

# Local Culture-Based Education: An Analysis of Talcott Parsons' Philosophy

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This article analyses the formulation of local culture-based education using the AGIL paradigm by Talcott Parsons. Education as a cultural agent is considered a failure in the process of transmission, socialisation, and internalisation of national cultural values. The practice of local culture-based education in educational institutions is considered not optimal. Local cultural material is often considered as additional material, so it does not get the attention of educators. This condition is quite worrying because it can cause a decrease in students' appreciation of the local culture, which results in the loss of local identity of the students. For this reason, this article focussed on two things; first, AGIL Talcott Parsons' theory, and second, analysis of problems and formulations of local culture-based education with the AGIL approach. The results of this study were formulations of local culture-based education based on four functional requirements by Talcott Parsons, namely adaptation (A): schools must obey local culture, goal attainment; (G): schools must have educational goals that are in line with local wisdom; integration (I): schools have policies or rules that maintain their relationship with the environment; and latent pattern maintenance (L): schools must have innovations in maintaining culture and are always updated in accordance with cultural demands.

**Key words:** *Education, Local culture, AGIL, Functionalism-structuralism.*

## Introduction

Indonesia is known as an archipelagic country inhabited by various ethnicities and tribes. Ethnic diversity ensures Indonesia is filled with diverse cultural treasures. In fact, almost every community in Indonesia has a unique local culture and is different from the others.,



These various cultures are believed by the community to have noble values which are the inheritance of the ancestors (Amirrachman, 2007). However, the existence of local culture in this country is considered to be fading. In fact, many cultural heritages are neglected and forgotten. Many local cultural values are ignored because they are no longer relevant to modern life. In fact, many nations are currently busy exploring their history and cultural heritage to strengthen their identity, while the Indonesian people copy and paste foreign cultures that have unclear origins and values of wisdom.

One of the causes of local cultural decline is globalisation. Globalisation is marked by the development of information and communication technology, which leads to a condition where geographical boundaries no longer apply to humans. Space is narrowing and time is getting shorter in the process of interaction and communication. So, it is true what Robertson said that globalisation is nothing but a process of narrowing the world into a small village where people are connected to each other (Bungin, 2012). Globalisation is a connected world that seems to have no boundaries, so according to McLuhan, the world becomes a Global Village (McLuhan, 1996).

The existence of unlimited connections causes easy interactions that lead to the globalisation of local culture and the localisation of global culture. For example, the Korean Wave, which is currently becoming a trend among Indonesian millennials (Larasati, 2018): or the phenomenon of Arabisation among Indonesian Muslims, as Gus Dur said (Wahid, 2006). Furthermore, globalisation has a major influence on the identity of 'being Indonesian' itself. There are various 'cultural ruptures' formed in the nation's culture, which cause the foundation of identity to collapse. Indonesian identity is now in a critical condition, which is moving it away from its own foundation (Piliang, 2009).

In facing this problem, Indonesian people must be able to respond to globalisation wisely. Globalisation is indeed impossible to fight, but the community must not be defeated and give up on globalisation. If the Indonesian people do not want the identity and character of the community and its cultural wealth to be lost to the hands of globalisation, then the community must have a strong defence mechanism. Globalisation may attack from all fronts, but with a strong community defence, the nation's culture will be well preserved. The preservation of local culture will strengthen the identity of a nation, because culture is a symbol of the identity and character of a nation.

One way to build a defence system is through education. Education, as a social institution, along with other institutions of course, has a duty to create social balance (Maliki, 2010). So, education is required to actively carry out the function of socialisation and internalisation of cultural values to build social order and balance. In this context, education and culture have bonds of interaction and interrelation that support and complement each other. Moreover, the



core of culture is the value system that underlies the thoughts, behaviours and works of the community, which must be developed and transmitted through learning. Thus, local culture-based education becomes very important as a means of socialisation, internalisation, and enculturation of local culture, with the goal of preserving local culture itself (Koentjaraningrat, 2002).

In fact, local culture-based education is still not effective. In formal education institutions, for example, local culture learning is not taken seriously. Cultural arts education, especially local art, is often regarded as a complementary lesson, which is only considered ahead at certain moments. As a result, students' appreciation of local culture is low. Students seem to be detached from their local socio-cultural roots (Hakim, 2012). For example, it can be seen in the Jepara carving case, which is currently experiencing a shortage of engravers. The shortage of engravers, as mentioned by Maskuri, chairman of Jepara's HIMKI (Association of Furniture and Craft Industries): is caused by the failure of education in instilling the love of local culture and art to the younger generation (Nurdin, 2017).

Cultural love for the young generation is urgent, especially in the 4.0 era. This era is a disruptive era. It has a very dynamic speed of acceleration, so the young generation must be discarded in dealing with this fast-paced change. Kamel & Watfa (2018) found that the business world must develop accelerated long-term planning in the global era. The business world must see opportunities in this era. Therefore, the lack of workers that was conveyed by the chairman of HIMKI if this did not occur – if businessmen use the 4.0 era as an opportunity for the business world... adapting and applying the opportunities (Kamel and Watfa 2018).

Likewise, the findings of Willis, Lynch, & Fradale (2018) in the Education context. They said that the application of blended learning needed to be adapted to the context, how well the local resources were developed and how to implement them. This research implied that technological development must be responded to quickly by adjusting its context (Lynch & Fradale 2018).

Based on these arguments, this paper tried to analyse the problems of local cultural education that have been running less optimally and provide an alternative model of local culture-based education. The approach used is a functional structuralism approach by Talcott Parsons. According to Parsons, all institutions are essentially a system and to maintain their existence, conditions of existence are needed. For this reason, a system must meet four principles to survive, namely Adaptation, Goal attainment, Integration, and Latency which are often referred to by the acronym AGIL. These four principles must be run in a system to maintain the balance of a system. For this reason, this article focussed on two things; first, about AGIL



Talcott Parsons' theory, and second, the application of AGIL theory in formulating local culture-based education.

### **Research Method**

This research is a qualitative research with the type of literature study. The literature study analysed in this study is the Talcott Parsons Theory. Therefore, the data sources in this study are two Talcott Parson books – they are the Social System and the American University. Both of these books are the primary data. To be considered by Parsons as a broader functionalist, the secondary data is sourced from a number of books or articles about the flow of sociology of structural functionalism. Besides the source of data about local cultural education, the researcher uses Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 32 of 2013 in article 2 paragraph 3, which directs that national education policies must also refer to local needs. All elements are analysed in the application of local culture-based education. Then, The data is analysed using content analysis techniques by a transdisciplinary approach. The transdisciplinary approach is to help one link complex issues in a particular field with concepts in other fields to find a comprehensive solution (Holger, 2007).

### ***Results and Discussion***

#### ***Talcott Parsons and His Philosophical School***

Talcott Parsons is known as a sociologist who had a major role in the development of sociology in becoming an organised scientific discipline. He was born in Colorado, USA, on December 13, 1902 and died on May 8, 1979 at the age of 76. Parsons grew up in an intellectual family: his father was a professor, minister, and chancellor at one of the small colleges in Colorado. He began to pursue social sciences in 1920 when he entered Amherst College and was about to major in biology but was 'lost' in the department of political economy studies. He then continued his postgraduate studies at the London School of Economics. Here, Parsons obtained an anthropological certificate directly from two functionalist structuralist experts, namely Bronislaw Malinowski and A.R. Radcliffe Brown, which finally led to his curiosity towards the functionalism approach (Hamilton, 1990).

He then continued his education at Heidelberg, Germany, which at that time was dominated by Max Weber's thoughts. He took a doctoral program with a focus on studying the concept of capitalism by reading a lot of the works of Marx, Weber, Sombart, and a number of other writers. He also briefly attended a lecture by Karl Jaspers, Weber's old friend, who helped him understand the basic methodology of Weber's thinking. After graduating, he then taught at Harvard University from 1927 to the end of his life. In 1937, Parsons published a monumental book entitled "The Structure of Social Action", which not only introduced his

thoughts but was also the basis of his own theory. The book, considered as having perfected the theory of functionalism, became more systematic, so Parsons was considered one of the greatest functionalists. After the publication of the book, Parsons' career began to climb. He was then entrusted to lead the Department of Social Relations at Harvard until 1946. Because of this position, Parsons' views and insights on social sciences became widespread, because they came into contact with various scientific disciplines and established relationships with other sociologists (Susilo, 2008).

Parsons developed his theory of social action with intensive critical analysis of 19th-century European sociologists such as Weber, Durkheim, Pareto, and Marshall. He claims to have found a common ground for the four sociologists' ideas above with the basic elements of social action. According to him, this theory of action can be the basis for developing a broad descriptive framework of the social system, in deriving the framework (in the form of a scheme) (Ormerod, 2019).

Parsons stated the core of his thought about the theory of action, that 1) all actions are directed at the goal, 2) actions occur in a situation where the elements are used by actors as a means to an end, 3) normatively, actions are regulated in accordance with the determination of tools and goals. In short, an action is the smallest and fundamental unit of social reality, which consists of several basic components in the form of goals, tools, conditions, and norms. Parsons also said that all the theories he examined could be a movement that led to "the theory of voluntaristic action". In this theory, humans can be understood when making choices or decisions on different goals and the tools used to achieve them. Thus, a unit of action is formed by actors, tools, goals, and an environment consisting of physical and social objects, values, and norms (Johnson, 1986).

In addition to this theory, one of his ideas which is very popular is the functional imperative paradigm or a prerequisite for a system set out in his book *The Social System* (1951). According to Parsons, there are certain functions or needs that must be met by the system for its preservation. These functions are known as AGIL (Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Integration, Latency). This functional scheme is widely applied in efforts to develop various fields of knowledge, not only social but also economic, political, religious, educational, legal, and others. In addition to these works, Parsons also wrote many works in the social field, including: *Working Papers in Theory of Action* (1951); *Family, Socialisation, and Interaction Process* (1955); *Economy and Society* (1956); *Societies, Evolutionary, and Comparative Perspectives* (1966); and *The System of Modern Societies* (1971) (Wagiyo, 2016).

Judging from the functionalist-structuralist thought, it can be guessed that Parsons thought tends to be influenced by the philosophy of positivism. Likewise, when viewed from his thought, Parsons learned a lot and read the works of positivist figures such as Comte and



Malinowski. Positivism is a philosophical school which views that natural (empirical) sciences are the only true source of knowledge. Positive is not the antonym of negative, but it means factual or real. All symptoms or everything that appears, is as it is, limited to objective experiences, not metaphysical (Anshari, 1987).

Positivism views science as having to be based on reason and observation. This means positivism always upholds empirical facts. Positivism rejects speculation, because everything must be based on empirical data. Therefore, positivism assumes that the procedure of studying phenomena in natural sciences can be applied in the social sciences (Prabowo, 2017). This assumption is not much different from Parsons' functional theory of social change. Parsons analogised social change in a society like the growth in living things. He assumed that each society was composed of a different set of subsystems according to their structure and functional meaning for the wider community (Saebani, 2016).

Positivism criticises several educational theories that are incompatible with reason and experience. Postulates or entities which cannot be observed in education are completely unrelated. According to them, the original theory of education should follow the path of thinking of scientific theories. Educational experts must be able to analyse and show that all educational concepts can be interpreted in terms that can be observed. Therefore, these concepts will not be meaningful if they cannot be verified empirically. Therefore, educational theory uses the methods adopted in science and proposes predictions that can be tested and then constructed in a concept (Kneller, 1984).

Although the philosophy of positivism is not much concerned with educational theory, its influence can be felt in the world of education today. One of the influences in Indonesian education can be seen in the 2013 curriculum. The learning approach that is carried out in the 2013 curriculum emphasises a scientific-based approach with 5 M steps, namely observing, asking, exploring, associating, and communicating. Likewise, in the assessment, the 2013 curriculum emphasises an authentic assessment model that includes the process and learning outcomes.

Parsons did not talk much about education. However, as a functionalist-structuralist, it can be assumed that his views on education are also not far from his social ideology. In Parsons' view, education is the process of socialising values to individuals in order to develop a sense of responsibility and skills needed in carrying out social roles. This view assumes that humans as part of a social system act rationally, but that action is controlled by the internalisation of social values and norms. In other words, human choice on an action is a structural choice (Maunah, 2016).

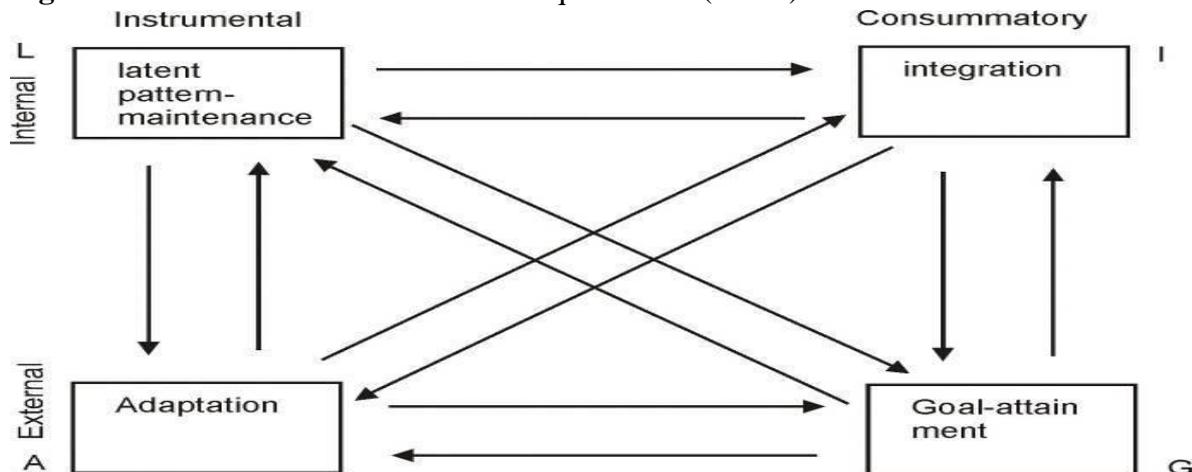
### ***AGIL Talcott Parsons Paradigm***

According to Parsons, each society is composed of a set of sub-systems that differ according to their structure and functional meaning for the wider community. Social life as a system requires the dependence of its elements, which leads to social stability. Parsons stated four system functions, called the "four function paradigm". Parsons called these four functional paradigms as functional imperatives or prerequisites that must be met for the system to work properly. The four prerequisites are adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latent pattern maintenance or latency, commonly called AGIL (Parsons & Gerald, 1973). Parsons designed the AGIL scheme to be used at all levels of his theoretical system.

1. *Adaptation.* The system is required to adapt to the environment and its changes, including how the behaviour of individuals in the system can be adapted to the environment. This adaptation function also refers to the ability of the system to meet its needs from the environment and to distribute the sources of needs into the system.
2. *Goal Attainment.* The system must define goals and mobilise system components towards achieving their main objectives. In this case, it is necessary to set priority goals so that the system is more directed. This function also implies that the system must motivate and mobilise effort and energy in the system to achieve its goals, which are common goals, not individual goals.
3. *Integration.* The system must regulate the relationships between the elements so that all components run in balance. The system must also be able to manage the relationships between the three other functions (A, G, L). Integration refers to the social ability of a system in maintaining bonds and solidarity, by involving components in controlling, maintaining subsystems, and preventing disruption in the system. This integration function can be manifested in the form of policies and rules to maintain the balance of a system.
4. *Latent pattern maintenance.* A system must complement, maintain, and improve individual motivation and cultural patterns that create and sustain that motivation. Latency function is a function that maintains a relatively fixed pattern of interaction between individuals and if there is a deviant behaviour then it is resolved through agreements that are updated constantly. This function is related to the norms and to maintain patterns (Mensah, 2019).

The four requirements mentioned above are fundamental functional requirements that apply to all existing systems. Parsons stated that the four-function scheme can be applied in every existing system at all levels of the organisation, from the smallest to the largest. The 4-function scheme can be described as below:

**Figure 1.** Four fundamental functional requirements (AGIL) scheme



The picture above illustrates the needs of an interconnected system. In general, there are two important requirements in the above scheme. First, the internal system and system requirements for the environment (internal-external axis). Second, the achievement of objectives and the means to achieve goals (instrumental-consummatory axis). In the picture above, in each function there are two arrows in opposite directions. This shows the reciprocal relationship between various functional requirements that is balanced and continuous.

It should also be noted, according to Parsons, that each system or sub-system of the four functions above also consists of adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latency. Likewise, with the system and sub-systems at the lower level. When the system is not running, then the problems faced are also not out of the four functional requirements. This theory is often referred to as "a set of Chinese boxes", which is a box in which there is a smaller box, in which there is also a smaller box, and so on (Parsons & Gerald, 1973).

### ***Analysis of Local Culture-Based Education with AGIL Paradigm***

Education is often interpreted as a process of internalising cultural values or the acculturation of individuals in their environment so as to be able to inherit cultural values in society. This is in line with Article 32 of the 1945 Constitution on the importance of building a national culture as the top of regional culture to be used as a guide for every Indonesian citizen. National education system through PP No. 19 of 2005 on National Education Standards already regulates the content of art and culture in formal educational institutions. The content of art and culture in the School does not only go through one subject, but can go through all subjects, because cultural arts encompass all aspects of human life. Through the same regulation, schools are also given the authority to develop education that can accommodate local potential and excellence. This certainly becomes a valuable opportunity for the development of local culture-based education in educational institutions (Presiden, 2005).



However, in fact, cultural education, especially local culture, requires greater attention. Although the formal education curriculum contains learning about art and culture, the portion given is relatively small, so this subject is set aside and considered as a complement, so that students' appreciation of local traditions and culture is currently declining. For this reason, innovative steps are needed so that local culture revives in the Indonesian education system. Based on the arguments above, the problem of the stagnation of local culture-based education can be analysed with the structural functionalism theory of Talcott Parsons' version with the AGIL paradigm. The AGIL paradigm can also be used at the same time to design alternative education systems based on local culture.

### **1. *Adaption***

Adaptation is the ability of a system to adapt to the environment and its changes, including how the system utilises the environment to meet the needs of the environment. In terms of this adaptation, locality-based arts and culture education in educational institutions tends to be limited to formalities in carrying out curriculum demands. Schools do not want to know the needs and local potentials that should be the basis and consideration in organising education. Whereas the government, through the Republic of Indonesia's Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 81A in 2013 on the Implementation of the Curriculum, has given flexibility to each institution to develop education by including studies of local excellence in accordance with the conditions and potential of the school and the surrounding environment (Mendikbud, 2013). That is, the adaptation function of educational institutions to the factual environmental conditions is still very weak.

In order to fulfil the adaptation function, the initial step that needs to be performed is to conduct a study involving all elements of stakeholders to formulate together about the local culture that needs to be developed through education. Educational institutions need to identify various cultural potentials as well as problems in society (Mendikbud, 2013). This is important so that the implementation of education is truly in harmony with the interests and needs of the community in the field of culture. From this adaptation function, educational institutions can also utilise available resources in the community such as observers, studios, or cultural relics, for the achievement of local cultural-based educational goals. In addition, adaptation also serves to provide input on policy maps and rules applied by educational institutions in managing local culture-based education.

### **2. *Goal Attainment***

The system must be able to determine the main goals and mobilise components in the system to achieve goals. In practice, education that has been running so far focusses more on the cognitive domain, including in learning local culture. Students are only introduced to the



richness of local culture, without being equipped with the skills and values behind the culture. Education also does not utilise available cultural resources and potential to support education.

Based on this function, the education system is intended to equip students with knowledge of local culture, skills based on local culture, and attitudes that are in accordance with local cultural values. It is hoped that the output of graduates will be able to participate in regional community development. In this case, each educational institution is given flexibility by the government to include local cultural content in the education system. This can be realised through the integration of local cultural values in each relevant subject. The subjects of History, Anthropology, Sociology, Economics, and even Islamic Religious Education can be a place to internalise local culture in the classroom (Sukmadinata, 1988): while the subjects of Cultural Arts, Skills, and local content can be focussed on equipping students with local cultural skills. These intracurricular activities can be supported by extracurricular activities which are indeed focussed on the development of local cultural skills. For educators, schools can collaborate with local cultural activists, studio owners, or cultural arts entrepreneurs.

### ***3. Integration***

A system must regulate the relationships between its elements so that all the components can function properly. This integration function regulates how relations between sub-systems can work well and support each other to create social stability. This function must also ensure that the relationships between the four functions do not interfere with each other. In the context of education, the education system must be able to create synergy between elements of education, both in terms of educators, students, management, facilities, curriculum and so on to support local culture-based education programs.

This integration function can be carried out through supervision activities on the implementation of local culture-based education. Supervision in education is not only in the form of control over the running of the system, but also creates the conditions needed for the creation of a good system (Purwanto, 2010). The creation of these conditions can be realised through the application of policies or special rules relating to local culture-based education. For example, the obligation to use clothing or local language within an educational institution, and sanctions for anyone who violates.

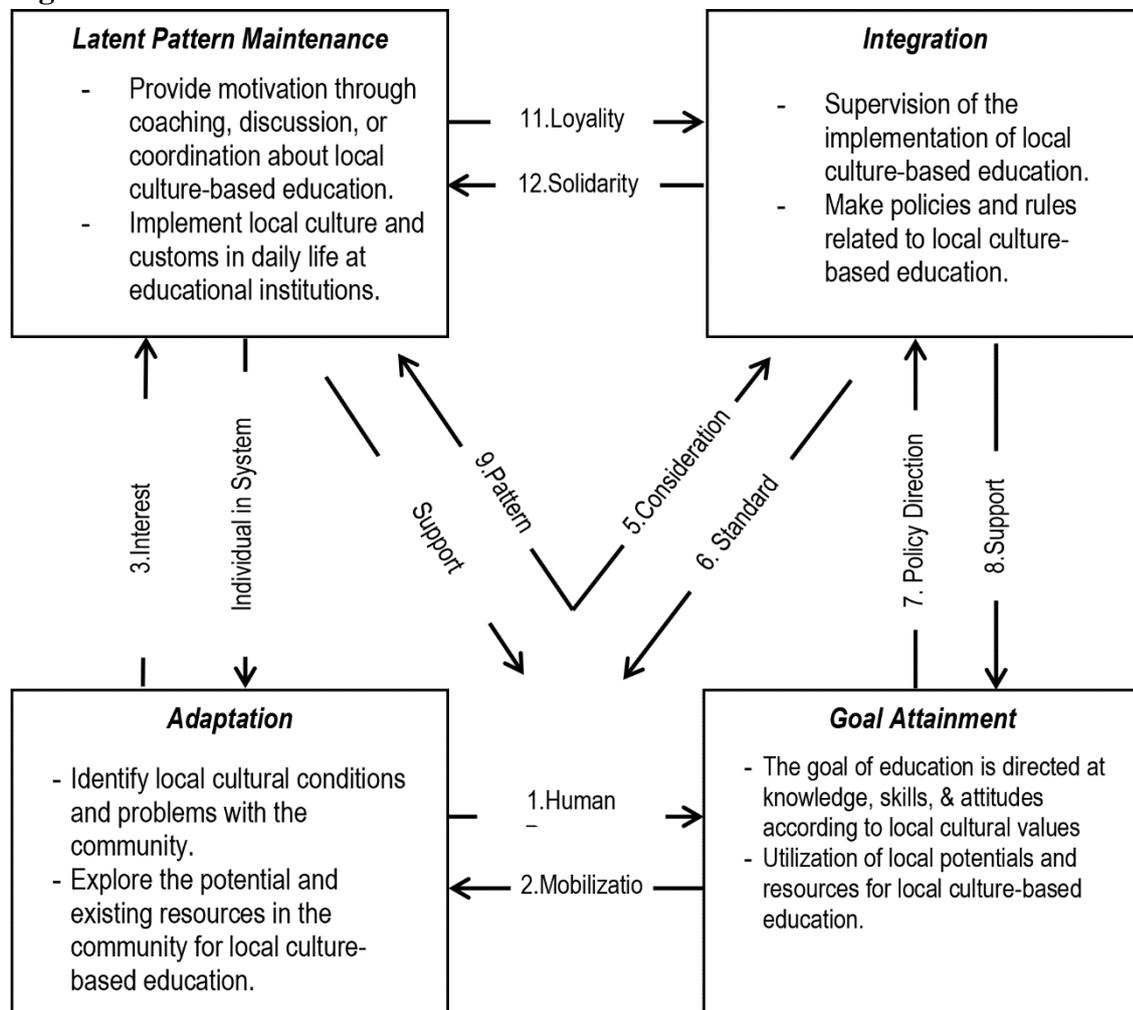
### ***4. Latent Pattern Maintenance/ Latency***

Latency is the ability of a system to maintain individual motivation and commitment so that the system is able to run well. This function can be performed by creating conditions and environments that support the running of the system. So, in the context of local culture-based education, this function can be carried out through providing motivation and creating habits,

atmosphere, and environment that allows school residents, both teachers and students, to feel comfortable to carry out their respective roles in local culture-based education. Motivation can be performed by coaching, discussing, or coordinating between individuals in a system related to the delivery of local culture-based education. Latency can also be performed by planting local cultural values through local cultural habituation in the school environment, such as the design of local culture-based school spaces or accustoming local traditions into every educational institution.

If described in the form of a scheme, it can be seen in the picture below:

**Figure 2.** The Local Culture Based Education Scheme on four functions of AGIL



In the picture above, we can see functions in local culture-based education including adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latency. The opposing arrows show that the four functions must be interconnected and dependent on each other, so that local culture-based

education will run well if the four functions run according to their functions and support each other. The picture can be explained as follows:

1. Identification and adaptation to local conditions (*adaptation*) produces a picture of the potential and local resources as one tool for achieving goals (*goal*).
2. Goal attainment by utilising local potential becomes a driving force for the education system to carry out the adaptation function (*adaptation*).
3. The adaptation of local culture (*adaptation*) raises community interest which will affect individual motivation in the education system to carry out their respective roles (*latency*).
4. Meanwhile, the motivation of individuals in the education system (*latency*) will influence the individual to adapt to local conditions (*adaptation*).
5. The existence of adaptation to local conditions (*adaptation*) provides consideration for the system to decide policies and rules (*adaptation*) related to local culture-based education.
6. The integration function carried out by the control and policy mechanism produces a standard or measure for the system to adapt to local conditions (*adaptation*).
7. Goal attainment (*goal*) determines the direction of policies and rules that are applied to maintain the balance of the implementation of local culture-based education (*integration*).
8. Whereas the existence of a system balance (*integration*) carried out through control and policy mechanisms will support the achievement of local culture-based educational goals.
9. Goal attainment (*goal*) also determines the pattern or form of motivation providing to individuals in the system in the context of organising local culture-based education.
10. While the latency function in the form of individual motivation will support the system in realising the goals of local culture-based education.
11. Motivation and interaction between individuals (*latency*) in the system produces loyalty which will affect the balance in the system (*integration*).
12. Meanwhile, the existence of this balance (*integration*) will also affect the motivation of individuals to create balance in the education system (*latency*).

In summary, referring to Parsons' explanation, the four functions above support one another. Adaptation helps educational institutions to solve problems and meet environmental needs and obtain needed resources. Goal attainment aims to define and achieve goals and overcome challenges that hinder the achievement of goals. Integration aims to overcome challenges that prevent the integration of social systems while ensuring coordination between various subsystems. Meanwhile, latency serves to maintain individual motivation and create a high-quality environment that encourages educational success (Mohamed et al., 2018).

## Conclusion

In this industrial era 4.0, where there are no more geographical boundaries, the task of preserving culture faces enormous challenges. The existence of a global culture is considered



to have taken a big wave of millennial generation who emigrated to global culture and left native culture. Education as a cultural process has the task of preserving cultural heritage by transmitting the cultural heritage and its values to future generations. This is performed so that future generations cannot be separated from the roots of local culture and identity.

Based on this situation, local culture-based education becomes important. Local culture is not only a learning material in classrooms, but also a spirit that underlies every element in the education system so that local culture will be embedded in students and not just limited to knowledge, but also skills, as well as attitudes that manifest in everyday life. In this case, local culture-based education with the AGIL scheme can be an alternative model for organising local culture-based education programs in educational institutions. As the functionalism-structuralism ideology is the basis of AGIL, this education scheme also prioritises the regularity and balance between systems and sub-systems for the ultimate goal of forming a complete Indonesian human.



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