



INTERNALIZATION OF MAPALUS LOCAL WISDOM IN PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION BUREAUCRACY: A STUDY ON UNIMA EDUCATIONAL PERSONNEL

Fabiola Tirsa Kansil¹, Asep Sumaryana², Sawitri Budi Utami³

^{1,2,3}Departemen Administrasi Publik, Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

In the discipline of Public Administration, which increasingly acknowledges the crucial role of local wisdom in building responsive governance, this research aims to investigate the process of internalizing the local wisdom value of Mapalus among academic staff at Manado State University, a public higher education institution, with implication for public organizational governance. Using qualitative approach, this study analyzes value communication, cultural understanding, and reinforcement mechanisms within the bureaucratic context, through in-depth interviews, observation, and document studies. The findings indicate that Mapalus internalization is strongly supported by cultural foundations and leadership legitimacy, but value communication is informal, and reinforcement mechanisms are dominated by civil servant discipline and external incentives rather than specific Mapalus values. Consequently, Mapalus exist as a personal social ethos but has not been fully institutionally embedded in UNIMA's work system. This study implies the importance of developing an adaptive value internalization framework for human resources policies and public bureaucratic cultural reforms strategies.

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Corresponding Author:

Fabiola Tirsa Kansil
Public Administration
Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia
tirsakansil99@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

In the discipline of Public Administration, the role of local wisdom is increasingly recognized as a crucial element to build governance that is responsive, inclusive, and relevant to the community context. Recently, discussions about public sector organizational culture have been intensely discussing the integration of local wisdom values as the basis of organizational values [1] [3]. This refers to efforts to build a value system in public organizations that is sourced from local knowledge and practices. In addition to being an effort to maintain the existence of a local wisdom, this concept assumes that local values that still exist today, have the potential to answer the challenges of the times. Thus, the narrative of its application in public organizations has become increasingly massive recently.

Manado State University (UNIMA), is one of them. UNIMA is a public organization in the field of higher education services with the status of a Public Service Agency (BLU), located in North Sulawesi, in 2020 this higher education organization integrated a local wisdom, namely Mapalus to be part of its organizational culture [4]. At UNIMA, Mapalus is interpreted as a value system, namely mutual cooperation and a work system, which

is to work together and work together for common ideals. Mapalus itself is a traditional wisdom of the Minahasa Ethnic that still exists today.

For the Minahasa people, Mapalus is a familiar term that has always been associated with a form of activity whose character and purpose are to help others [5]. Mapalus is understood by most people as a mutually helpful organization or a help-help organization, which means cooperation, collaboration, or teamwork. In terms of linguistics according to several literary records, Mapalus comes from the word 'Palus' which is prefixed 'Ma'. Palus means 'to pour,' so based on the meaning of the word, Mapalus means "pouring the contents from one container to another" [5], [6]. The Minahasa people have had Mapalus since ancient times as a system of mutual cooperation that is closely related to production activities when they were still an ethnic group [5], [7].

Mapalus is echoed at UNIMA through the Rector's vision for the 2020-2024 period, namely "Unima Superior Innovative Based on Mapalus," which then echoes in the jargon "Unima Mapalus." UNIMA makes various communication efforts so that the values of Mapalus can be accepted and internalized. These efforts include communication through the Organization's Strategic Plan for 2020-2024, the establishment of institutional values, as well as top-down communication from leadership, and promotion through organizational media with #UnimaMapalus hashtags. However, despite these efforts, the acceptance of these values by all members of the organization, especially education personnel, is not guaranteed. Education personnel, with administrative, procedural, and operational support work characteristics, tend to internalize organizational values normatively and as structural obligations, so that organizational values do not become the main instrument in achieving performance goals. The peculiarities of the role and impact of the performance of education personnel on the quality of university services make this group an important focus in research.

Previous research at UNIMA has linked the low performance of education staff and lack of student satisfaction with service with the internalization of existing work values or culture [8], [9]. Therefore, various studies suggest strengthening organizational values and continuous socialization to increase understanding and acceptance of organizational values, especially among education personnel [10] [13].

Two main problems were identified from the implementation of the idea of "Unima Mapalus" in education personnel. First, the lack of understanding of education personnel on the expected behavior, especially in the context of employment, because socialization efforts are still declarative and have not articulated the values of Mapalus into concrete behavior. Second, there is no incentive mechanism or strengthening of behavior that reflects Mapalus values, such as integration in the performance evaluation system or reward and punishment, which risks making these values only limited to slogans. The identification of this problem shows that there is a gap between the organization's normative commitment to internalize the values of Mapalus and its implementation in the daily work behavior of education personnel. Although UNIMA has made initial efforts in socializing Mapalus values through the Strategic Plan document and symbolizing them through jargon, the process of internalizing these values has not touched understanding, acceptance, and appreciation through concrete actions in daily work behavior. It can be said that the values of local wisdom of Mapalus have not been properly internalized in UNIMA's education staff.

Previous literature has extensively recorded the contribution of local wisdom values in building a culture of public organizations and encouraging bureaucratic cultural reform [1] [3]. In addition, several studies have identified the role of local wisdom values in shaping organizational citizenship behavior in public sector employees [14], [15]. However, most of the previous research is still general and has not examined the process of internalizing the value of local wisdom in the context of specific institutions or roles. This study aims to fill this void by focusing on the internalization of Mapalus values, a local wisdom of Minahasa among the education staff of Manado State University.

By examining the internalization process in depth, this research contributes academically to the development of public administration science through a more nuanced understanding of the adaptation of local values in bureaucratic structures. Practically, the findings of this research are expected to be strategic inputs for UNIMA in formulating more effective human resources (HR) policies and organizational value strengthening programs, as well as providing important information for other public organizations that seek to integrate local wisdom to improve the performance and quality of public services. Therefore, this research aims to explain the process of internalizing the values of local wisdom of Mapalus in UNIMA education staff.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach. This approach was chosen to deeply understand the meaning, experience, and process of internalizing Mapalus values in the context of the work of UNIMA education personnel. This is in line with the view [16] that, the consideration in qualitative design is to discover and understand what lies behind the phenomenon being studied. The stages of research carried out start from understanding the research background that is manifested in field observation, determining the type and source of data needed (including the determination of informants) and collecting secondary data. Furthermore, the collected data is grouped, condensed, and interpreted to draw conclusions, with triangulation applied to ensure the credibility of the findings. However, as is common in qualitative research, this study has some methodological

limitations. The findings are contextual and may not be generalized to other institutions outside UNIMA. In addition, the potential for subjectivity in data interpretation remains a consideration, despite triangulation efforts have been made. This limitation is an important note to strengthen caution in understanding and applying research results.

This research was conducted at Manado State University, North Sulawesi in August-October 2025. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews with university leaders, human resource managers, and education staff from various work units. The selection of these sources is based on their involvement and main role in the process of internalizing Mapalus values, so that informants are selected purposively. In addition to interview techniques, observations, document studies, institutional values, and organizational communication media were also carried out, and various previous research that has been conducted related to this topic. This is done to enrich perspectives and triangulate from different points of view.

The data analysis in this study follows the model [17] which consists of the stages of data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion or verification. This model was chosen because it provides a systematic framework for managing and analyzing qualitative data in depth and allows for the gradual identification of patterns and themes. The analysis process begins as soon as the researcher enters the field, with the collected data grouped, focused, and simplified to identify key themes relevant to the research objectives. To improve the validity and reliability of the findings, this study applied triangulation of data sources and data collection methods. Triangulation is carried out by comparing and confirming information obtained from various informants – such as university leaders, human resource managers, and education personnel – as well as comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation. Thus, each finding is validated through cross-confirmation from various points of view and data types so that the results of the analysis are stronger and can be accounted for methodologically.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Communication of the values of local wisdom of Mapalus to UNIMA education staff

The discussion on the communication of Mapalus values to UNIMA education staff describes how the essence of local wisdom is understood in the work environment. [18] emphasizes that if a value is important to the organization, then the concept and meaning of the value must be communicated to members. In UNIMA itself, the communication process of Mapalus is very dominated by the cultural dimension and leadership example, but it has limitations in terms of systematization and formalization by the organization, this can affect the depth and sustainability of institutionalized internalization.

The communication of Mapalus values at UNIMA is characterized by its informal nature, firmly rooted in culture, and highly dependent on certain individuals or figures, especially leaders. The basic understanding that underlies this communication characteristic is that the value of Mapalus is inherent in education personnel because of their identity as the Minahasa community. This is reflected in the informant's statement, for example "the Mapalus culture, all aspects of the life of the Minahasa people... if the Minahasa people become civil servants, the Mapalus culture still exists, the spirit remains" and "if the Mapalus work there is no training. has been created by itself... Mapalus has indeed become a habit at UNIMA. These findings imply that value communication is not considered a need for formal or structured organizational intervention, but rather as something that is already existing and inherent.

The flow of Mapalus communication occurs in three layers of interaction. First, education personnel have Mapalus as their cultural background, Mapalus is understood as part of the tradition and cultural identity of the Minahasa people that are carried over to the work environment. Second, the leadership activates these values through the slogan and invitation "Unima Mapalus," the jargon carried by these triggers and rearticulates the collective spirit typical of Mapalus. Third, social interaction between education personnel maintains it through joint work, solidarity and daily cooperation to maintain Mapalus in practice. This suggests that value communication relies heavily on emotional and relational resonance, and is heavily influenced by social context and relationships between individuals, rather than planned organizational mechanisms. This can lead to fluctuating value communication success, depending on the leadership figure and can weaken as leadership changes.

Although informal, there are concrete mechanisms used to communicate Mapalus' values, namely leadership examples and daily and routine communication. Leadership example is the most crucial and effective communication mechanism. This research shows that, leaders communicate value through time discipline, responsibility, direct involvement in operations, and participation in communal activities. Consistency between the words and deeds of leaders builds credibility and is a reflection of strong values for education personnel. The proactive involvement of the leadership, without waiting for staff to come into the room, creates an atmosphere of open communication and demonstrates the typical practice of togetherness of Mapalus. Mapalus values are also conveyed through regular interactions such as morning apples, meetings, task directions, informal

discussions, and feedback from leaders. The morning apple, for example, is a formal space for leaders to convey direction and emphasis on the aspects of discipline and core values of work. Value learning happens situationally through everyday conversations, not just formal forums, where education personnel discuss, ask for direction, and find solutions together.

Although the practice of value communication as mentioned above is able to revive work solidarity, there is a significant gap compared to the theoretical perspective on the internalization of organizational values. The literature emphasizes the importance of explicit, repetitive, and structured communication to explain the meaning of behavioral values and expectations [18][20]. At UNIMA, Mapalus value communication is still passive, unplanned, and immeasurable. Various forms of formal communication such as value campaigns, learning sessions, cultural bulletins, value-based training, dialogue forums, or value ambassador programs have not yet occurred.

The absence of this formal communication framework has implications for the absence of equalization of understanding where organizations do not have a mechanism to equalize understanding between education personnel consistently. The literature on organizational communication in the public sector emphasizes that effective value communication is not only declarative, but must involve a planned strategy to translate abstract values into concrete behaviors [21]. Without systematic efforts, as found in studies on the internalization of local values in other institutions, such as SAHATE in LAN Jatinangor or Bugis-Makassar values in public service, the full potential of these values of local wisdom in shaping the organizational climate and improving the quality of services will not be optimally achieved [22][23].

These fluctuations in understanding have the potential to cause instability in the internalization of values, which can weaken as leadership changes or contexts change. While leadership plays a crucial role in activating cultural values [24], internalized sustainability requires systematic support from the organization. When value communication relies largely on leadership figures and informal interactions, there is an inherent risk that the value will vary in application between units or individuals, as noted by studies on value conflicts in collaborative efforts in the public sector [25]. To overcome this problem, UNIMA needs to develop a more systematic and structured communication strategy, such as organizing value campaigns, value-based training, and the preparation of Mapalus-based code of conduct, as well as encouraging regular discussion forums so that the understanding of values can be standardized.

Cultural understanding that facilitates

The next element that plays a role in the process of internalizing organizational culture as noted in various theoretical frameworks is the facilitation aspect. It refers to the conditions or environment that can support the internalization process, [26] calling it an enabling condition. In the view [18] this is manifested in a simple organizational scheme. At UNIMA itself, the cultural understanding of education personnel is the foundation and key facilitator. The internalization of Mapalus in UNIMA education personnel is strongly supported by the existence of a strong cultural resonance, where these values are not considered foreign, but as an integral part of personal and collective identity. This understanding creates conditions that allow for the spontaneous acceptance and application of values, even if the organization has not yet fully integrated them in a formal system.

The understanding of education personnel towards Mapalus is rooted in the status of this local wisdom as an intrinsic part of the Minahasa community tradition. Informants consistently state that Mapalus is a "local culture that educates us to be team-worked" and that "the spirit remains" in them as Minahasa people, even when they become civil servants. This shows that Mapalus is understood not just as a concept to be learned, but as a cultural identity that has been rooted for generations and is naturally carried into the workspace. Implicitly, Mapalus is considered as "living values" at UNIMA – values that are alive and expressed in a natural pattern of interaction, such as helping each other spontaneously, without having to be governed by formal organizational rules. Expressions such as "torang bantu gal" or "baku tulung akang sama-sama" become verbal manifestations of this cultural understanding in daily work practices. This then facilitates the acceptance of values, because Mapalus are a reflection of themselves, not something imported or forced.

This cultural understanding creates a strong value congruence between the personal values of education personnel and organizational values. When individuals identify deeply with the local values that the organization promotes, as well as the cultural identification experienced by UNIMA education personnel with Mapalus, this will facilitate the acceptance and adoption of harmonious behaviors [27]. This phenomenon is similar to findings in the public service motivation literature, where value alignment between individuals and organizations significantly mediates job satisfaction and commitment to organizational goals [28].

Although Mapalus has lived as a socio-cultural value, formal legitimacy through the vision of the rector's leadership for the 2020-2024 period has become a catalyst. This leadership, instead of introducing new values, instead acts as the so-called [29] 'cultural architects' who strategically revitalize and legitimize the values of Mapalus that have been inherent in the educational workforce. So as to facilitate its acceptance and application in the context of the organization.

It is important to understand that the use of the Mapalus theme by the leadership at UNIMA has a strong historical precedent. The long history of Mapalus in Minahasa shows that this value is inherently open to innovation and social mobilization [5]. The spirit of Mapalus has been used several times by the political system for collective purposes – from infrastructure development in the colonial era to community-based sanitation programs and rural home arisan [5], [30]. This historical record shows that Mapalus always found new forms when authority figures were able to articulate and articulate them for a common goal.

Therefore, when the leadership of the Rector for the 2020-2024 period voiced the slogan "Unima Mapalus" with an invitation to "work together and work together to build UNIMA," it triggered a strong emotional resonance among education staff. The leadership serves as a catalyst that not only triggers, but also directs the cultural energy that already exists, giving it institutional direction and context in university governance. Thus, UNIMA's leadership leveraged the same historical mechanism in articulating and legitimizing Mapalus, creating conditions that were very conducive to internalization, as education personnel felt that these values were aligned with their identity and were now supported by institutional authorities. In fact, this climate encourages voluntary mutual aid behavior outside the formal boundaries of work tasks [15].

Although Mapalus lives as living values expressed in natural interaction and spontaneous solidarity, the absence of an organizational framework that guides Mapale-based meanings and behaviors in the context of work can lead to its application becoming situational and inconsistent. This presents an important nuance: while cultural understanding becomes a powerful facilitator for acceptance, it can also create tension if it is not balanced with adequate formalization. The literature shows that when deep-rooted informal values are not fully integrated in the formal system, there can be inconsistencies or even value incongruities between cultural expectations and existing bureaucratic procedures [31]. This phenomenon underscores that although cultural resonance accelerates internalization at the personal level, organizations still require systematic efforts to transform this social ethos into institutionalized operational principles in order to achieve sustainable internalization.

Value reinforcement mechanism

The findings of this study clearly show that practices that are in line with the values of Mapalus have been implemented in the daily life of UNIMA education staff. They often show initiative to help each other, replace colleagues who are in the crosshairs, and collaborate across units for the smooth operation of services. This practice of mutual cooperation is not only interpreted as the division of the workload, but as a foundation to build and achieve common goals. However, even though these practices are present in real terms and have a positive impact, the mechanism for strengthening the value of Mapalus specifically within the UNIMA organizational framework still shows weaknesses. A value reinforcement mechanism is a system designed by an organization to consistently encourage, facilitate, and reinforce behaviors that align with desired values, as well as prevent inappropriate behavior. The internalized literature emphasizes that to ensure continuity and value inference, expected behaviors must be consistently reinforced through rewards and sanctions [18], [20].

The value internalization literature emphasizes that in order to transform values from the realm of aspiration to an institutionalized practice, a clear and consistent reinforcement mechanism is needed. In public administration, a value-based performance management system can promote alignment between organizational values and members' personal values [32]. Without these mechanisms, the values that live as a social ethos would have a hard time resonating in formal systems that govern incentives, promotions, and sanctions [33].

UNIMA has a reward and punishment mechanism, which can be a source of clarity for education personnel about the behavior that is valued in the organization. However, this reward and sanction mechanism is mainly sourced from formal rules regarding ASN discipline and personnel regulations, which do not directly strengthen Mapalus value-based behavior. For example, the awards received by education personnel are generally in the form of performance allowances or promotions associated with the fulfillment of administrative indicators, attendance, and compliance with regulations, without special indicators that assess the application of Mapalus values such as collaboration or mutual cooperation initiatives in daily tasks. Similarly, sanctions imposed on education personnel, such as reprimands, or cuts in incentives, are also more related to violations of ASN discipline rules. Financial motivation, such as performance allowances and promotional opportunities, are the main drivers of education workforce performance.

These findings highlight the conflict between intrinsic motivation derived from the appreciation of Mapalus as a social ethic and extrinsic motivation driven by compliance with ASN discipline and financial incentives. In the context of public administration, public service motivation often relies on intrinsic rewards such as a sense of achievement or contribution to the public interest, although extrinsic motivations such as salary increases or promotions can also go hand in hand [34]. However, if the main focus of strengthening is only on external incentives that are not directly related to the Mapalus value, there is a risk that the Mapalus value is not the main driver of behavior. As research shows, cultural values can stimulate motivation for public service, and self-determination theory provides a framework for explaining how cultural values become an antecedent to this

motivation [35]. The failure of the reinforcement system at UNIMA to explicitly acknowledge and reward the behavior of Mapalus, despite the strong cultural resonance, has the potential to undermine this intrinsic impulse.

The absence of explicit reinforcement by the organizational system causes the internalization of Mapalus values to be fragile. To overcome this challenge, UNIMA needs to consider the development of a performance management system that explicitly integrates the values of Mapalus. Studies show that, an effective performance management system should encourage awareness, positive attitudes, and adherence to performance management instructions, as well as related to salary promotions and awards [36]. This means establishing performance indicators that not only measure administrative output, but also behaviors that reflect collaboration, mutual cooperation, and mutual care. Value internalization strategies such as those applied to the value of AKHLAK in internal supervision, for example, involve integration into performance systems and reflective forums to strengthen integrity [37]. Thus, Mapalus can transition from being just a 'collective spirit' to an integral part of the 'rules of the game' in the organization, where the behaviors encouraged by Mapalus are formally recognized, evaluated, and rewarded.

However, the integration of cultural values into the performance management system is not without its challenges. In some contexts, such as in Vietnam, the implementation of performance management can conflict with traditional cultural aspects, especially if the system is insensitive to local nuances [38]. Therefore, UNIMA needs to design a strengthening mechanism that is not only administratively effective but also culturally sensitive, ensuring that Mapale-based performance indicators do not detract from the authentic essence of the value, but rather reinforce it within a formal framework. This requires a balance between artifacts that simply mimic an outcome-based culture by encouraging member engagement rooted in the group's culture [39].

In the end, Mapalus at UNIMA lives as a social ethos and a "collective spirit" that strengthens solidarity and work ethic, but does not yet have a "home" in the institutional work system. The main problem is not in the absence of understanding or practice of values, but in the absence of a system that is able to effectively communicate, clarify, and strengthen these values within an organizational framework. Therefore, the weakness of this strengthening mechanism, coupled with the internalized nature of culture and dependence on leadership figures, as well as the unsystematic communication of values, collectively explains why the values of Mapalus have not been properly internalized in UNIMA's education staff.

4. CONCLUSION

This study describes the investigation of the process of internalizing the values of local wisdom of Mapalus in UNIMA education personnel within the framework of public sector organizational culture. Departing from the theoretical perspective of internalization, this study places value communication, facilitative conditions, and reinforcement mechanisms as the three main pillars of internalization. Field findings show that these three elements are indeed present in practice, but have not been integrated with each other.

Communication of Mapalus values at UNIMA takes place mostly informally, highly dependent on the example of leaders and daily interactions between education staff. Although it is able to evoke emotional resonance and work solidarity, this communication is undersupported by a structured, explicit, and sustainable organizational system, so that Mapala's understanding becomes fluid and vulnerable to leadership changes. The internalization of these values is strengthened by the cultural understanding of education personnel as a deep-rooted Minahasa social identity, and legitimized by a leadership vision that activates this cultural energy in the formal context of the organization. However, this strong cultural base has not been followed by institutional strengthening, causing Mapalus practices to tend to be spontaneous and not standardized. The behavior of mutual cooperation that reflects Mapalus is more driven by social and relational motivations, rather than by an explicit organizational reward system. The mechanism for strengthening work behavior is still dominated by ASN discipline regulations, reflecting the weak integration of Mapalus into the formal incentive system. As a result, Mapalus lives as a social ethos that strengthens solidarity, but has not been institutionalized organizationally. Thus, this study shows that the process of internalizing the values of local wisdom of Mapalus in UNIMA education personnel is a process that is strongly supported by cultural foundations and leadership legitimacy that resonates historically, but has not been supported by a structured organizational communication system and specific value strengthening mechanisms.

An important implication for public administration is that in the context of local wisdom, cultural legitimacy and the role of leadership figures can act as temporary substitutions for immature formal organizational mechanisms. However, this underscores the urgent need for organizations to develop a more adaptive value internalization framework, which not only leverages cultural foundations but also systematically integrates them into HR policies and bureaucratic reform strategies. This is crucial to achieve a sustainable and institutionalized internalization of values, as well as to increase the capacity of the bureaucracy to respond to public needs contextually.

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