embody the material legacy of Dutch colonialism in Java. These structures offer tangible evidence for teaching about colonialism, imperialism, and historical research methods (Huss, 2025; Zembylas, 2025). Yet despite their pedagogical potential, they remain largely absent from formal history instruction. This gap reflects a broader pattern in post-colonial education where local heritage often remains disconnected from official curricula, limiting students' opportunities to encounter history as materially present in their everyday environments (Jedlicki, 2022 ; Budasz & Wurzer, 2024).

This study addresses these challenges through the development and evaluation of a locally-embedded booklet on Cepu's Dutch colonial heritage designed as an alternative teaching resource for tenth-grade history instruction. The research is guided by four objectives: (1) to analyze the needs for locally contextualized history teaching materials at SMA Negeri 1 Cepu; (2) to design and develop a booklet integrating local colonial heritage with curriculum-aligned historical content; (3) to validate the booklet's feasibility through expert assessment; and (4) to evaluate student responses to the developed material.

By examining the development process and outcomes, this study contributes to international scholarship on curriculum innovation, local resource development, and post-colonial history education. It positions local heritage materials not merely as supplementary resources but as critical interventions that can reshape how students encounter and interpret colonial pasts. The findings offer insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers across post-colonial contexts grappling with similar challenges of aligning global curriculum frameworks with local historical resources.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### ***Curriculum Reform and the Challenge of Teaching Materials in Post-Colonial Contexts***

Curriculum reform in post-colonial societies operates within complex historical and political dynamics that shape both the possibilities and constraints of educational change. (Amiruddin et al., 2023) argues that curriculum is never neutral but embodies particular configurations of power, knowledge, and interest. In Indonesia, successive curriculum reforms have reflected ongoing negotiations between centralized control and local autonomy, between internationally circulating educational discourses and locally grounded pedagogical traditions (Chaidir et al., 2025). The Merdeka Curriculum's emphasis on flexibility and contextualization represents a significant departure from earlier, more prescriptive approaches, yet its success depends fundamentally on teachers' capacity to operationalize this flexibility within resource-constrained environments.

The challenge of teaching materials development in such contexts has been extensively documented. (Sihombing & Nguyen, 2025) note that in many Global South educational systems, textbooks and learning resources remain scarce, outdated, or poorly aligned with curriculum objectives. Teachers often lack both the materials themselves and the professional preparation needed to adapt or develop resources responsive to local contexts. This "resource gap" disproportionately affects subjects like history that require diverse, rich materials to support disciplinary thinking. The transition to flexible

curricula may exacerbate rather than alleviate these challenges if teachers are expected to fill resource gaps without adequate institutional support.

International scholarship on textbook development emphasizes the importance of locally contextualized materials for meaningful learning. Research across multiple national contexts demonstrates that students engage more deeply with historical content when it connects to familiar landscapes, communities, and heritage (Apdelmi et al., 2025). Locally-embedded materials enable what (Spillman et al., 2023) terms a "critical pedagogy of place," where learning emerges from and responds to the specific geographical and cultural contexts of students' lives. This perspective aligns with constructivist learning theories emphasizing that knowledge construction occurs most effectively when new information can be assimilated into existing cognitive frameworks derived from lived experience (Taggart & Wheeler, 2025).

### ***Booklets as Pedagogical Media: Affordances and Design Principles***

Booklets represent a distinctive form of educational media occupying a valuable niche between comprehensive textbooks and ephemeral handouts. O'Farrelly & Tatlow-Golden (2022) describe booklets as simple visual booklets (or simple illustrated information booklets), which are low-cost and easily produced materials designed specifically for each project. They feature uncluttered pages, larger type, bright realistic illustrations, and visually led content to support young children's comprehension even for non-readers through narrative or storybook-style presentation. Unlike traditional textbooks that aim for comprehensive coverage, booklets target specific topics or learning objectives (such as explaining research activities, voluntary participation, and rights to choice), allowing focused engagement with selected content.

The pedagogical affordances of booklets have been documented across educational contexts. Holsey Foss et al. (2025) found that well-designed booklets can enhance student engagement by presenting information concisely and integrating visual elements that support comprehension. (van Aswegen & Pendergast, 2023) demonstrated the effectiveness of locally-themed booklets for teaching regional history, noting that students responded positively to materials connecting historical content to familiar landscapes. These findings align with broader research on multimedia learning, which establishes that combining text with relevant images enhances information processing and retention (Teng, 2023).

Effective booklet design requires attention to multiple dimensions. Content must be accurate, curriculum-aligned, and appropriately scaffolded for target learners. Visual elements including layout, typography, color schemes, and illustrations must support rather than distract from learning objectives. (Labischová, 2024) emphasizes that media design should follow principles of clarity, consistency, and cognitive accessibility, ensuring that format enhances rather than impedes comprehension. For historical content, visual materials must also meet disciplinary standards of authenticity and appropriate sourcing, enabling students to engage with images as evidence rather than mere illustration.

### ***Local Heritage as Pedagogical Resource in History Education***

The integration of local heritage into history education has emerged as a significant theme in international scholarship. (Jedlicki, 2022) conceptualizes heritage not as static objects but as cultural processes involving negotiation of meaning, identity construction, and community engagement. When students encounter local heritage sites and artifacts, they participate in these meaning-making processes, encountering history not as completed narrative but as ongoing dialogue between past and present. This perspective challenges traditional approaches that position heritage as merely illustrative of national narratives, instead recognizing it as generative of multiple, potentially contested meanings.

In post-colonial contexts, local heritage carries particular significance. Colonial-era buildings, landscapes, and artifacts embody the material legacy of colonial domination while also representing sites of adaptation, resistance, and cultural mixing (Peretti, 2024). Engaging students with colonial heritage requires pedagogical approaches that acknowledge this complexity, avoiding both romanticized erasure of colonial violence and simplistic condemnation that forecloses critical analysis. (Bellin & Bartolini, 2024) emphasizes that historical understanding in post-colonial societies requires navigating "narrative templates" that shape how collective pasts are remembered and represented. Local heritage sites offer opportunities to encounter colonial history as materially present, enabling students to develop nuanced understandings that transcend official narratives.

Research on place-based history education supports the pedagogical value of local heritage engagement. Karn (2024) demonstrate that engagement with local historical sites enhances historical empathy and perspective-taking. In the Indonesian context, studies have shown that locally-grounded materials can increase student engagement with history while fostering appreciation for regional cultural heritage (Birsyada et al., 2024). However, systematic development and validation of such materials remains limited, representing a gap this study addresses.

### ***Differentiated Instruction and the Merdeka Curriculum Framework***

The Merdeka Curriculum's emphasis on differentiated instruction reflects broader international trends recognizing that effective teaching responds to diverse learner needs. Adeniran et al. (2025) conceptualizes differentiation as a philosophical framework requiring teachers to proactively modify curricula, teaching methods, resources, and learning activities to address variations in student readiness, interest, and learning profiles. In history education, differentiation involves adapting how students engage with historical sources, construct historical narratives, and demonstrate understanding while maintaining disciplinary rigor (Smets & Savenije, 2025).

The development of locally-embedded teaching materials supports differentiated instruction by providing resources responsive to specific student populations. Materials drawing on local heritage enable teachers to connect abstract historical concepts to students' lived experiences, supporting learners who struggle with decontextualized

content. Visual elements accommodate diverse learning preferences, while varied activity types including the crossword puzzles incorporated in this booklet's design provide multiple entry points for engagement. As Adeniran et al. (2025) emphasize, effective differentiation requires a rich repertoire of materials and strategies; locally-developed resources expand this repertoire while ensuring cultural and contextual relevance.

## **Method**

### ***Research Design***

This study employs a Research and Development (R&D) approach, which systematically aims to produce new products or enhance existing ones through structured, iterative procedures (Ramot & Bialik, 2023). R&D methodology in educational research focuses on designing, developing, and evaluating instructional products to address specific learning needs while generating knowledge about effective design processes. Unlike purely descriptive research, R&D produces tangible, validated outputs that can directly inform educational practice.

The development model selected is the ADDIE model (Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, Evaluate), which provides systematic guidance for educational product development while maintaining flexibility for contextual adaptation (Dizon, 2025). The ADDIE framework was chosen for its comprehensive coverage of the development lifecycle, its emphasis on iterative refinement based on empirical feedback, and its widespread acceptance in instructional design research. The researchers adopted a procedural approach, implementing each stage sequentially while allowing for recursive refinement as findings from later stages informed revisions to earlier design decisions.

Due to resource and time constraints, the research was conducted through the implementation stage, culminating in limited trials with the target student population. While full implementation including broader dissemination and summative evaluation would strengthen claims about long-term effectiveness, the current design provides robust evidence of feasibility, acceptability, and initial efficacy.

### ***Data and Sources of Data***

This study utilized both qualitative and quantitative data obtained from multiple sources to ensure comprehensive understanding of the development process and product effectiveness. Data sources encompassed three categories essential for R&D research: expert informants, target users, and documentary evidence.

Expert informants comprised two faculty members from Universitas Negeri Semarang with specialized expertise relevant to the research. Dr. R. Soeharso, M.Pd., served as material expert, providing validation of content accuracy, curriculum alignment, and pedagogical appropriateness. Andy Suryadi, S.Pd., M.Pd., served as media expert, evaluating technical dimensions including layout, visual design, typography, and overall presentation quality. Additionally, the tenth-grade history teacher at SMA Negeri 1 Cepu, Bu

Stephani S.Pd., provided practitioner validation assessing practical usability and classroom appropriateness.

Target users consisted of tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Cepu during the 2023/2024 academic year. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants appropriate for the research objectives. The population comprised all tenth-grade students, from which class X-2 was selected as the sample based on teacher recommendation and schedule compatibility. This class participated in limited trials, with initial testing involving 10 randomly selected students followed by full-class implementation with 36 students. This sampling approach, while not permitting statistical generalization, provides rich information about user responses essential for formative evaluation.

Documentary sources included curriculum documents (Merdeka Curriculum guidelines, Learning Outcomes, Learning Objectives), historical resources (KITLV archival materials, academic publications on Cepu's colonial heritage, newspaper archives), and design materials (booklet drafts, validation instruments, student questionnaires).

### **Data Collection**

Data collection employed multiple techniques aligned with the ADDIE development stages, designed to capture both formative feedback for ongoing refinement and summative evidence of product quality.

During the analysis stage, semi-structured interviews were conducted on October 19, 2023, with the history teacher and several tenth-grade students. Teacher interviews explored perceptions of current teaching material availability, challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, and needs for locally contextualized resources. Student interviews examined experiences with history learning, difficulties encountered, and interest in locally-grounded materials. These interviews provided essential needs assessment data guiding subsequent design decisions.

During the design and development stages, literature study was conducted to gather content for the booklet. Sources included Merdeka Curriculum history textbooks, academic publications on Cepu's colonial history, archival materials from Leiden University's digital collections, KITLV image archives, and local historical resources. Content selection prioritized alignment with curriculum learning objectives, historical accuracy, and relevance to students' local environment.

Expert validation employed structured questionnaires developed based on National Education Standards Agency (BSNP) criteria for teaching materials assessment. Material validation instruments assessed content accuracy, curriculum alignment, language appropriateness, and pedagogical effectiveness across multiple indicators using a four-point Likert scale. Media validation instruments assessed layout quality, visual design, typography, image appropriateness, and overall presentation. Both instruments included open-ended sections for qualitative comments and suggestions. Validation occurred in two rounds: initial validation in December 2023, followed by revision and second validation in January 2024.

Student response data were collected through two rounds of trials. Initial limited trials on January 4, 2024, involved 10 randomly selected students completing questionnaires assessing booklet clarity, interest, and perceived learning value. Full-class trials on February 8, 2024, involved all 36 students in class X-2 completing similar questionnaires following booklet-based learning activities.

### ***Trustworthiness of Data***

Ensuring data trustworthiness in R&D research requires attention to both qualitative credibility and quantitative validity. Content validity for validation instruments was established by basing items on BSNP criteria and having instruments reviewed by research supervisors before use. Expert validators were selected based on demonstrated expertise in their respective domains, ensuring assessments reflected informed professional judgment.

Triangulation was employed to enhance credibility of needs assessment findings. Interview data from teachers and students were compared to identify convergent patterns, while observational notes provided additional contextual information. Member checking was conducted by summarizing key findings and presenting them to participants for verification.

Reliability of quantitative data was enhanced through careful instrument design, including clear item wording, consistent administration procedures, and use of established rating scales. For student response data, internal consistency was assessed through examination of response patterns across items, with no evidence of random or inconsistent responding.

While the study's focus on a single school limits generalizability, thick description of the research context, participants, and development process supports transferability by enabling readers to assess applicability to other settings.

### ***Data Analysis***

Data analysis employed techniques appropriate for the mixed-methods nature of R&D research. Quantitative data from validation questionnaires and student trials were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Following Sugiyono's (2015) guidelines, Likert-scale responses were converted to numerical scores and percentage feasibility calculated using the formula:

$$P = (f/N) \times 100\%$$

where P represents percentage, f represents obtained score, and N represents maximum possible score. Resulting percentages were interpreted using established criteria: 81.25-100% = highly feasible/no revision needed; 62.5-81.25% = feasible/minor revision; 43.75-62.5% = moderately feasible/revision needed; 25-43.75% = not feasible/major revision needed (Dewanti, 2020).

Qualitative data from interview transcripts and open-ended questionnaire responses were analyzed using content analysis techniques. Data were coded to identify themes related to teaching material needs, implementation challenges, and user responses to the developed booklet. These qualitative findings were used to contextualize quantitative results and provide detailed guidance for revisions.

Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings occurred iteratively throughout the development process. Quantitative ratings identified areas of concern, while qualitative comments provided detailed guidance for addressing those concerns. This integrated approach ensured that revisions were both targeted and informed.

## **Results**

### ***Needs Assessment: Teaching Material Gaps at SMA Negeri 1 Cepu***

Initial needs assessment conducted through interviews with the history teacher and students revealed significant challenges in teaching material provision under the Merdeka Curriculum. The teacher, Bu Stephani S.Pd., explained:

"The Merdeka Curriculum has only been used in tenth grade for one year, following the local education office's direction. Unfortunately, teaching materials for this curriculum are very limited because it's still new. For history class, we only have PDF modules, and we often have to use old curriculum textbooks for instruction. We really need additional teaching materials like posters, booklets, or other resources that students can use to supplement their references."

This account reveals multiple dimensions of the resource gap: limited quantity of materials, reliance on formats (PDF) that may not optimally support learning, and continued dependence on pre-Merdeka resources. The teacher's explicit expression of need for varied, print-based supplementary materials validates the research focus.

Student interviews confirmed these challenges while adding nuance about learning difficulties. Student Aditya Yuliansyah stated:

"History class in tenth grade sometimes faces problems with limited teaching materials. We often have to use old curriculum textbooks, which makes it quite difficult to learn history material. Some friends in class become lazy about studying."

Student Denissa Alifatul Lutfi elaborated on pedagogical concerns:

"The difficulty is that the teacher often uses lecture methods, and the material explained is too much. The examples for the material are hard to find in our environment, so it's difficult to understand what's being explained."

This comment identifies two interconnected challenges: pedagogical approach (lecture-dominated instruction) and content contextualization (lack of locally relevant examples). Students' expressed desire for materials connecting historical concepts to their environment directly supports the booklet's design orientation.

### ***Expert Validation Results***

Material expert validation was conducted in two rounds. Initial validation on December 7, 2023, yielded a feasibility score of 61%, falling within the "moderately feasible/revision needed" category. The expert provided specific recommendations including: adding

concise summaries of key content, ensuring clarity of source attribution, improving image-text alignment, enhancing material clarity, and incorporating engaging elements such as crossword puzzles to increase student interest.

Following revisions addressing these recommendations, second validation on January 11, 2024, yielded a substantially improved score of 90.3%, placing the material in the "highly feasible/no revision needed" category. Assessment across multiple dimensions showed strong improvement: content alignment with Learning Objectives improved from 2 (adequate) to 4 (excellent); readability ratings averaged 3.5 (good to excellent); and effectiveness for engaging student interest improved from 2.5 to 4 (excellent). These gains demonstrate the value of expert feedback in refining educational materials.

Media expert validation followed a similar trajectory. Initial validation on December 7, 2023, produced a feasibility score of 61%, indicating need for revision. The expert identified specific areas requiring attention: image placement requiring systematic organization; layout needing simpler, more attractive design; color schemes requiring better coordination with background images; cover design needing simplification and better alignment with title; typography requiring enhanced readability; and image sizing and positioning requiring adjustment.

Revisions addressed each recommendation systematically. Second validation on January 11, 2024, yielded a feasibility score of 86%, placing the media in the "highly feasible" category. Component-level assessment showed improvements: image and layout appropriateness improved from 3 to 4 (excellent); cover design from 2 to 3 (good); typography readability from 3 to 4 (excellent). These results confirm that systematic attention to design principles significantly enhances media quality.

Teacher validation conducted following revisions yielded a feasibility score of 90%, with the teacher affirming the booklet's alignment with curriculum objectives and appropriateness for tenth-grade learners.

### ***Student Response to Booklet Implementation***

Limited trials with 10 randomly selected students on January 4, 2024, produced a mean feasibility score of 77%, falling within the "feasible" category. Individual student ratings ranged from 58 to 65 (on a scale where higher scores indicate more positive response), with most students expressing appreciation for the visual elements and local connections.

Full-class implementation with all 36 students in class X-2 on February 8, 2024, yielded a mean feasibility score of 83%, placing the booklet in the "highly feasible" category. Individual scores ranged from 60 to 74, with the majority of students rating the booklet positively across all assessment dimensions. The increase from 77% to 83% between limited and full trials likely reflects both the larger sample providing more stable estimates and students' positive responses to the revised booklet following validation feedback.

Qualitative comments from students reinforced these quantitative findings. Students frequently mentioned appreciation for the visual elements, the connection to familiar local buildings, and the concise, accessible presentation of historical content. Several students expressed interest in visiting the buildings featured in the booklet, suggesting that the material succeeded in generating historical curiosity and connection to place.



Figure 1. Booklet as a developmental product

## Discussion

### *Situating Local Heritage Booklets within Global Curriculum Debates*

The development and positive reception of the Cepu colonial heritage booklet at SMA Negeri 1 Cepu illuminates broader dynamics in post-colonial curriculum reform. The Merdeka Curriculum's philosophical commitment to flexibility and contextualization creates space for locally-embedded resources, yet this space remains underutilized without deliberate development efforts. This study demonstrates that such efforts can yield materials that simultaneously address resource gaps, engage students, and cultivate historical literacy rooted in local heritage.

The booklet's success validates international scholarship emphasizing the pedagogical value of locally contextualized materials. (Li et al., 2025) argues that learner-centered education must be contextually appropriate to be effective, and that materials disconnected from students' lived experiences may fail to engage even when pedagogically sound. The Cepu students' positive response to materials featuring familiar buildings confirms that

local relevance enhances engagement. This finding resonates with Haq et al. (2024) critical pedagogy of place, which positions place-based learning as both pedagogically effective and politically significant enabling students to develop critical consciousness about their environments.

However, the development process also reveals tensions inherent in post-colonial heritage education. Colonial-era buildings embody complex, often painful histories of domination, exploitation, and racial hierarchy. Presenting such heritage as learning resources without adequate critical framing risks normalizing or romanticizing colonial presence. While the current booklet focuses on introducing buildings as evidence for historical research methods, future iterations should incorporate explicit attention to the power relations, labor systems, and social hierarchies that produced and were reproduced through these structures. As (Huss & Banerji, 2025) argues, engaging with colonial ruins requires attending to what remains affectively as well as materially the enduring inequalities, memories, and wounds that colonial projects left behind.

### ***The Development Process as Knowledge Production***

The iterative validation process employed in this study demonstrates the value of expert feedback in refining educational materials. The substantial improvement between initial and final validation scores for both material (61% to 90.3%) and media (61% to 86%) dimensions confirms that expert input can identify specific, actionable improvements that meaningfully enhance quality. This finding supports the integration of expert validation as standard practice in teaching materials development, particularly in resource-constrained contexts where materials may otherwise be developed without systematic quality assurance.

The specific recommendations provided by experts offer insights into design principles for locally-embedded historical materials. Material expert emphasis on concise summaries, clear source attribution, and engaging elements like puzzles suggests that historical booklets must balance depth with accessibility, academic rigor with student engagement. Media expert recommendations regarding layout, typography, image placement, and color schemes confirm that visual design significantly impacts user experience and learning effectiveness. These principles, while developed in this specific context, likely generalize to similar material development efforts elsewhere.

The teacher's role in validation merits particular attention. As the intended user of the developed material, the teacher's assessment of curriculum alignment, appropriateness for learners, and practical usability provides essential ecological validity. The high teacher validation score (90%) confirms that the booklet meets classroom needs, while the teacher's willingness to incorporate the material into instruction suggests sustainable adoption beyond the research context.

### ***Student Engagement and Historical Consciousness***

The strong student response to the booklet (83% feasibility rating) supports arguments that locally-grounded materials can enhance engagement with history. Students' expressed interest in visiting featured buildings suggests that the booklet succeeded in generating historical curiosity and connection to place a crucial precursor to developing

historical consciousness (Barsch, 2025). As Wineburg (2001) emphasizes, historical thinking requires first caring enough about the past to engage with it seriously; materials that spark such caring perform essential pedagogical work.

However, engagement alone does not guarantee development of sophisticated historical understanding. The booklet's focus on introducing buildings as evidence for research methods represents an initial step in historical thinking development. Future research should examine whether and how such materials contribute to deeper competencies including source analysis, perspective recognition, and understanding of historical significance. Longitudinal studies tracking students' historical thinking development following engagement with locally-embedded materials would provide valuable evidence about long-term impacts.

The booklet's focus on colonial heritage also raises questions about how students interpret and respond to such content. Research on historical consciousness in post-colonial contexts emphasizes that encountering colonial pasts involves navigating complex emotional terrain including shame, anger, pride, and ambivalence (Mattila et al., 2024; Savenije et al., 2019). While students in this study responded positively to the booklet, deeper investigation of their interpretations of colonial heritage would illuminate how such materials shape historical understanding and identity formation.

### ***Comparative Perspectives: Local Materials in Global Context***

The challenges addressed in this study, resource scarcity, need for contextualized materials, and desire to connect students with local heritage, are not unique to Indonesia but characterize history education across the Global South. Comparative research reveals similar dynamics in diverse settings: South African teachers and curriculum developers struggling with post-apartheid history education amid persistent material shortages, Eurocentric legacies, and the need to integrate marginalized narratives (Chimbunde, 2025; Iyer, 2025); educators in postcolonial African contexts navigating tensions between decolonial aspirations and inadequate resources for incorporating indigenous or local knowledge into school history (Magalhães Teixeira, 2025; Woldegiorgis, 2025) and broader Global South scholarship highlighting the marginalization of regional or local histories in favor of dominant national or Western frameworks, often due to epistemic violence and resource constraints (Zembylas, 2025a). Cepu booklet project contributes to this international conversation by documenting a systematic development process and providing evidence of feasibility and acceptability.

The Merdeka Curriculum's emphasis on teacher autonomy and contextual responsiveness positions Indonesian educators to contribute to global conversations about locally-appropriate pedagogy. Unlike centralized systems that prescribe uniform materials, the Merdeka framework creates space for teacher-led innovation. The Cepu booklet represents one example of how teachers and researchers can collaboratively develop resources responsive to local contexts while maintaining alignment with national curriculum objectives. Disseminating such examples through professional networks and scholarly publications can support broader innovation across the system.

The booklet's focus on colonial heritage also contributes to international scholarship on teaching difficult histories. Across post-colonial societies, educators grapple with how

to represent colonial pasts in ways that acknowledge violence and exploitation while avoiding simplistic victim narratives that foreclose critical analysis (Jhagroe & Salazar-Morales, 2025). The Cepu booklet's approach presenting colonial buildings as evidence for historical research without extensive critical framing represents one pedagogical strategy. Comparative research examining how different post-colonial contexts approach similar heritage would illuminate the possibilities and limitations of various approaches.

### ***Implications for Practice and Policy***

The findings carry several implications for educational practice and policy. First, they demonstrate that locally-embedded materials can be developed systematically using established R&D methodologies, even in resource-constrained settings. The process documented here including needs assessment, expert validation, iterative revision, and user testing provides a replicable model for similar initiatives elsewhere.

Second, the findings support investment in teacher capacity for materials development. The Merdeka Curriculum's flexibility creates opportunities for teacher-led innovation, but realizing these opportunities requires professional learning opportunities that develop design competencies. Teacher education programs and professional development initiatives should incorporate training in materials development, including principles of content selection, visual design, and validation.

Third, the positive student response suggests that integrating local heritage into formal curriculum can enhance engagement and foster historical consciousness. Policymakers should consider mechanisms for supporting local materials development, perhaps through competitive grants, recognition programs, or dissemination platforms that share exemplary resources across schools and regions.

Fourth, the validation process underscores the importance of quality assurance in materials development. While teacher autonomy is valuable, it should be complemented by systematic quality checks ensuring that locally-developed materials meet standards for accuracy, appropriateness, and effectiveness. The expert validation model employed here offers one approach that could be adapted for broader use.

### ***Conclusion and Limitation***

This study developed and evaluated a locally-embedded booklet on Dutch colonial heritage buildings in Cepu as an alternative teaching resource for history education under Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum. The research demonstrated that systematic R&D methodology can produce materials that meet expert standards for quality while generating strong student engagement. Expert validation yielded high feasibility scores (material experts 90.3%; media experts 86%), while student trials showed positive reception (83% approval). The findings confirm that locally anchored, visually rich materials can effectively bridge the gap between curriculum flexibility and resource scarcity, fostering historical literacy and strengthening student connection to regional heritage.

The study contributes to international discourse on Curriculum and Media Innovation for Historical Literacy by offering a replicable model for developing context-sensitive resources in post-colonial educational settings. It demonstrates that locally-embedded materials not only address immediate pedagogical needs but also cultivate historical

consciousness by enabling students to encounter colonial heritage as both local artifact and global historical phenomenon. The iterative validation process provides evidence that expert feedback meaningfully enhances material quality, supporting integration of systematic quality assurance into materials development practice.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The research was conducted at a single school with a relatively small sample, limiting generalizability to other contexts. While the development process produced materials appropriate for this setting, adaptation would likely be necessary for schools with different local heritage, student populations, or curriculum interpretations. The study focused on initial feasibility and acceptability rather than long-term learning outcomes; research examining whether booklet use leads to measurable gains in historical understanding would strengthen claims about effectiveness. The booklet's treatment of colonial heritage, while appropriate for introducing buildings as evidence, could be enhanced through more explicit attention to the power relations and social hierarchies embedded in colonial structures. Finally, resource constraints limited implementation to the trial stage; broader dissemination and sustained use would provide additional evidence about the material's value.

Future research should examine the booklet's impact on student learning outcomes through quasi-experimental designs comparing classes using the material with those relying on conventional resources. Longitudinal studies tracking students' historical consciousness development following engagement with locally-embedded materials would illuminate long-term effects. Comparative research examining similar initiatives across different Indonesian regions or post-colonial contexts would identify factors supporting or constraining local materials development. Studies investigating teacher uptake and adaptation of developed materials would illuminate how resources are actually used in classroom practice. Finally, research exploring student interpretations of colonial heritage content would deepen understanding of how such materials shape historical understanding and identity formation.

The development of locally-embedded teaching materials represents both a necessity and an opportunity in post-colonial educational contexts. It addresses immediate resource gaps while creating possibilities for reimagining how history is taught, learned, and understood. The Cepu colonial heritage booklet offers one model for such work, demonstrating that systematic, collaborative development can produce materials that are both academically sound and locally meaningful. As Indonesia and other post-colonial societies continue refining their educational approaches, locally-grounded resources will play an essential role in ensuring that curriculum reform translates into meaningful learning experiences connecting students to their multiple pasts and possible futures.

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