

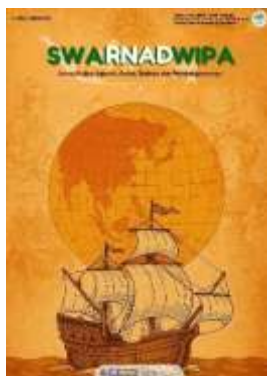
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## Evaluation of Local History Education in the Merdeka Curriculum: Challenges and Implementation in Regional Schools

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### Abstract

This study aims to describe the implementation of local history learning assessments within the Merdeka Curriculum and to analyze the challenges faced at senior high schools (SMA/MA) in Tebing Tinggi City, North Sumatra. Tebing Tinggi City possesses a significant wealth of local history, including relics of the Padang Kingdom, Dutch colonial sites, the Bloody Incident of December 13, 1945, and multicultural ethnic diversity. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a multisite case study design across three high schools (SMA/MA) selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected via indepth interviews, classroom observations, focus group discussions, and documentation. Data validity was tested through triangulation of sources and techniques, as well as member checking. Analysis utilized the interactive model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana. The results indicate: (1) the evaluation instruments used by teachers have not systematically integrated the local history of Tebing Tinggi; (2) there are four main groups of challenges: pedagogical, learning resources, infrastructure, and institutional policy; (3) students respond positively to local history based evaluations; and (4) teachers' adaptation efforts are independent and not yet systemic. The study underscores the urgency of developing integrated evaluation standards for the local history of Tebing Tinggi within the Merdeka Curriculum.

**Keywords:** local history learning evaluation, merdeka curriculum, authentic assessment.

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### INTRODUCTION

History education plays a strategic role in shaping the national identity and historical awareness of the younger generation. At the local level, local history serves as a bridge connecting the grand narrative of national history with the real life experiences of the local community. Context based learning has proven effective in enhancing students' historical thinking skills while strengthening the relevance of learning to their daily lives (Hasan, 2019; Widiadi, Aji Saputra, & Handoyo, 2022).

The city of Tebing Tinggi, known as the 'City of Lemang,' holds an extraordinary wealth of local history. The city was established in 1864 when Datuk Bandar Kajum founded a settlement along the banks of the Padang River, and was officially designated

as a municipality (*gemeente*) by the Dutch colonial government on July 1, 1917 (Rahyuni, 2024). This region was once part of the Kingdom of Padang, which was under the Kingdom of Deli. The most significant historical event occurred on December 13, 1945, when Tebing Tinggi fighters battled Japanese troops in an event known as the 'Tebing Tinggi Bloodbath.' Additionally, the city reflects a rich ethnic diversity including Batak Simalungun, Malay, Chinese, Javanese, and Nias communities as evidenced by the collection of the Tebing Tinggi City Museum, which has been in operation since 2014.

The Merdeka Curriculum, established through Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation No. 12 of 2024 provides ample opportunity for the integration of local history into teaching and assessment in educational institutions (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2024). This policy emphasizes that local content must be developed based on the historical, cultural, and traditional wisdom of each region (BSKAP, Ministry of Education and Culture, 2024). Formally, nearly 80 percent of schools in Indonesia had implemented the Merdeka Curriculum by 2024, including schools in Tebing Tinggi City (BPMP Sumut, 2024).

However, the implementation of learning assessment within the Merdeka Curriculum still faces various challenges. Ahmad et al. (2023) found that assessment challenges include a mismatch between assessment instruments and the principles of student centered learning, a shortage of trained teachers, and a lack of evaluation tools capable of measuring competencies holistically. In Tebing Tinggi City, this issue is exacerbated by the lack of evaluation instruments and guidelines specifically designed to measure students' understanding of the city's local history.

Although research on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in history education has been conducted at the national level (Fitri, Fariz, & Fajriyah, 2024; Rahmawati, Sutiyah, & Abidin, 2022; Santoso, Setyonugroho, & Irawan, 2023), no studies have specifically examined the evaluation of local history education in Tebing Tinggi City. This research gap serves as the foundation and rationale for this study.

Based on the problem identification, this study is designed to empirically and systematically map the current state of local history education evaluation in high schools (SMA/MA) in Tebing Tinggi City. The problem is addressed through a descriptive exploratory approach that gathers data from various sources (teachers, students, school principals, supervisors, and official school documents) to produce a comprehensive picture of the practices, challenges, perceptions, and adaptation efforts taking place. The research findings are expected to serve as an empirical basis for the development of evaluation standards for local history in Tebing Tinggi as well as policy recommendations for the Tebing Tinggi City Department of Education

In general, this study aims to describe and analyze the implementation of local history assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum, as well as the challenges faced in high schools in Tebing Tinggi City. Specifically, the study aims to: (1) describe the forms and assessment tools used by history teachers to evaluate students' understanding of Tebing Tinggi's local history; (2) identify the challenges teachers face in designing and conducting local history assessments; (3) analyze students' perceptions of the assessment of local history learning in Tebing Tinggi; and (4) describe the adaptation efforts undertaken by teachers and schools to address the challenges of local history assessment.

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## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a multi site case study design. This approach was chosen because it is capable of deeply describing the phenomenon of local history learning evaluation, which is complex, contextual, and multidimensional. Through this approach, researchers can comprehensively understand the meanings, processes, and dynamics occurring in the field aspects that cannot be measured quantitatively (Creswell, 2021; Kusumastuti, 2019). The case study design allows for the exploration of phenomena within real world contexts, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not entirely clear (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2020). The use of a multi site approach aims to obtain more representative data and enables comparative analysis across research locations.

The research was conducted in several schools in Tebing Tinggi City, North Sumatra. The selection of locations was based on considerations of the diversity of school characteristics and their relevance to local history education. The research subjects included history teachers, students, and relevant parties involved in the learning process.

Data collection methods included observation, in depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to directly observe the learning and evaluation processes taking place in the classroom. In depth interviews were conducted with informants to gather more detailed information regarding their experiences and perspectives. Documentation was used to supplement the data, including archives, learning materials, and other supporting documents.

Data analysis was conducted interactively using the model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2020), which comprises three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data reduction was performed by sorting and focusing on relevant data; data presentation was done in the form of descriptive narratives; and conclusions were drawn gradually and continuously verified to ensure data validity.

Data validity in this study was ensured through source and method triangulation, as well as member checking. This was done to enhance the credibility and reliability of the research findings.

Using this method, the study is expected to provide an in depth and comprehensive overview of the evaluation of local history education, as well as yield relevant findings that can serve as a foundation for developing more effective teaching practices.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Overview of the Research Site**

The study was conducted at three schools in Tebing Tinggi City, each with distinct characteristics. SMA-A is SMA Negeri 1 Tebing Tinggi, a state high school with an A accreditation located in the city center. It has two history teachers with over ten years of experience, adequate computer lab facilities, and has been one of the first schools to implement the Merdeka Curriculum in Tebing Tinggi City since the 2022/2023 school year. SMA-B is Dipanegara Tebing Tinggi Private High School, an A accredited school located on the outskirts of the city; it has one history teacher and faces more significant

limitations in digital facilities compared to the other two schools. Madrasah C is Tebing Tinggi State Madrasah Aliyah, an A accredited school with three active history teachers that has been designated as a driving force for the Merdeka Curriculum.

The city of Tebing Tinggi possesses a wealth of local historical assets that serve as potential content for learning assessments. These assets include: the Tebing Tinggi City Museum (established in 2014, housing a collection reflecting the city’s multiethnic heritage); the Gedung Juang 45 monument commemorating the struggle for independence; historical sites of the Padang Kingdom along the Padang River, including the discovery of a Hindu style shipwreck at the river’s depths; the historic Tebing Tinggi Lama settlement area (the city’s origin, 1864); and the narrative of the Bloody Incident of December 13, 1945, which stands as a significant milestone in the history of the Tebing Tinggi people’s resistance against Japanese occupation (Rahyuni, 2024).

### Forms and Tools for Evaluating the Local History of Tebing Tinggi

An analysis of the teaching modules and KOSP from the three schools shows that all three schools have formally adopted the three types of assessments outlined in the Merdeka Curriculum: diagnostic, formative, and summative. However, the integration of Tebing Tinggi’s local history content into evaluation instruments remains very limited, inconsistent, and tends to be incidental.

At SMA-A, teachers use a combination of multiple choice and essay based written tests as the primary evaluation instruments. An analysis of ten sets of collected test questions revealed that the proportion of questions explicitly referencing historical events or figures from Tebing Tinggi City has not exceeded 10% of the total number of test items. At SMA-B, one innovative practice was identified: an assignment requiring a visit to the Tebing Tinggi City Museum, with the results submitted in the form of a written report, conducted once per semester, without a standardized assessment rubric. At MAN-C (Madrasah Aliyah), the assessment instruments rely entirely on the national history textbook and do not include a single question or assignment that explicitly refers to the local history of Tebing Tinggi.

These findings align with those of Rahmawati, Sutiyah, and Abidin (2022), who found that history assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum has not yet fully implemented the principles of authentic assessment based on local contexts. Fitri, Fariz, and Fajriyah (2024) also note that although history assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum already includes diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, the content being tested remains overwhelmingly national in nature. This irony is all the more evident given that Tebing Tinggi City has a City Museum that could serve as a tangible local history laboratory, yet this potential has not been systematically integrated into learning assessments.

**Table 1.** Profile of the Implementation of the Tebing Tinggi Local History Assessment in Three Schools

Types of Assessments	SMA-A	SMA-B	MAN-C	Integration of Local History Tebing Tinggi
Diagnostic	there is	there is	there is	None of the three schools
Formatif (written test)	there is	there is	there is	< 10% local content (SMA-A only)

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Formative (project/visit)	None	1x/semester	None	SMA-B: museum visit, without a specific category
Summative	there is	there is	there is	Predominantly national content
Portfolio	there is (informal)	None	None	Not yet standardized

### Challenges in Evaluating the Local History of Tebing Tinggi

Based on the results of in depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observations, four interrelated sets of challenges were identified:

#### a. Pedagogical Challenges

The majority of teachers acknowledge that they do not yet possess adequate skills to design assessment instruments that integrate historical thinking based on Tebing Tinggi's local content. No teachers have ever received specialized training on developing history based Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) questions or rubrics for evaluating local history projects. This leads teachers to tend to stick with conventional assessment methods that are familiar and safe, even though they recognize that these methods do not align with the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum.

This finding aligns with Ahmad et al. (2023), who state that the greatest challenge in implementing assessment within the Merdeka Curriculum is teachers' lack of understanding regarding the diversification of assessment types, particularly assessment as learning. Wulandari and Sutisna (2023) also emphasize that the primary obstacle to authentic assessment is teachers' difficulty in designing valid rubrics to measure student performance holistically.

#### b. Challenges in Learning Resources and References

The lack of standardized and reliable local historical references for Tebing Tinggi poses a significant obstacle. The absence of a question bank on Tebing Tinggi's local history, the lack of a city history textbook aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum's Learning Outcomes, and the scarcity of verified primary source documentation make it difficult for teachers to design valid and accountable assessment questions.

In fact, the city of Tebing Tinggi has a City Museum that houses a collection of photographs of the struggle for independence, artifacts of multi ethnicity, and historical documentation of the city from the era of the kingdom to independence. However, the relationship between this museum and the evaluation system in schools has not yet been formally and systematically established.

#### c. Infrastructure Challenges and Digital Access

The infrastructure gap between schools in the city center and the outskirts is starkly evident. SMA-B, located in Bajenis District, faces limitations in digital devices and an unstable internet connection, hindering the use of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) and digital assessment platforms. This situation aligns with the findings of Warsihna et al. (2023) that infrastructure limitations are the primary barrier to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in rural schools.

#### d. Policy and Institutional Challenges

The report card grading system, which still adheres to national standards, makes it difficult for teachers to assign proportional weight to evaluations based on the local history of Tebing Tinggi. The lack of regulations or technical guidelines from the Tebing Tinggi City Department of Education that specifically govern the integration of local history into the evaluation system leaves teachers feeling they lack sufficient legitimacy to develop local history based evaluations in a more serious and systematic manner.

There is an institutional paradox in Tebing Tinggi City: on the one hand, the city possesses an extraordinary wealth of local history (the Padang Kingdom, the 1945 Bloody Incident, the City Museum, and the Juang 45 Building) that is potentially highly suitable as meaningful evaluation content. On the other hand, there is not yet a single well structured support system whether in terms of regulations, materials, training, or inter institutional collaboration that facilitates the tangible utilization of this potential in history learning assessments in schools.

### **Students' Perceptions of the Evaluation of Local History in Tebing Tinggi**

Although the implementation of local history based assessments remains very limited, student responses to them have been overwhelmingly positive. Of the twenty four student informants, twenty (83.3%) stated that assignments and questions directly related to the history of Tebing Tinggi felt far more meaningful and relevant to their lives compared to memorizing national historical events, which felt abstract and distant.

Students at SMA-B who had visited the Tebing Tinggi City Museum as part of the assessment reported significantly higher levels of engagement and a stronger sense of ownership regarding their city's historical heritage. Some students voluntarily sought additional information outside the classroom by visiting the Gedung Juang 45 and asking their parents about the 1945 Events an indication of intrinsic motivation not yet evident in conventional assessments.

These findings support Hasan's (2019) argument regarding the importance of history education that connects local experiences with students' personal meanings. Husna and Syukur (2020) also affirm that history learning based on historical thinking skills can significantly enhance students' cognitive engagement and intrinsic motivation. This positive student response should serve as the primary foundation for teachers and schools to develop more systematic and high quality local history assessments.

### **Adaptation Efforts by Teachers and Schools**

Despite various limitations, a number of self initiated adaptive practices were identified. At SMA-A, history teachers established an informal sharing community with history teachers from other schools through the Tebing Tinggi City History Teachers' Working Group (MGMP) forum to collaborate on developing a question bank containing local history content. At SMA-B, teachers independently designed a field trip program to the Tebing Tinggi City Museum as part of project evaluation, despite lacking formal school support and standardized assessment rubrics. At MAN-C, teachers informally collaborated with community leaders and members of the local Tebing Tinggi historians' community to serve as guest speakers for student presentations.

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These adaptation efforts reflect the teachers' high commitment and creativity amidst limited systemic support. However, because they are individual and informal, their sustainability depends heavily on the personal initiative of the teachers involved rather than on a structured system. As emphasized by Ahmad et al. (2023), individual efforts are insufficient without systemic support from the local government. Formal collaboration is needed between the Tebing Tinggi City Department of Education, schools, the Tebing Tinggi City Museum, and Gedung Juang 45 to build a sustainable local history evaluation ecosystem.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion, four conclusions were drawn. First, history teachers at senior high schools and Islamic senior high schools in Tebing Tinggi have not systematically integrated local historical content including the legacy of the Padang Kingdom, the 1945 Bloody Incident, the City Museum's collection, and narratives of multi ethnicity into the evaluation instruments of the Merdeka Curriculum. Assessment is still dominated by conventional instruments based on national history content, with a very small portion dedicated to Tebing Tinggi's local history and inconsistent implementation across schools.

Second, there are four interrelated groups of challenges: (a) pedagogical, namely limitations in teachers' competencies in designing authentic assessments based on Tebing Tinggi's local history; (b) learning resources, namely the lack of standardized question banks, textbooks, and documentation of Tebing Tinggi's local history for evaluation purposes; (c) infrastructure, namely the disparity in digital resources between schools in the city center and those in the outskirts; and (d) institutional policy, namely the absence of regulations and technical guidelines from the Tebing Tinggi City Department of Education governing the integration of local history into the evaluation system.

Third, students responded very positively (83.3%) to the Tebing Tinggi local history based assessment, rating it as far more meaningful, relevant, and motivating than conventional assessments. Experiential assessments, such as visits to the Tebing Tinggi City Museum, have proven effective in fostering students' intrinsic motivation and sense of ownership regarding their city's historical heritage.

Fourth, the adaptation efforts undertaken by teachers are individual and informal in nature, not yet supported by a structured institutional system. Policy intervention is needed from the Tebing Tinggi City Government through the Education Office in the form of: (a) the development of technical guidelines for Tebing Tinggi local history assessment integrated with the Merdeka Curriculum; (b) the compilation of a verified question bank and Tebing Tinggi local history modules; (c) a teacher training program in history based on the city's local context; and (d) the establishment of formal partnerships between schools, the Tebing Tinggi City Museum, and Gedung Juang 45 as local history laboratories.

During the colonial period, legal dualism arose due to the implementation of Western legal systems, which placed customary law in a subordinate position. However,

customary law persisted as the living law governing social life. After independence, efforts to integrate customary law into the national legal system demonstrated its crucial role in maintaining cultural identity and social harmony. Despite facing various challenges in the modern era, Lampung customary law remains relevant and adaptable to changing times. Therefore, understanding local legal history is crucial for developing a national legal system that is inclusive, contextual, and based on local wisdom.

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