

# Integrating Theory and Practice through Field-Based Learning Strategies

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## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received May 12, 2025

Accepted October 14, 2025

Available online December 25, 2025

### Kata Kunci:

Pembelajaran Berbasis Lapangan; Kagaluhan; Sejarah Lokal; Partisipasi Siswa; Pembelajaran Kontekstual.

### Keywords:

Field Based Learning; Kagaluhan; Local History; Student Participation; Contextual Learning.



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## ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh perlunya model pembelajaran sejarah yang mampu menghubungkan teori dengan pengalaman nyata siswa. Tujuan penelitian adalah untuk menganalisis keterkaitan antara teori sejarah, nilai-nilai budaya, dan warisan arkeologi dengan praktik berbasis lapangan melalui penerapan pendekatan Pembelajaran Berbasis Lapangan dan menganalisis efektivitas Pembelajaran Berbasis Lapangan dalam memperdalam pemahaman mahasiswa dan mendorong partisipasi aktif mereka dalam mata kuliah Kagaluhan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Subjek penelitian adalah mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Sejarah yang mengikuti mata kuliah Kagaluhan sebanyak 20 orang, serta dosen pengampu mata kuliah. Partisipan juga meliputi pengelola situs sejarah lokal, dan tokoh masyarakat setempat. Teknik pengambilan partisipan dilakukan secara purposive sampling. Metode pengumpulan data yaitu observasi, wawancara, analisis dokumen dan triangulasi. Instrumen penelitian utama adalah lembar observasi dan panduan wawancara. Teknik analisis data menggunakan analisis deskriptif kualitatif dengan prosedur analisis data mengikuti model Miles dan Huberman. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa mampu menyatukan teori dengan sejarah, budaya, dan peninggalan arkeologi Galuh dengan fakta lapangan melalui kegiatan observasi di situs sejarah dan tradisi budaya lokal. Partisipasi siswa tampak melalui komunikasi verbal maupun nonverbal dalam diskusi serta keterlibatan aktif di lapangan. Kesimpulannya, Field-Based Learning efektif meningkatkan pemahaman materi, keterampilan berpikir kritis, kolaborasi, serta menumbuhkan penghargaan terhadap warisan sejarah dan budaya lokal.

## ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the need for a history learning model that can connect theory with students' real-life experiences. The purpose of this research is to analyze the relationship between historical theory, cultural values, and archaeological heritage in field-based practice through the application of the Field-Based Learning approach, and to assess the effectiveness of This Approach in deepening students' understanding and encouraging their active participation in the Kagaluhan course. This research uses a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. The subjects of the research were 20 students of the History Education Study Program who took the Kagaluhan course, as well as the lecturers teaching the course. Participants also included managers of local historical sites and local community leaders. The participant selection technique used was purposive sampling. Data collection methods included observation, interviews, document analysis, and triangulation. The main research instruments were observation sheets and interview guides. The data analysis technique used was qualitative descriptive analysis, with data analysis procedures following the Miles and Huberman model. The results showed that students were able to integrate theory with the history, culture, and archaeological heritage of Galuh with field facts through observation activities at historical sites and local cultural traditions. Student participation was evident through verbal and nonverbal communication in discussions and active involvement in the field. In conclusion, Field-Based Learning effectively improves material comprehension, critical thinking skills, and collaboration, while also fostering an appreciation for local historical and cultural heritage.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in enabling students to develop their potential in accordance with learning objectives. At the higher education level, universities are expected to produce graduates who not only possess a strong theoretical foundation but also can apply their knowledge practically and relevantly (Adib, 2017; Masriah et al., 2018; Putera & Shofiah, 2021; Sururi et al., 2022). Therefore, universities are expected to produce graduates who not only possess a strong theoretical foundation but also can apply their knowledge practically and relevantly to current needs (Hasan & Channa, 2021; Shim & Lee, 2020; Zhang & Ardasheva, 2019). This means that higher education should not stop at mastering concepts and theories alone, but should be directed towards developing comprehensive competencies, encompassing knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes (Adib, 2017; Dakhi et al., 2020; Putera & Shofiah, 2021). The ideal graduate is not only someone who understands theory in depth, but also someone who can utilize this knowledge to solve real problems in society, the industrial world, and the increasingly complex world of work (Adib, 2017; Putera & Shofiah, 2021; Qorib, 2024).

Universities need to design adaptive and contextual curricula that bridge the academic and practical worlds (Sasmi et al., 2017; Siregar et al., 2022). The implementation of project-based learning, industrial internships, applied research, and collaboration with various external sectors are crucial steps in strengthening students' practical skills. Lecturers also play a crucial role as facilitators, not only transferring knowledge but also fostering critical, creative, collaborative, and communicative thinking skills (Butarbutar & Ismanto, 2022; Hutabarat, 2020; Liu et al., 2018; S. Supriati, 2018). With this combination of theoretical mastery and practical experience, university graduates are expected to possess global competitiveness and a high level of social sensitivity. Students are not only able to adapt to changes in the world of work but can also become agents of change, contributing to societal progress (Amiruddin et al., 2022; Simonsmeier et al., 2020). Thus, the primary goal of higher education is not only to produce educated workers but also to cultivate intelligent, innovative, and characterful individuals who are prepared to face future challenges.

However, a current problem is that students struggle to connect theoretical frameworks to the historical realities they encounter. This often results in a limited and abstract understanding of the subject, with minimal relevance to the surrounding community's cultural and social life. This is reinforced by previous findings that indicate numerous challenges faced by college graduates (Handayani & Supriati, 2018; Qorib, 2024). Other findings also suggest that students can articulate theories but are unable to use them critically to assess the validity of evidence or construct interpretations (Cowgill, D. A. & Waring, 2017; Wilke et al., 2023). Observations at Galuh University on the Kagaluhan course also indicate that students struggle to connect theoretical frameworks to the historical realities they encounter. The Kagaluhan course is a distinctive component of the university curriculum that focuses on exploring the historical and cultural heritage of the Galuh Kingdom as part of the broader Sundanese civilization. This course is designed to help students understand the philosophical and moral values embodied in Kagaluhan culture through the study of history, local traditions, and archaeological evidence. In this course, students are encouraged to analyze the social, political, and religious systems of the Galuh Kingdom while engaging directly with historical sources and archaeological remains, including inscriptions and ancient artifacts. Learning activities conducted primarily in the classroom tend to leave students' understanding of historical concepts only at an abstract level. The lack of direct interaction with historical objects or sites leaves their understanding shallow and disconnected from the cultural essence of the Galuh civilization.

Based on these problems, an approach is needed that can improve student skills. In this case, the Field-Based Learning approach is considered highly relevant for the Kagaluhan course because it helps bridge the gap between theory and practice. The field trip model, also called Field-Based Learning, is an instructional approach that focuses on psychological development related to skills and actions (Fedesco et al., 2020; Leininger-Frézal & Sprenger, 2022). The field trip model includes three subdimensions or types of learning behaviors: (a) seeking feedback and engaging in reflective learning, (b) learning through observing others, and (c) learning through experimentation and new experiences (Fedesco et al., 2020; Leininger-Frézal & Sprenger, 2022; Olabode, 2023; Turasih et al., 2024; Yaya et al., 2025). These dimensions demonstrate that Field-Based Learning not only supports the development of cognitive understanding but also fosters affective and psychomotor growth through active participation and experiential learning (Kandamby, 2021; Orekat et al., 2025). Field-based learning has long been recognized as a practical approach to bridging the gap between theory and practice (Ilhami, A., Susilawati et al., 2023; Qolamani, 2024). Initially, this method was introduced to provide students with opportunities to visit specific locations directly related to the learning material, enabling them to gain firsthand experience and a deeper contextual understanding.

Previous findings suggest that field-based learning will help students practice their skills (Karyadi & Aswin, 2019; Yuliyanto et al., 2024). Other studies have also shown that field-based learning can enhance knowledge and skills (Jansing, 2025; Karp, 2022; Morris, 2023). In the Kagaluhan course, which explores

the history, culture, and values of the Galuh Kingdom, the Field-Based Learning approach has great potential as a learning strategy. This method enables students to directly engage in learning activities at historical sites, including Karangkamulyan, Astana Gede Kawali, Mount Susuru, Bojong Salawe, and Kampung Kuta. Through these field experiences, students are able not only to understand the material conceptually but also to develop practical skills in historical observation, interpretation, and analysis. Despite its potential benefits, the application of Field-Based Learning in higher education, particularly in the Kagaluhan course, has received limited academic attention. Only a few studies have explored its implementation in terms of instructional design, practical challenges, and its overall impact on student learning outcomes. Based on this, the purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between historical theory, cultural values, and archaeological heritage in field-based practice through the application of the Field-Based Learning approach, and to assess the effectiveness of This Approach in deepening students' understanding and encouraging their active participation in the Kagaluhan course.

## 2. METHOD

This research uses a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. This approach aims to provide an in-depth description of the phenomenon of applying Field-Based Learning (FBL) in the learning of the Kagaluhan course at Galuh University. Qualitative descriptive research is employed to understand social phenomena from the participants' perspectives through direct interaction in the field (Sugyono, 2012). The qualitative descriptive process usually involves three sequential stages: (1) the orientation or description stage, (2) the data reduction stage, and (3) the selection and elaboration stage, in which the research focus is refined and examined in more depth (Sugyono, 2012). Descriptive research is designed to provide an accurate picture of the conditions of the phenomenon that exist at the time of the research. By using this method, this research can conduct an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon, allowing the identification of patterns and trends that emerge from the observed events. The research procedure is carried out through three main stages. First, the Orientation stage (Initial Description): the researcher observes the learning process and determines the research focus. Second, the Data Reduction stage. Information obtained from the field is selected, categorized, and grouped according to the central theme of the research. Third, the Presentation and Verification stage. The results of observations, interviews, and documentation were analyzed and verified using triangulation techniques to ensure the validity of the conclusions (Sugyono, 2012).

The research subjects consisted of 20 students from the History Education Study Program at Galuh University who were enrolled in the Kagaluhan course, as well as the lecturers who taught the course. Participants also included managers of local historical sites, such as those at Karangkamulyan, Astana Gede Kawali, and Bojong Salawe, as well as local community leaders, who served as additional informants to enrich the field data. The participant selection technique employed was purposive sampling, which involves selecting subjects based on specific criteria, specifically their direct involvement in the field-based learning process (Sugyono, 2012). The methods used to collect data included observation, interviews, document analysis, and triangulation. Participant observation, in which the researcher is directly involved in the daily activities of the observed subjects, was used to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences. In this study, the researcher participated as a guide in the learning process of the Kagaluhan course, which was conducted at the historical site. In-depth interviews involve flexible, open, and informal interactions that allow for repeated conversations with the same informants when necessary. In this study, interviews were conducted with guides at several historical sites, including Karangkamulyan, Astanaga Kawali, Bojong Salawe, and Mount Susuru. Document analysis methods included a review of syllabi, student field notes, and observation reports. Content analysis is a technique that involves the systematic examination of documents, such as syllabi and teaching materials, related to Kagaluhan learning activities. Triangulation is a technique that integrates several data collection methods and sources to enhance the credibility and validity of the research findings. The primary research instruments were observation sheets and open-ended interview guides, which were used to record students' activities, participation, and reflections during field activities. The instrument grid is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Research Instrument Grid**

Observed Aspects	Indicators	Data Format	Data Source
Student Engagement	Actively asking questions, taking notes, and interacting with sources	Field notes, activity photos	Students, Lecturers

Observed Aspects	Indicators	Data Format	Data Source
Integration of Theory and Practice	Ability to connect historical theories with site observations	Interview transcripts, observation reports	Students
Critical Thinking Skills	Formulating arguments based on field facts	Presentation results, discussion notes	Students
Collaboration and Communication	Group collaboration and the ability to communicate	Lecturer observation notes, presentation documentation	Students, Lecturers
Appreciation of Local Cultural Values	Understanding the meaning and values of local traditions	Interviews, written reflections	Students, Community Leaders

The data analysis technique used was qualitative descriptive analysis. The data analysis procedure follows the Miles and Huberman model (Sugyono, 2012), which consists of three interrelated stages. The first stage, data reduction, involves selecting, simplifying, and focusing on relevant data from field observations, interviews, and document analysis. At this stage, the researcher groups the data according to the main research themes, such as student involvement, the integration of theory and practice, and the appreciation of local cultural values. This reduction process aims to eliminate irrelevant data and sharpen the focus of the analysis on the phenomenon being studied. The next stage is data presentation, which involves organizing the reduced data into descriptive narratives, tables, and representative quotations from interviews. This presentation aims to clearly and logically demonstrate the interrelationships between findings, facilitating the researcher's understanding of the connection between field-based learning theory and students' empirical experiences at historical sites. The final stage is conclusion drawing and verification, in which the researcher interprets the meaning of the presented data and formulates tentative conclusions, which are then repeatedly verified to ensure their validity. The verification process was conducted through triangulation techniques of sources, methods, and time to ensure the validity of the research findings. Thus, the results of the data analysis in this study not only describe the phenomenon descriptively but also reveal a more profound meaning regarding the effectiveness of the Field-Based Learning strategy in improving students' conceptual understanding and active participation in the Kagaluhan course.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Result

Identifying the Relationship between Historical Theory, Culture, and Archaeological Heritage of Kagaluhan and Field Practice through a Field-Based Learning Approach. Innovative learning practices support the realization of the four pillars of education: learning to know, learning to do, learning to collect, and learning to become (Hartati, 2023). Therefore, theory and practice function as interrelated components in fostering meaningful and contextual learning experiences that holistically nurture students' intellectual and moral growth. In the Kagaluhan course, which adopts an integrative learning approach, students are encouraged to explore the relationship between historical theories discussed in class, cultural values embedded in society, and archaeological artifacts that serve as tangible evidence of the past. The implementation of the Field-Based Learning strategy effectively bridges theoretical concepts with real-world experiences. These connections are examined through systematic observation, interviews, and student reflection. Through the PBL process, students are not only introduced to knowledge but also allowed to experience, interpret, and reflect on historical heritage as part of their character development and cultural identity. The results of this process reveal the complex relationship between historical theory, cultural values, and archaeological evidence of Kagaluhan, which collectively contribute to a deeper understanding of history and heritage through experiential learning. The findings regarding the relationship between historical theory, cultural values, and archaeological heritage of Kagaluhan and its implementation in field practice through Field-Based Learning (PBL). In the Kagaluhan course, one of the main topics discusses the archaeological heritage of the Galuh Kingdom. To enhance students' understanding of this course, the lecturer divided the 20 enrolled students into three groups, each assigned to conduct field observations at different historical sites. The first group was assigned to observe the Karangkamulyan site, the second group to the Astana Gede Kawali site, and the third group to the Bojong Salawe site. Each group was given one week to conduct field observations, analyze their findings, and present the results in a PowerPoint presentation. In the Kagaluhan lesson material, it is explained that the first palace of the Galuh Kingdom was located in Karangkamulyan, a site founded by King Wretikandayun, the first Galuh King, in the 7th century, specifically in 612 AD. In field observations, students examine the

site to identify historical evidence of the Galuh Kingdom by applying the theoretical framework discussed previously in class. They compile detailed field notes and visual documentation that capture archaeological and cultural traces, reflecting the legacy of the Galuh civilization in the 7th century.

In addition to the Karangkamulyan material, the Kagaluhan course also examines Astana Gede Kawali, recognized as the second palace of the Galuh Kingdom during the reign of Maharaja Prabu Linggabuana (Siliwangi), the father of Diah Pitaloka and Niskala Wastu Kancana, who died in the Battle of Bubad in 1357 AD. The inscriptions found at the site provide valuable historical records, including references to Niskala Wastu Kancana, a ruler renowned for advancing the welfare of his people through the development of irrigation systems. Other inscriptions document aspects of the Sundanese calendar, reflecting the advanced socio-cultural and administrative systems of the Galuh Kingdom. The Bojong Salawe site is located at Sanghyang Cipta Permana Prabu Digaluh, in Tunggalrahayu Hamlet, Cimaragas Village, Cimaragas District, Ciamis Regency. This site is one of the locations in Ciamis Regency that preserves the history of the region's origins. After conducting field observations at various heritage sites of the Galuh Kingdom in Ciamis Regency, the students presented their research findings to the class via a PowerPoint presentation. The presentations demonstrated a more comprehensive understanding of historical narratives after firsthand encountering the sites, inscriptions, and locations they had previously only known about through books or even stories. They stated that "Seeing historical relics firsthand makes the stories of the past more vivid and meaningful."

Field learning activities, also known as Field-Based Learning, are a practical approach to connecting classroom theory with the cultural realities of the community. In the Kagaluhan course, visits to historical and cultural sites in the Ciamis region provide students with the opportunity to directly experience the cultural heritage that is preserved by the local community. For example, at the Ciung Wanara Site, the Ngikis ritual is held; at the Astana Gede Kawali Site, the Nyiar Lumar ritual is held; and at the Bojong Salawe Site, the Misalin ritual is regularly performed. Each of these traditional ceremonies is held annually and remains an integral part of community life. The Ngikis traditional ceremony, one of the most prominent traditions, is an ancient ritual that has become a cultural symbol for the Karangkamulyan community. Passed down from generation to generation since the early 19th century, this tradition contains a wealth of local wisdom. This tradition encompasses eleven key values, including religious, social, linguistic, moral, historical, cultural, economic, intellectual, ethical, and aesthetic values, as well as the principles of silih asah, silih asih, and silih asuh (mutual learning, mutual love, and mutual care). These values reflect the depth of the community's cultural philosophy and its ongoing commitment to preserving ancestral traditions. Some elements that demonstrate religious values include: 1) Recitation of Shalawat and Sholawat: Although the ritual still contains traditional elements, the core of today's Ngikis activity is the recitation of shalawat and sholawat to the Prophet Muhammad SAW. 2) Pilgrimage to Ancestral Tombs: This pilgrimage activity, which may have originally been a form of pure respect for ancestors, is in line with Islamic teachings about respecting and praying for the deceased. 3) Use of Religious Attributes: In the Ngikis ritual, many attributes or symbols that have religious meanings in Islam are used.

Social values are embedded in the Ngikis tradition, primarily through cooperation (*gotong royong*) and deliberation (*musyawarah*), which are integral to its implementation. These activities encourage interaction, cooperation, and solidarity among community members. The Ngikis tradition involves the entire community, from traditional leaders and administrators to the village population at large, in preparing and carrying out rituals. This practice of cooperation directly fosters a sense of togetherness, mutual support, and social solidarity. Tasks that previously seemed daunting become more manageable when undertaken together, thereby strengthening interpersonal relationships and social cohesion. Through the practices of cooperation and deliberation, the Ngikis tradition transcends its spiritual essence, serving as a social institution that strengthens communal solidarity and social harmony. This demonstrates that this tradition has two dimensions: vertical, reflecting the relationship between humans and divine entities or ancestors; and horizontal, manifested in strong bonds and mutual respect among community members.

The Ngikis traditional ceremony is held at the Karangkamulyan site, believed to be the political and cultural center of the ancient Galuh Kingdom. The ceremony's significance stems from the historical relics within this sacred area, each of which bears symbolic ties to the kingdom's heritage and the community's collective memory. Pangcalikan, a stone traditionally regarded as a royal seat or council stone, where Galuh rulers once held deliberations. In the Ngikis ritual, Pangcalikan serves as the focal point, with the surrounding bamboo fence ceremonially renewed as a sign of respect and spiritual renewal. Ancestral Tombs. Several tombs, including those of Duke Panaekan, are integral to the Ngikis procession. These tombs serve as pilgrimage and memorial spaces, where participants offer prayers in honor of the founders and leaders of the former kingdom. Panyabungan Hayam. This area is believed to be the site of traditional cockfights once held as part of a contest for the royal throne, a narrative often associated with the legendary figure Ciung Wanara.

This tradition serves as an effective medium for preserving and passing on ancestral cultural heritage. The Ngikis tradition contains profound symbolic meanings that reflect the Sundanese worldview and cosmology. One prominent example is the ritual of replacing the bamboo fence surrounding the Pangcalikan area. The fence serves not only as a physical barrier but also as a symbol of protection, sanctity, and a separation between the physical and spiritual worlds. The act of renewal in this ritual signifies a reaffirmation of the community's commitment and passion to preserving its cultural heritage. In the Ngikis ceremony, the use of Old Sundanese is an essential cultural element. Prayers, chants, and aphorisms delivered by ritual administrators or traditional elders are often expressed in the original Sundanese language, strengthening linguistic and cultural identity. This practice serves as a vital mechanism for preserving and revitalizing local languages, preventing their gradual extinction. Cultural values are preserved and passed on through the crucial role of ritual guardians and traditional elders. They serve as keepers of ancestral knowledge and oral traditions that have been passed down through generations. Through their guidance and narrative articulation, participants gain a deeper understanding of the meanings contained in each ritual, symbol, and philosophical aspect of the tradition.

Ethical values are integrated into the Ngikis tradition through a series of rituals and symbolic expressions that emphasize respect, propriety, and conformity to established social and customary norms. This tradition serves not only as a ritual but also as a means of moral development, guiding participants toward ethically grounded behavior in community life. The moral value embodied in the Ngikis tradition is modesty, which is evident in appearance and behavior. Participants, especially ritual guardians and elders, typically wear neat and modest traditional clothing as a sign of respect for ancestors and acknowledgment of the sacred site. This practice conveys the ethical principles of situational propriety and self-control. During the ritual, all participants are expected to maintain a calm and respectful demeanor at all times. The prohibition on using foul language or displaying inappropriate behavior in the ritual area is an important aspect of the ethical values that must be upheld. One of the most significant unwritten rules is the prohibition against damaging or removing any element of the sacred site, including its flora and fauna. This principle conveys a profound ethical message about the importance of preserving nature and cultural heritage. The ritual of cleaning the site before the ceremony begins is a concrete manifestation of cleanliness and environmental responsibility. This ritual not only symbolizes physical purification but also a moral commitment to maintaining harmony between humans and their environment.

A core ethical principle in the Ngikis tradition is respect, demonstrated through participants' behavior toward their ancestors and fellow community members. The pilgrimage and prayer rituals are performed as an expression of deep respect for the founders of the Galuh Kingdom, recognizing their spiritual heritage and historical significance. Obedience and respect for elders and ritual officers leading the ceremonies reflect an ethic of courtesy and gratitude, underscoring the community's appreciation for age, wisdom, and leadership (Irma). The value of love in the Ngikis tradition reflects a universal and unconditional form of affection that transcends ethnicity, religion, or ideology. During visits to ancestral graves at the Karangkamulyan site, participants offer prayers not only to well-known historical figures but also to unknown predecessors. This practice embodies a genuine sense of appreciation and respect for the contributions of previous generations, regardless of their individual identities. This tradition involves participants across generations, from children to the elderly. This intergenerational interaction strengthens bonds of affection, as older members share stories and wisdom, while younger participants learn to respect and appreciate their cultural heritage.

The value of acceptance or tolerance is embodied in the Ngikis tradition as follows. Interfaith Participation: Although Ngikis incorporates elements of Islamic practices alongside ancient Sundanese cultural traditions, it remains inclusive and welcomes participation from all faiths. This openness reflects the community's commitment to accepting and acknowledging cultural and religious diversity (Agus Safyudin). The Ngikis tradition at the Karangkamulyan site is an annual ritual that embodies the complex interaction of religious, social, historical, cultural, and ethical values. Religiously, this tradition combines Islamic teachings with local spiritual beliefs, as seen in the recitation of prayers and pilgrimages to ancestral graves, led by key figures such as Prince Dipati Imbanagara. Socially, this ritual strengthens community cohesion through practices of cooperation and collective deliberation, fostering a sense of togetherness. Historically, this ritual holds significant weight, as it takes place in the center of the former Galuh Kingdom and serves as a channel for preserving and passing down oral history. Culturally, this tradition maintains local identity through the use of symbolism, Sundanese language, and traditional art. Ethically, this tradition encourages good behavior, environmental responsibility, and inclusivity, reflecting the values of compassion and acceptance. Thus, Ngikis is a holistic expression of local wisdom, uniting diverse aspects of life into one meaningful practice.

Second, evaluating the Effectiveness of Field-Based Learning in Improving Student Understanding and Engagement in Kagaluhan Material. To evaluate the effectiveness of Field-Based Learning (PBL) in

enhancing student understanding and active participation in Kagaluhan material, several steps can be taken, as follows. First, understanding the material by connecting field observations with classroom theory. In the Kagaluhan course, students' understanding of the material is developed not only through theoretical learning in class, but also strengthened through field observation activities. Observation, as a data collection technique, involves systematically monitoring and recording the conditions or behavior of target subjects. Theories taught in class, such as concepts related to the Galuh Kingdom, social structures, cultural traditions, and archaeological artifacts, provide an initial framework for students to interpret real-world phenomena. By conducting direct observations at historical and cultural sites, such as the Ciung Wanara Site associated with the Galuh Kingdom, students can compare and verify information obtained from the literature. Interaction with local communities, participation in ritual observations, and direct exposure to archaeological remains offer empirical experiences that deepen and broaden students' understanding. This process facilitates the integration of theory and practice: abstract concepts become concrete when connected to field evidence, while insights gained from observation can, in turn, enrich theoretical understanding with new contextual perspectives. The combination of classroom theory and field experiences encourages students not only to master cognitive knowledge but also to develop analytical skills, critical thinking, and an appreciation for local cultural heritage. This approach fosters a holistic learning experience that bridges intellectual understanding with practical engagement.

Second, participation in group discussions and presentations. Student involvement in group discussions and class presentations in the Kagaluhan course is an important strategy for developing critical thinking, collaborative, and communicative skills. During the group discussion phase, students are encouraged to exchange ideas, connect field observations with theories learned in class, and analyze emerging issues related to the historical heritage and cultural traditions of Galuh. This process encourages students to not only rely on individual understanding but also to construct knowledge collectively. The learning method is a commonly applied learning strategy that improves student learning outcomes, particularly in specific subjects. In its implementation, several steps are taken, including organizing students into discussion groups, providing relevant discussion materials, and providing guidance on discussion procedures. Students are then tasked with analyzing the material and drawing conclusions based on the results of their collaborative discussions. Through in-class presentations, students are allowed to present the results of their group discussions in a structured and coherent manner. These presentations allow students to practice organizing arguments, supporting their claims with empirical field evidence, and communicating ideas clearly. Furthermore, the subsequent Q&A session encourages students to think critically, defend their points of view rationally, and remain open to alternative perspectives and constructive feedback. Thus, participating in discussions and presentations not only enhances students' understanding of the Kagaluhan material but also develops important soft skills, including teamwork, effective communication, and problem-solving abilities. These experiences prepare students to face academic and social challenges in a broader context, bridging theoretical knowledge with practical application.

Third, evaluation instruments. In teaching the Kagaluhan course, lecturers conduct observations as part of the learning evaluation process. Field observations are learning activities outside the classroom that aim to collect data directly from the research location. Through this method, the data obtained are more valid and closer to real conditions. These observations are conducted by recording the level of student activity, both in the field and during class discussions. During field activities, lecturers observe the extent to which students are involved in the direct observation process, such as asking questions to informants, recording important information, and showing curiosity about the object being studied. These activities are important indicators for assessing the extent to which students can connect the theories they have learned with reality in the field. Meanwhile, during class discussions, lecturers observe and record student participation in expressing opinions, responding to other groups' perspectives, and contributing to collective conclusions. These observation notes serve as the basis for assessing students' abilities to think critically, collaborate effectively, and communicate ideas in an academic context. Therefore, lecturer observations have two purposes: as a tool to monitor student understanding and as a basis for reflecting on and improving future teaching and learning strategies.

Fourth, Interpretation and Follow-Up. This approach is an innovative strategy that aims to encourage a natural learning process by actively engaging students in real-world tasks and experiences. Field-based learning is recognized as an effective method of experiential learning that bridges theory and practice. Field-based learning is not simply an extracurricular activity, but has been shown to improve students' understanding, engagement, and overall learning outcomes. By directly encountering situations previously studied only in theory, students can internalize knowledge more effectively, critically reflect on their experiences, and develop practical skills that complement their academic understanding. The application of Field-Based Learning in the Kagaluhan course has proven effective in bridging theoretical

knowledge with real-world experiences, thereby enhancing student understanding and engagement. Through a combination of field observations, group discussions, and presentations, students not only gain a more concrete understanding of the material but also develop critical skills, including analysis, communication, collaboration, and problem-solving. Supported by lecturers' systematic observation of student activities, PBL is an innovative experiential learning strategy that makes Kagaluhan material more dynamic, contextual, and meaningful.

## Discussion

First, identifying the relationship between theories of Kagaluhan history, culture, and archaeology and field practice. The findings of this study indicate that theoretical knowledge and practical experience complement each other in fostering meaningful and character-oriented learning (Arifin, 2020; Sasmita Sari et al., 2024; Sobri et al., 2019). Learning theory provides a set of guiding principles that inform how the educational process should be conducted, while innovative field-based practices serve as concrete mechanisms for applying these principles in real-world contexts (Ilhami, A., Susilawati et al., 2023; Qolamani, 2024). Through Field-Based Learning, students can connect abstract concepts related to Kagaluhan history, culture, and archaeology with real-world experiences, thereby deepening their understanding and appreciation of the subject matter. Innovative learning practices implemented through Field-Based Learning strategies have proven effective in bridging theoretical knowledge with real-world experiences (Fedesco et al., 2020; Leininger-Frézal & Sprenger, 2022). Students not only gain cognitive understanding but also directly engage with, understand, and reflect on the historical and cultural heritage that is an integral part of their identity. This approach aligns with UNESCO's four pillars of learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together (Annisha, 2024; Prasetyono & Trisnawati, 2018).

Second, the connection between historical theory and field evidence. Observations at the sites of Karangkamulyan, Astana Gede Kawali, and Bojong Salawe demonstrate how historical theory discussed in class is supported by archaeological evidence in the field. Students can connect historical narratives with concrete material traces, including inscriptions, documents, traditional manuscripts, and other archival sources, as well as physical remains and remains of the sites. Direct engagement strengthens students' understanding, transforming abstract concepts into concrete realities that can be directly observed and analyzed (Fedesco et al., 2020; Leininger-Frézal & Sprenger, 2022; Olabode, 2023; Turasih et al., 2024; Yaya et al., 2025). The connection between cultural values, social practices, and value systems represents an integrated whole, as sociologically, individual values are closely linked to broader social realities (Damayanti et al., 2025; Musanna et al., 2017). Enduring local traditions, such as the Ngikis ceremony in Karangkamulyan, Nyiar Lumar in Kawali, and Misalin in Bojong Salawe, illustrate the continuity of cultural values passed down across generations. By actively participating in observing these rituals, students gain insights that go beyond historical knowledge to encompass religious, social, cultural, moral, ethical, and compassionate dimensions. Religious values are realized through prayer and pilgrimage; social values emerge through cooperation and collective deliberation. Historical values are evident in the relationship between ritual and the heritage of the Galuh Kingdom. Cultural values are expressed through symbolism, language, and the role of key keepers (Aryani, 2019; Fazalani et al., 2024).

Third, the effectiveness of Field-Based Learning in Improving Student Understanding and Participation in the Material of Kagaluhan. The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of Field-Based Learning in the Kagaluhan course effectively improves conceptual understanding and active student participation. Student engagement in class is reflected through verbal and nonverbal communication (Fedesco et al., 2020; Leininger-Frézal & Sprenger, 2022). This learning process extends beyond traditional classroom learning. It includes empirical experiences in the field, thus encouraging greater motivation in local history courses and encouraging students to actively explore and analyze events (Fedesco et al., 2020; Leininger-Frézal & Sprenger, 2022; Olabode, 2023; Turasih et al., 2024; Yaya et al., 2025). By connecting historical facts to students' surroundings, the learning atmosphere becomes more engaging and enjoyable (Limin, SteLimin & Kundiman, 2023; Widiastuti, 2017). Consequently, this approach facilitates the integration between knowledge (cognitive understanding) and experience (practical engagement), thus creating a complementary and holistic learning experience.

Fourth, strengthening understanding of the material. Direct observation activities at historical and cultural sites, such as Ciung Wanara, Astana Gede Kawali, and Bojong Salawe, transform previously abstract theoretical concepts into concrete experiences. Students' understanding of the material is often initially abstract (Susiloningsih, 2019; Yusuf & Widyaningsih, 2018). Through field observations, students can compare literature with empirical reality, identify similarities and differences, and enrich their theoretical understanding through a contextual perspective (Aryani, 2019; Fazalani et al., 2024). This process illustrates the relationship between theory and practice, encouraging students not only to master cognitive

knowledge but also to develop analytical skills, critical thinking, and an appreciation for local cultural heritage. Learning that combines diverse programs and activities, integrating theory with fieldwork practices within a structured curriculum, encourages holistic knowledge acquisition and active student engagement (Kandamby, 2021; Orekat et al., 2025).

Fifth, Increasing Student Engagement. Group discussions and presentations serve as strategic tools to foster collaboration, communication, and reflective thinking among students. Group discussions are a learning approach that encourages the development of students' cognitive skills, facilitates understanding of the subject matter, increases engagement in the learning process, and provides opportunities to practice scientific communication and reasoning (Fauzan et al., 2022; Rusmiati, 2022; Wulandari et al., 2025). During these activities, students not only exchange ideas but also learn to construct coherent arguments, support their claims with field evidence, and defend their perspectives in class forums. This process deepens students' understanding while strengthening important soft skills, including collaboration, effective communication, and problem-solving (Febnasari et al., 2019; Setyowati & Fimansyah, 2018). Therefore, student participation is manifested through verbal and nonverbal means, ranging from articulating opinions to actively engaging in team-based activities. Evaluations conducted through lecturer observations provide insight into the level of student engagement, both in field activities and in the classroom. Active behaviors, such as asking questions, taking notes, interacting, and participating in discussions, are key indicators for assessing learning outcomes (Gultom et al., 2020; Yong & Saad, 2023). Group discussions and presentations also require students to be actively involved, facilitating multidirectional interactions among peers and between students and lecturers. These observation notes not only monitor the development of student understanding but also provide a basis for reflection, which informs the design of more effective learning strategies for subsequent sessions.

Overall, the effectiveness of Field-Based Learning (PBL) in the Kagaluhan course is reflected in its ability to bridge theoretical knowledge with real-world experiences, increase student engagement, and foster academic competency and holistic character development. This approach makes learning more contextual, reflective, and meaningful, aligning with students' needs to understand and appreciate the nation's historical and cultural heritage. This study has several limitations that should be taken into account when interpreting the results. First, the scope of research participants was limited to students of the History Education Study Program at Galuh University in one course, namely Kagaluhan, so the results cannot be broadly generalized to the context of other study programs or institutions. Second, the descriptive qualitative approach used emphasizes an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon rather than quantitative measurement. Therefore, the findings are contextual and depend on the subjective experiences of participants and the researcher's interpretation. The results of this study provide important implications for the development of history teaching practices in higher education. From a pedagogical perspective, the Field-Based Learning (FBL) strategy can be an effective alternative learning model for connecting academic theory with students' real-life experiences. This approach encourages active engagement, critical thinking, and student collaboration, making it applicable to other courses based on field or contextual exploration.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of Field-Based Learning (PBL) in Kagaluhan effectively integrates theory and practice. Through fieldwork conducted at historical and cultural sites, students gain hands-on experience that strengthens their conceptual understanding. Previously abstract theories become more concrete as they are validated through field findings, including archaeological remains, local traditions, and cultural values that are still alive in the community. In addition to enhancing cognitive aspects, PBL also encourages active student participation, both verbally and nonverbally. Group discussions and presentations offer students opportunities to develop critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and scientific skills. Their active involvement in asking questions, taking notes, and interacting is an important indicator of learning success. Thus, PBL proves to be an effective strategy for learning local history, as it not only enhances academic understanding but also cultivates character, cultural awareness, and appreciation for historical heritage. Learning becomes more meaningful, contextual, reflective, and relevant to the needs of students as the next generation with cultural identity.

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