

Epistemological Foundations of Character Education Management Based on Local Values: A Conceptual Analysis of Pancawaluya

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the epistemological foundations of character education management through a conceptual analysis of Pancawaluya, a local value framework developed in West Java, Indonesia. It employs a qualitative conceptual approach, namely a literature review of scholarly publications and policy documents published between 2020 and 2026, complemented by limited contextual interviews with curriculum developers and school supervisors to clarify the cultural and policy background of Pancawaluya. The data were analyzed through thematic synthesis and conceptual analysis. The findings show that Pancawaluya functions as a set of living values rooted in socially constructed traditions and intergenerational practices rather than in written classical texts. Effective management of character education requires the integration of positivist, constructivist, and critical epistemological paradigms. This integration produces a hybrid managerial rationality that combines data-based accountability, participatory meaning-making, and reflective concern for justice and student well-being. The five Pancawaluya values also show conceptual correspondence with education-for-well-being agendas. This study concludes that local values can serve not only as pedagogical content but also as an epistemic framework for decision-making in character education management.

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Introduction

Social, cultural, and technological developments over the past decade have posed serious challenges to education systems, particularly in relation to adolescents' conditions. Students increasingly face bullying, peer violence, substance abuse, student brawls, and

problems of mental health and emotional well-being, and international assessments now treat life at school and students' well-being as core evidence for educational policy (OECD, 2023). Digital environments have reshaped peer interaction and the settings in which adolescents' risks and opportunities unfold; although the evidence for a simple causal harm is limited, such environments may amplify existing vulnerabilities (Odgers & Jensen, 2020). In West Java, a recent study of junior and senior high school students in Bandung showed that bullying involves perpetrators, victims, and bystanders whose roles differ by gender, educational level, and age, and the authors called for targeted school interventions and policies (Maslihah et al., 2025). These phenomena underscore that education can no longer be oriented solely toward academic achievement but must seriously strengthen character education capable of building students' moral, social, and psychological resilience, in line with UNESCO's (2021) call for education grounded in human dignity, cultural diversity, and an ethic of care and reciprocity.

In response to these challenges, the Indonesian government reaffirmed the orientation of character education through Regulation of the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education No. 10 of 2025 on Graduate Competency Standards, which formulates eight graduate profile dimensions: faith and devotion to God Almighty, citizenship, critical reasoning, creativity, independence, collaboration, physical and mental health, and communication (Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah Republik Indonesia, 2025). These dimensions reflect a holistic approach that integrates spiritual, cognitive, social, emotional, and physical aspects as the ultimate goals of education. However, achieving the graduate profile is not determined solely by curriculum design. Recent studies show that the dimensions can be connected to concrete classroom practices such as democratic discussion (Amalia et al., 2026), yet implementation at the school level may remain suboptimal and tends to be administrative (Salmi & Suriani, 2026). Research on school leadership likewise shows that leaders influence learning mainly indirectly and succeed by responding to context rather than by applying fixed recipes (Leithwood et al., 2020), which places the quality of managerial decision-making at the center of policy implementation at regional and school levels.

Within this context, the Province of West Java developed Pancawaluya Character Education as a local value-based character education strategy, articulated in West Java Governor's Circular Letter No. 43/PK.03.04/KESRA of 2025 on Gapura Panca Waluya education, which also provides special guidance for students who display deviant behavior (Pemerintah Provinsi Jawa Barat, 2025). Pancawaluya is rooted in the values of *cageur*, *bageur*, *bener*, *pinter*, and *singer*, representing orientations toward physical and mental health, moral virtue, integrity, intelligence, and creativity or adaptability. A systematic review of 18 articles published between 2018 and 2025 describes Pancawaluya as a Sundanese local wisdom philosophy of five dimensions of human perfection that has been passed down across generations, with character education as the most frequent theme (Fazriyah et al., 2026). Interviews with curriculum development teams and school supervisors conducted for this study indicate that Pancawaluya has long existed as a cultural term in West Java, commonly expressed as a prayer and hope by parents for their children. Although not explicitly found in written classical manuscripts, informants described it as an oral tradition and value practice known since at least the early twentieth century. Within the policy framework, these values were later formalized in response to adolescent social problems such as bullying, violence, substance abuse, and mental health challenges.

Epistemologically, the existence of Pancawaluya indicates that character education is derived not only from state normative constructions or formal policy texts but also from living values that are socially constructed and interpreted within communities. This positions Pancawaluya at the intersection of constructivist and sociocultural epistemologies, which view knowledge and values as products of interaction, collective experience, and cultural context, and which remind educators that educational purposes must be judged in relation to the world and not only to learners' expressed needs (Biesta, 2022; Rifai et al., 2025). The formulation of Pancawaluya Character Education was also consciously aligned with sustainable human development agendas, emphasizing balance among individual well-being, social relations, and environmental sustainability. This resonates with whole-school approaches that link student well-being to the core goals of schools and evaluate it by listening to multiple stakeholders (Edwards et al., 2024).

Previous research on local value-based character education has largely focused on pedagogical integration. Sakman and Syam (2020) proposed incorporating local wisdom into lesson plans and learning materials in every subject, with schools, families, and communities sharing responsibility for students' character. Arista et al. (2026) showed that the values of Gapura Pancawaluya align with the character goals of the *Merdeka* Curriculum and can be built into each stage of history instruction. Studies that touch on management reveal persistent difficulties. Ramdani et al. (2026) found that the management of learning based on the Sundanese value *hade tata hade basa* in two elementary schools in Purwakarta was not yet systematic: the values were not explicit in planning, habituation lacked structured strategies, and assessment focused mainly on cognitive outcomes. Similarly, Rahman et al. (2026) reported that teachers in Garut Regency perceived the Pancawaluya policy as additional administrative work rather than as values woven into classroom, extracurricular, and co-curricular activities.

Nevertheless, epistemological analyses of decision-making in character education management remain limited. Rifai et al. (2025) reviewed 40 peer-reviewed articles and found that epistemological theories shape strategic planning, evaluation, governance, and leadership development, but that limited epistemological understanding among decision-makers and weak cross-disciplinary dialogue hinder their wider use. In practice, implementing policies such as Pancawaluya requires managerial rationality that goes beyond data and accountability to include participatory dialogue, contextual meaning-making, and social justice reflection. This research gap underlies the present study. The novelty of this article lies in formulating an epistemological framework for character education management based on local values through the integration of positivist, constructivist, and critical paradigms, using Pancawaluya Character Education as the analytical context.

Based on the background and research gap outlined above, this study aims to examine the epistemological foundations of character education management through a conceptual analysis of Pancawaluya. Specifically, it seeks to (1) clarify the epistemic status of Pancawaluya as a living local value, (2) analyze the contribution of positivist, constructivist, and critical paradigms to managerial decision-making, and (3) formulate an integrative framework and relate it to the education-for-well-being agenda. This study is expected to enrich the philosophy of educational management and provide a conceptual foundation for reflective, adaptive, and equitable character education policies.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a conceptual literature review design. This approach was chosen to analyze in depth the epistemological foundations of character education management, particularly the integration of positivist, constructivist, and critical paradigms in the implementation of Pancawaluya Character Education. A conceptual design was appropriate because the aim was not to measure the effects of the policy but to clarify the assumptions about knowledge and values that underlie managerial decisions.

Primary data sources consisted of scholarly literature and policy documents relevant to epistemology, educational management, character education, and local value-based education policy. The literature was identified through Google Scholar using combinations of the keywords Pancawaluya, character education management, local wisdom, educational leadership, evidence-informed decision-making, critical policy analysis, and student well-being, in English and Indonesian. It included academic books, reputable national and international journal articles, and reports of international organizations published between 2020 and 2026 to ensure theoretical and contextual relevance. Sources were retained when they were directly relevant to Pancawaluya or to at least one of the three paradigms and had an identifiable bibliographic record. Selection and reporting followed the principle of transparent documentation of PRISMA 2020 (Page et al., 2021). Policy documents included Regulation of the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education No. 10 of 2025 (Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah Republik Indonesia, 2025) and West Java Governor's Circular Letter No. 43/PK.03.04/KESRA of 2025 (Pemerintah Provinsi Jawa Barat, 2025).

To enrich contextual understanding of the policy background and implementation practices, this study also utilized qualitative information from limited interviews with Pancawaluya curriculum developers and school supervisors. These interviews were not positioned as primary empirical data but served as policy insights to clarify cultural meanings, historical background, and policy orientation. Thus, the interviews functioned as interpretive support rather than as a basis for empirical generalization. Informants are not named in this article, and their views are reported only in aggregated, contextual form.

Data analysis was conducted through thematic synthesis and conceptual analysis, informed by the procedures of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) and applied to the literature and documents rather than to interview transcripts. The analysis involved four steps: (1) identifying and categorizing the literature based on epistemological paradigms (positivist, constructivist, and critical); (2) analyzing the implications of each paradigm for managerial decision-making in character education; (3) synthesizing the findings into an integrative conceptual framework; and (4) reflecting on the relevance of the framework to Pancawaluya Character Education and the education-for-well-being agenda.

To strengthen the trustworthiness of the analysis, this study triangulated three sources of information, namely scholarly literature, policy documents, and contextual interviews. It also documented the coding decisions that linked each source to a paradigm and treated its interpretations of Pancawaluya as provisional claims open to revision. As a conceptual study, it offers analytical rather than statistical generalization.

Results and Discussion

The analysis produced six interrelated findings that describe the epistemological foundations of Pancawaluya-based character education management: (1) the epistemic status of Pancawaluya as living values, (2) the contribution of the positivist paradigm, (3) the contribution of the constructivist paradigm, (4) the contribution of the critical paradigm, (5) the correspondence between Pancawaluya and the education-for-well-being agenda, and (6) the hybrid managerial rationality that emerges from their integration.

Finding 1: Pancawaluya as Living Values

Pancawaluya Character Education did not emerge merely as a technocratic policy construction but rather as a formal articulation of cultural values long practiced within West Javanese society. Contextual information from interviews with curriculum developers and school supervisors confirms that Pancawaluya has traditionally functioned as a parental prayer and hope for children's character development. The values of *cageur*, *bageur*, *bener*, *pinter*, and *singer* are understood as life orientations transmitted orally and intergenerationally, which positions Pancawaluya as living values legitimized through social practice rather than formal historical codification. This finding is consistent with the literature, in which Pancawaluya is described as a Sundanese local wisdom philosophy passed down across generations as a guide for forming whole and dignified persons (Fazriyah et al., 2026).

These findings indicate that the absence of Pancawaluya in written classical texts does not weaken its epistemological validity but instead highlights its adaptive and contextual nature. From a constructivist and sociocultural perspective, knowledge and values are constructed through interaction, language, and collective experience, so living local values can function as legitimate sources of knowledge in educational decision-making (Biesta, 2022; Rifai et al., 2025). This legitimacy is not unconditional. Biesta (2025) reminds us that education is oriented toward the world, with democracy and ecology among its concerns, so local values need to be examined reflectively in relation to the world that students share rather than simply preserved. This supports the position of Pancawaluya as an epistemic reference and not merely as cultural symbolism.

Finding 2: The Positivist Paradigm and Data-Based Accountability

Further analysis shows that implementing Pancawaluya Character Education requires managerial decision-making rationality that cannot be reduced to a single epistemological paradigm. Positivist approaches contribute through data-based accountability mechanisms, such as discipline indicators, student behavior records, and physical and mental health reports. These mechanisms make it possible to monitor bullying, violence, and well-being problems that would otherwise remain invisible, and they correspond to the formal models of educational management that emphasize rational, hierarchical, and evidence-supported decisions (Bush, 2020). They also align with the literature on evidence-informed decision-making, although Vanlommel et al. (2026) stress that evidence use is contextual and interpretive rather than linear, and that research, data, and professional expertise may conflict. In the epistemological mapping of Rifai et al. (2025), this contribution corresponds to empiricism supporting evidence-based decisions.

These findings indicate that data-driven approaches alone are insufficient to capture the qualitative and contextual complexity of character values. When a value such as *bener* is reduced to what can be counted, management risks the administrative compliance

reported in recent studies (Rahman et al., 2026; Salmi & Suriani, 2026) and the bias toward cognitive outcomes in assessment observed by Ramdani et al. (2026).

Finding 3: The Constructivist Paradigm and Participatory Meaning-Making

Constructivist paradigms enrich managerial practices through dialogue, deliberation, and collective meaning-making at the school level. Pancawaluya values gain operational meaning through the involvement of teachers, parents, and stakeholders, allowing *bageur* (social relations), *bener* (integrity), and *singer* (creativity) to be interpreted contextually. This aligns with the conclusion of Leithwood et al. (2020) that leadership has a greater influence when it is widely distributed and when practices are adapted to context, and with the collegial emphasis on shared decision-making in educational management theory (Bush, 2020). The same logic underlies the call of Sakman and Syam (2020) for schools, families, and communities to jointly shape students' character, and the finding of Arista et al. (2026) that Pancawaluya values can be integrated into each stage of instruction when teachers develop locally grounded materials.

These findings indicate that the constructivist paradigm turns Pancawaluya from a prescribed list of values into a shared interpretive practice. Without such participation, values are experienced as additional tasks imposed from above, as teachers in Garut described (Rahman et al., 2026). Participation also has limits: meanings negotiated locally may diverge from one another or reproduce existing hierarchies, which calls for the critical paradigm discussed next.

Finding 4: The Critical Paradigm, Justice, and Student Well-Being

Critical paradigms play a reflective role in evaluating policy implications for social justice and student well-being. Character education should not function as a repressive social control mechanism but as an affirmative space that protects students from bullying, violence, and social exclusion. This perspective resonates with critical policy studies that emphasize power relations and equity in policy implementation. Ball (2021) shows how education policy is entangled with marketization, performance pressures, and new forms of governance, and Diem and Brooks (2022) argue that critical policy analysis is a necessary counterpart to policy research that overlooks equity, social justice, and oppression. Within educational leadership, Arar et al. (2026) conclude that effective leadership must confront systemic inequalities and that policy itself can limit the implementation of social justice principles, while Lumby and Moorosi (2022) caution that scholarship on educational management may be constrained by the very frameworks that sustain it.

These findings indicate that the critical paradigm offers a reflexive check on the other two paradigms. For Pancawaluya, it directs managers to ask whether the special guidance provided for students with deviant behavior (Pemerintah Provinsi Jawa Barat, 2025) functions as support or as punishment, and whether bullying patterns that differ by gender, educational level, and age (Maslihah et al., 2025) are addressed through targeted and fair interventions instead of uniform sanctions.

Finding 5: Pancawaluya and the Education-for-Well-Being Agenda

In a broader context, Pancawaluya values can be placed in dialogue with global education-for-well-being agendas. UNESCO (2021) proposes a new social contract for education grounded in human rights, social justice, cultural diversity, and an ethic of care and reciprocity, while whole-school research emphasizes that well-being should be linked to the core goals of schools, build social capital, manage context and complexity, and be evaluated by listening to multiple stakeholders (Edwards et al., 2024). The analysis shows

a strong conceptual correspondence between the five Pancawaluya values and dimensions of well-being (Table 1): *cageur* aligns with physical and mental well-being (learning to live well), *bageur* with social well-being (learning to live together), *bener* with integrity and identity formation (learning to be), *pinter* with cognitive well-being (learning to know), and *singer* with creativity, agency, and sustainability (learning to do and to live sustainably).

Table 1. Conceptual Correspondence between Pancawaluya Values and Well-Being Dimensions

Pancawaluya value	Core orientation	Corresponding well-being dimension
Cageur	Physical and mental health	Physical and mental well-being (learning to live well)
Bageur	Moral virtue and goodness in social relations	Social well-being (learning to live together)
Bener	Integrity and truthfulness	Integrity and identity formation (learning to be)
Pinter	Intelligence	Cognitive well-being (learning to know)
Singer	Creativity and adaptability	Creativity, agency, and sustainability (learning to do and to live sustainably)

Note. Authors' analysis based on UNESCO (2021) and Edwards et al. (2024).

These findings reinforce the positioning of Pancawaluya as a local value framework compatible with global well-being agendas. The correspondence is analytical rather than empirical, and it should be read as a heuristic for aligning local values with international frameworks, not as proof that the policy produces well-being outcomes. Evidence on students' life at school, such as that compiled in the PISA 2022 results (OECD, 2023), suggests that such outcomes need to be monitored, which returns the discussion to the role of data-based accountability.

Finding 6: Toward a Hybrid Managerial Rationality

Synthesizing these findings suggests that decision-making in Pancawaluya-based character education management requires the simultaneous integration of positivist, constructivist, and critical paradigms (Table 2). This integration produces a hybrid managerial rationality that combines data objectivity, collective meaning-making, and reflective concern for justice and student well-being. Each paradigm compensates for a weakness of the others: data prevent values from remaining slogans, participation prevents data from being treated as self-explanatory, and critique prevents both from reproducing inequality. This is consistent with the finding that limited epistemological understanding among decision-makers is a barrier to effective educational management (Rifai et al., 2025), and with the view that high-stakes decisions require judging the interplay between evidence, context, and professional expertise (Vanlommel et al., 2026).

Table 2. Epistemological Paradigms and Their Contribution to Pancawaluya-Based Character Education Management

Paradigm	Managerial contribution	Application in Pancawaluya	Limitation if used alone
Positivist	Data-based accountability and monitoring	Discipline indicators, student behavior records, and physical and mental health reports (<i>cageur</i> , <i>bener</i>)	Reduces values to what can be counted and invites administrative compliance

Paradigm	Managerial contribution	Application in Pancawaluya	Limitation if used alone
Constructivist	Dialogue, deliberation, and collective meaning-making	Teachers, parents, and stakeholders interpret <i>bageur</i> , <i>bener</i> , and <i>singer</i> in the school context	Locally negotiated meanings may diverge or reproduce existing hierarchies
Critical	Reflection on power, equity, and student well-being	Examining whether practices protect students from bullying, violence, and exclusion rather than serve as social control	Critique without operational mechanisms for monitoring and participation
Hybrid rationality	Integration of all three paradigms	Evidence, participation, and reflection used together in policy and school decisions	Requires epistemological understanding among decision-makers

Note. Authors' synthesis based on Bush (2020), Rifai et al. (2025), and Vanlommel et al. (2026).

Consequently, Pancawaluya functions not only as a cultural identity marker but also as an epistemic reference for developing contextual, humanistic, and well-being-oriented character education management. In practical terms, principals and school supervisors can use the framework as a reflective checklist: which evidence is used, who participates in interpreting the values, and who benefits or is burdened by the decision.

Conclusion

This study affirms that managing character education based on local values requires an epistemological framework that transcends technocratic and instrumental approaches. Pancawaluya Character Education demonstrates that living local values can function as legitimate epistemic references in managerial educational decision-making when reflectively integrated with positivist, constructivist, and critical paradigms. The novelty of this study lies in positioning Pancawaluya as an epistemological framework for character education management rather than merely pedagogical content or cultural symbolism. Integrating these paradigms produces a hybrid managerial rationality combining data objectivity, collective meaning-making, and reflective concern for justice and student well-being, thereby contributing to the development of humanistic, equitable, and sustainable educational management. As a conceptual study supported by limited contextual interviews, its findings are analytical and not statistically generalizable. Future research should test the framework empirically, for example through case studies of schools in West Java that implement Pancawaluya, and examine how principals and supervisors actually combine data, dialogue, and critical reflection when making decisions.

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The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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The authors used Claude (Anthropic) for language editing, reference checking, and formatting support. The authors reviewed and verified all AI-assisted revisions and take full responsibility for the final content.

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