

Purun Puppet Theatre: Weaving Stories on an Ecopedagogical Stage for the Sustainability of Cultural and Environmental Wisdom

Nawung Asmoro

Girindraswari ^{1*}

Marrisa Aulia Mayangsari ²

¹⁻²Program Studi Pendidikan Seni Drama Tari dan Musik, Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan, Universitas Palangka Raya, Palangkaraya, Indonesia.

*email:

nawungasmoro@fkip.upr.ac.id

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Abstract

Ecological crises, marked by environmental degradation and the weakening of human-nature relationships, reflect the limitations of environmental education paradigms that remain dominated by cognitive and normative approaches. Such approaches often fail to cultivate ecological awareness grounded in lived experience, cultural contexts, and community-based social practices. This study aims to analyze *Purun Puppet Theatre* as an arts-based *ecopedagogy* model that supports the sustainability of environmentally grounded cultural wisdom. The study employed *Participatory Action Research* and *Arts-Based Research*, involving 31 participants in Palangka Raya. PAR was used to examine the production process of *Purun Paper Puppets*, while ABR was applied to analyze the implementation of *Purun Puppet Theatre* as an *ecopedagogical stage*. Post-performance sustainability implications were explored through *Focus Group Discussions* (FGDs), and all data were interpreted within the conceptual frameworks of PAR and ABR. The findings indicate that *Purun Puppet Theatre* operates through three epistemic stages. First, *formation of praxis*, referring to the development of ecological understanding through the production of *Purun Paper Puppets*, integrating purun materiality, place-based experiences, and community participation as ecological learning practices. Second, *knowledge production*, referring to the implementation of *Purun Puppet Theatre* as an *ecopedagogical stage* that generates cultural-ecological knowledge through relationships among puppets, materials, narratives, audiences, and the social space of performance. Third, *knowledge translation*, referring to the translation of environmentally grounded cultural wisdom through post-performance reflection, strengthening ecological awareness, empathy toward human-nature relationships, and the reinterpretation of local purun wisdom within the context of environmental sustainability. This study demonstrates that *Purun Puppet Theatre* functions not only as a medium for communicating ecological messages but also as an arts-based *ecopedagogy* model that produces and translates cultural-ecological knowledge in reflective, participatory, and contextual ways.



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INTRODUCTION

The contemporary ecological crisis—marked by peatland degradation, recurrent fires, and the weakening of human-nature relationships—reveals fundamental problems in the ways environmental issues are understood and taught (Gienger et al., 2024; Velepini, 2025). Environmental education in many contexts, particularly in Indonesia, remains largely cognitive, normative, and verbal in nature, emphasizing information delivery and moral exhortation while insufficiently engaging experiential, embodied, and cultural dimensions. Such educational patterns often produce a gap between environmental knowledge and everyday ecological practices (Sihombing et al., 2025; Tsevreni, 2024). This condition underscores the need for educational approaches that are not merely informative, but contextual and rooted in the lived experiences of communities, in order to foster ecological understanding that is both meaningful and sustainable.

In response to the limitations of cognitive and normative approaches to environmental education, ecopedagogy has emerged as a critical educational framework that situates human-nature-culture relations within a unified analytical perspective. Ecopedagogy is not solely oriented toward the transmission of ecological knowledge, but emphasizes the formation of ethical relationships that enable individuals and communities to understand the environment as a lived space imbued with values, histories, and cultural meanings (McIntosh & Feltrin, 2025; Rahardjanto et al., 2025). Within this framework, learning is understood as an embodied, narrative, and contextual experience, in which ecological knowledge is constructed through direct engagement,

storytelling, and social and cultural practices embedded in everyday life (Quinones & Duhn, 2025; Stern et al., 2026). From this perspective, ecopedagogy opens space for forms of learning that are not only reflective but also transformative, while enabling cultural practices—including the arts—to function as pedagogical media in cultivating sustainable ecological awareness.

Aligned with *ecopedagogy*'s emphasis on experience, narrative, and social practice as the foundations of ecological learning, performing arts emerge as a strategic medium in environmental education because they not only communicate ecological messages but also facilitate multisensory learning through visual expression, movement, sound, and social interaction (Olvera-Hernandez et al., 2025; Pearce, 2024). Performing arts also provide symbolic narrative spaces capable of translating complex ecological issues into stories accessible to diverse age groups and social backgrounds (Mancilla García et al., 2025; Wall et al., 2026). In this context, theatre—particularly puppet theatre and *object theatre*—holds strong pedagogical potential by bridging imagination and social reality, making it effective as a medium for educational engagement among children and community audiences (Karaolis, 2023; Timmins & King, 2024). Through the dialogical relationship between performance and audience, performing arts create participatory spaces for reflection that foster contextual ecological understanding. Nevertheless, the use of arts in environmental education has developed through different orientations, ranging from art as a medium for ecological awareness, performance as a tool for environmental advocacy, to artistic practice as a participatory learning experience.

Various approaches, such as *eco-art education*, *environmental theatre*, and *arts-based environmental learning*, have made significant contributions to connecting arts and environmental education, yet each embodies distinct pedagogical orientations. *Eco-art education* generally positions art as a medium of creative expression to foster ecological awareness through the representation of environmental issues, the reinforcement of pro-environmental values, and the cultivation of human-nature connectedness through environmentally based artistic practices (Sunassee et al., 2021). Meanwhile, *environmental theatre* tends to emphasize performative functions in communicating ecological messages, fostering collective reflection, and encouraging socio-ecological awareness through symbolic narratives and audience engagement within performance spaces (Balcare, 2022). In contrast, *arts-based environmental learning* primarily views artistic experience as a means of environmental learning through creative engagement, sensory reflection, and direct experience in understanding ecological issues (Hannigan et al., 2025). These differing orientations suggest that art is not always positioned as a space for producing ecological knowledge grounded in materiality, community, and contextual experience, thereby opening conceptual space for the development of forms of *ecopedagogy* rooted in locality and community cultural practices, as articulated through *Purun Puppet Theatre*.

Departing from this conceptual space, *Purun Puppet Theatre* is proposed as a form of ecological education rooted in local contexts through the use of purun as an artistic medium, pedagogical material, and marker of peatland ecology. Unlike *eco-art education*, *environmental theatre*, and *arts-based environmental learning*, which generally position art as a representational, performative, or experiential medium for learning, *Purun Puppet Theatre* places local materiality, performative practice, and community participation at the center of contextual ecological knowledge formation. As a form of puppet theatre grounded in local materials, *Purun Puppet Theatre* employs purun—a plant characteristic of peatland ecosystems—as the primary material for puppets and stage elements, and is developed through multimedia approaches and a community-based touring performance format. The use of purun as a contextual learning medium aligns with the perspective of Mulyani et al. (2025), who position purun as a learning resource rooted in environmental knowledge and the local wisdom of peatland communities. Within this performative practice, storytelling functions as the primary medium that interweaves ecological, cultural, and social experiences into the performance space, transforming the stage from a site of mere spectacle into a space of *ecopedagogy*, where learning occurs through sensory engagement, social interaction, and symbolic narratives grounded in community experience.

Material in *Purun Puppet* plays a central role in shaping the meaning of ecopedagogical learning through performing arts. Purun is positioned as a plant that connects ecological and cultural dimensions within peatland communities, as its presence reflects local environmental conditions while embodying local knowledge of human-nature relations (Rusmaniah et al., 2022). The use of purun in everyday practices and traditional weaving demonstrates how ecological knowledge is materialized through living, sustainable material culture transmitted across generations (Purba et al., 2024). Ecological studies further affirm purun as an integral component of peatland ecosystems, such that its utilization reflects context-specific forms of ecological adaptation (Kumalawati, 2023; Mahendra et al., 2025). Over time, the shift of purun from a utilitarian resource to an artistic and educational medium opens spaces for experiential learning, positioning purun as a marker of cultural and environmental wisdom in which ecological knowledge and cultural practices converge within a contextualized system of meaning.

Studies on art addressing environmental issues in Indonesia have often limited the role of art to ecological awareness campaigns or as a medium for conveying moral messages, thereby confining its function largely to representational and communicative purposes. Such approaches leave a conceptual gap, as art is rarely understood as a pedagogical space that actively shapes ecological knowledge, values, and relationships through experience-based engagement. Moreover, the dimension of local wisdom—particularly that rooted in materiality, cultural practices, and community contexts—has often not been established as a foundational perspective in understanding environmental art. Emerging from this gap, and in response to the differing conceptual orientations of eco-art education, environmental theatre, and arts-based environmental learning, this study specifically examines *Purun Puppet Theatre* developed in the peatland context of Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, where *purun* is culturally and ecologically embedded in everyday community life. The study offers a conceptual contribution by positioning an arts-based ecological learning model that operates through the interweaving of narrative, materiality, and community experience as a form of locally grounded ecopedagogy that expands the representational and communicative functions of environmental art toward the formation of community-based ecological knowledge. Through the *ecopedagogical stage*, this practice demonstrates that environmental and cultural wisdom is not merely represented symbolically, but also constructed and transmitted contextually through the direct involvement of audiences within the social and cultural space of performance.

The urgency of this study lies in the need to develop environmental education approaches capable of responding to ecological challenges through contextual, participatory, and locally grounded media. *Purun Puppet Theatre* is particularly relevant for examination because it integrates ecological, cultural, and pedagogical dimensions within a single practice that not only conveys environmental messages, but also shapes learning relationships through narrative, material engagement, and social interaction. Within this framework, the study aims to articulate *Purun Puppet Theatre* as an arts-based ecological learning model that operates through the interlacing of narrative, *purun* materiality, and community experience within an ecopedagogical stage. Through this analysis, the study seeks to expand understanding of the role of performing arts as spaces for the production and transmission of contextual environmental and cultural wisdom, while also offering conceptual implications for the development of ecopedagogy grounded in local wisdom within environmental education and community-based arts practices.

RESEARCH METHOD

The methodological approach adopted in this study integrates Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Arts-Based Research (ABR), with a clear differentiation of functions at each stage of the research process. The integration of these two approaches is carried out through the allocation of methodological functions according to the focus of the research questions, allowing each approach to explain different dimensions of the phenomenon under investigation. PAR is employed to address the first research question, namely to understand the production process of *Purun Puppet Theatre* within an ecopedagogical context, by positioning participants as active subjects and co-researchers within participatory cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection. Methodologically, PAR is grounded in the view that knowledge is not transferred in a linear manner but is constructed through reflective praxis and collective inquiry in real social contexts; thus, learning and artistic creation are understood as spaces of knowledge production that are situational, embodied, and transformative (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019). Within the PAR framework, this approach is particularly relevant for community-based and sustainability-oriented research, as it enables the simultaneous integration of pedagogical action, critical reflection, and the transformation of practice (Burns et al., 2021; McAteer, 2021). Through PAR, this study generates data in the form of participatory observations during the training process, documentation of the stages of *purun* material processing and puppet creation, as well as participants' reflections on the ecological and cultural values emerging throughout the production process.

Subsequently, Arts-Based Research (ABR) is employed to address the second research question, namely to understand how *Purun Puppet Theatre* is implemented as a stage of ecopedagogy. Methodologically, ABR positions artistic practice not as a supplementary educational tool but as a mode of inquiry and a source of knowledge production, in which aesthetic, material, and performative experiences generate research data through performances, narratives, and social interactions (Boyd & Barry, 2024). Within this framework, *Purun Puppet Theatre* is understood as an artistic practice that produces embodied and contextual cultural-ecological knowledge, which is interpreted through the direct engagement of audiences within specific social spaces (Boyd & Barry, 2024; Fried, 2025). The implementation of *Purun Puppet Theatre* took the form of a village-based touring performance conducted at three sites: TK Darul Istiqomah, SDN 5 Bukit Tunggal, and

Paviliun Tjilik Riwut. Each performance was designed as an ecopedagogical learning space comprising three main elements: an ecological education prologue, an object-theatre performance based on purun puppets, and a reflective discussion session involving students, parents, teachers, and creators in the form of a Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

The FGD was used to address the third research question, namely to understand the implications of Purun Puppet Theatre for the sustainability of environmental and cultural wisdom. Within the framework of Arts-Based Research, the FGD is not positioned merely as a technique for collecting opinions, but as a reflective space that brings together aesthetic experience, cultural memory, and post-performance social meaning-making, thereby enabling the articulation of knowledge emerging from embodied experience and collective dialogue (Boyd & Barry, 2024). Through the FGD, audiences and community members are invited to reflect on their viewing experiences, interpret the ecological narratives conveyed, and make sense of the use of purun material and the form of the performance in relation to everyday practices and local cultural values. This approach aligns with the view that meaning in ABR does not end at the performative moment, but is socially constructed through processes of reflection and discourse following artistic experience (Archibald, 2022; Busby, 2024). Data generated from the FGD were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative approach through thematic coding to identify patterns of meaning-making, affective responses, and emerging forms of ecological awareness.

This study involved 31 participants directly engaged in all stages of the research, consisting of 10 participants in the Participatory Action Research (PAR) cycle, including creators and community members involved in the production of Purun Puppet Theatre, and 21 participants involved in the implementation of Arts-Based Research (ABR) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) sessions, comprising students, teachers, parents, creators, and community members across three sites: TK Darul Istiqomah (7 participants), SDN 5 Bukit Tunggal (8 participants), and Paviliun Tjilik Riwut (6 participants). Participants were purposively selected based on their involvement in the production process, participation in the implementation of Purun Puppet Theatre as a stage of ecopedagogy, and engagement in post-implementation reflection through Focus Group Discussion (FGD). All qualitative data obtained through PAR and ABR were systematically analyzed in relation to relevant literature. Within the PAR framework, literature was used to interpret participatory learning processes, participant relationships, and reflective practices emerging during purun puppet production training as an experience-based ecopedagogy practice. Within the ABR framework, literature strengthened interpretations of performing arts as a medium of knowledge production, particularly in analyzing narratives, materiality, and social interactions emerging during the implementation of Purun Puppet Theatre and reflective sessions. Thus, the literature review functioned not only as a theoretical reference but also as an analytical tool connecting empirical findings with the conceptual frameworks of PAR and ABR, enabling interpretation with academic depth and theoretical relevance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Production Process of Purun Paper Puppets within an Ecopedagogical Context

The production process of *Purun Paper Puppets* in this study took place through a participatory cycle involving 10 participants consisting of creators and community members, who were actively engaged from the stages of planning, purun material processing, and puppet creation to reflection on production outcomes. This involvement indicates that puppet production functioned not merely as a technical activity, but also as a space for ecological learning developed through direct experience, collaborative work, and collective reflection. To understand these dynamics, this study employed a *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) approach, which positions participants as active subjects and co-researchers within the creative process (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019). Within the PAR framework, the production process followed cycles of planning, action, observation, reflection, and the continuous refinement of practice (Fine & Torre, 2021). The entire process generated qualitative data in the form of participatory observations, documentation of purun material processing and puppet-making stages, as well as participants' reflections on the ecological and cultural values emerging throughout the production process. Thus, each stage of production was understood not merely as a procedural activity, but also as an analytical space for examining practices, interactions, and reflections representing ecopedagogical values. Based on this framework, the following table presents the stages of the *Purun Paper Puppet* production process according to the PAR cycle.

Table 1. PAR Stages in the Paper Puppet Purun Production Process

PAR Stage	Focus of the PAR Stage	Purun Paper Puppet Production Process
Planning	Formulation of objectives and collaborative planning	Defining the objectives of producing Purun Paper Puppets as an object theatre medium for conveying ecological messages; introducing purun as an environmentally friendly paper raw material; planning a simple production workflow from purun paper-making to puppet character design; determining story themes based on environmental issues and local cultural values; collectively assigning roles and tasks.
Action	Implementation of production through hands-on practice	Processing purun into paper through stages of fiber breakdown, sheet molding, and drying; using purun paper as the primary material for Purun Paper Puppets; designing and cutting character forms based on simple sketches; assembling puppets using lightweight frames and simple joints made of wood/bamboo; finalizing the puppets while maintaining the natural color and texture of purun.
Observation	Monitoring processes and participant engagement	Observing participants' collective work at each stage of Purun Paper Puppet production; documenting work processes and collaborative interactions; recording participants' responses to the use of purun paper as an alternative environmentally friendly material; identifying technical challenges in paper printing and puppet assembly.
Reflection	Evaluation of experiences and creative outcomes	Conducting collective reflections on experiences of processing purun into paper and shaping it into Purun Paper Puppets; evaluating the alignment of character designs with ecological messages and local narratives; assessing visual quality, structural strength, and the suitability of the puppets for object theatre simulations.
Re-planning	Refinement and further development	Revising puppet designs; developing variations of characters and narratives; planning the use of Purun Paper Puppets in object theatre simulation activities as a medium for ecological education grounded in local cultural contexts.

At the *planning* and *action* stages, the production of *Purun Paper Puppets* demonstrates that understandings of purun as both an ecological and cultural material are constructed through participatory discussions emphasizing its ecological function as a peatland plant, its history of use, and its symbolic value within community life. This process forms the basis for developing puppet designs and functions intended to represent human-nature relationships. These findings indicate that production decisions are not shaped solely through individual or technical considerations, but emerge through *collective inquiry* (Tilley, 2024; Van Houte & Rast, 2024), *shared decision-making* (Hainzer et al., 2026; Olvera-Hernandez et al., 2025), and knowledge formation through *communicative action* (Olvera-Hernandez et al., 2023; Polido et al., 2025) and the *negotiation of meaning* (Bennett et al., 2024; Breel, 2025). During the *action* stage, participants' involvement in purun processing, puppet structure construction, and character development illustrates that ecological understanding evolves through embodied and contextual material experiences. Analytically, this practice suggests that the production process functions as a space for experience-based ecological learning, in which understanding develops through practice, action, and problem-solving as a form of *praxis* within PAR (Fine & Torre, 2021), while also reflecting processes of *learning through action* (Lampert et al., 2025; Oinonen et al., 2024) and *knowledge-in-action* (Buizer et al., 2024; Reffhaug & Lysgaard, 2024). Thus, the *planning* and *action* stages represent not merely technical production procedures, but also demonstrate how ecological and cultural values are internalized through reflective and transformative production experiences.

**Figure 1.** Results of Purun Paper Puppet Production

Subsequently, the *observation*, *reflection*, and *re-planning* stages demonstrate that the production process of *Purun Paper Puppets* developed as a dynamic ecological and cultural practice rather than a linear production activity. Observations of participant engagement, collective work dynamics, and human-environment

relations revealed that production functioned as a shared learning process through which participants continuously interpreted and adjusted their practices. These findings indicate that observation in the PAR cycle did not merely document activities but served as a mechanism for critically examining ecological understanding and collaborative interactions. Such practices align with the concepts of *self-reflective inquiry* (Cornish et al., 2023; Haufe et al., 2024) and *reflexive monitoring* (Stam et al., 2023) in PAR, while also reflecting collaborative learning processes emerging through social interaction (Gardeli & Vosinakis, 2025). During the *reflection* stage, participants collectively reinterpreted production experiences to understand shifts in ecological understanding and practice. Analytically, this process suggests that reflection functioned not only as an evaluative stage but also as a form of critical learning through which participants reconsidered their relationships with materials, production practices, and ecological meanings (Fries, 2025; Zakopoulos et al., 2023). The outcomes of reflection informed the *re-planning* stage, reinforcing the cyclical character of PAR as a process of continuous and adaptive learning (Fine & Torre, 2021), while also demonstrating an orientation toward continuous improvement, in which production practices were continuously refined and expanded rather than ending after a single cycle (Cornish et al., 2023). Consequently, the planning of subsequent puppet production and the implementation of *Purun Puppet Theatre* were positioned as extensions of *praxis* that transformed production from a workshop activity into an ongoing cultural and pedagogical practice.

These PAR-based production stages demonstrate that the overall practice of producing *Purun Paper Puppets* functioned as a form of *place-based environmental education*, in which purun was introduced not merely as a material resource but as part of a living peatland ecology and cultural landscape. The findings indicate that puppet production enabled participants to understand ecological relations through direct engagement with local materiality and culturally grounded design practices. Analytically, this positions material not as a neutral object, but as an active component of ecological learning embedded in local environmental contexts (Ardoin et al., 2020; Martínez-Rodríguez & Fernández-Herrera, 2022). The production process also reflects ecological learning or *learning-as-practice* (Murti et al., 2025; Yemini et al., 2025), in which ecological understanding developed through action, material engagement, and hand-tool-material interactions across production stages as embodied and situated experiences. Furthermore, the involvement of children, teachers, and community members situates the production of *Purun Puppets* within a *community-based environmental education* framework (Lolita et al., 2025; Ningrum et al., 2025), emphasizing collaborative learning, intergenerational transfer of ecological knowledge, and the sustainability of practice through continued production planning and the implementation of *Purun Puppet Theatre*. The following section outlines the internalization of ecopedagogical principles within the *Purun Puppet* production process.

Table 2. Ecopedagogical Concepts in the Purun Paper Puppets Production Process

Conceptual Framework	Key Sub-Concepts	Purun Puppet Production Practices	Ecopedagogical Context in the Purun Puppet Production Process
Place-Based Environmental Education / Place-Based Pedagogy	Learning Rooted in Place	Introduction of purun as a peatland plant; discussion of wetland ecosystems and local practices	Learning is grounded in the participants' lived environment. Purun is understood as part of the local ecological and cultural landscape, rather than as a neutral material.
	Ecological & Cultural Contextualization	Planning of puppet design and character representing human-nature relations	Place is understood as both an ecological and cultural space. The puppets function as narrative media that express relationships between humans and the peatland environment.
	Place as Pedagogical Agent	Exploration of purun's material characteristics (flexibility, fragility, strength after processing)	Natural materials act as pedagogical agents, shaping ecological understanding through their inherent properties.
	Re-inhabiting Place	Puppet production as an art practice using local materials	Artistic production becomes a way of "re-inhabiting" place through meaningful, place-responsive creative practice.
Ecological Learning / Learning-as-Practice	Learning through Doing and Making	Soaking, drying, shaping, and assembling purun	Learning occurs through hands-on action rather than theoretical instruction.
	Embodied and Material Learning	Hand-tool-material interaction during the production process	Ecological knowledge is formed through bodily engagement, sensory experience, and material interaction.
	Situated Learning	Production activities conducted within the community and real environmental settings	Knowledge is situated, emerging from specific social and ecological contexts.
	Knowledge as Emergent	Technical problem-solving during puppet production	Ecological understanding develops gradually through practice and experimentation rather than being predefined.

Conceptual Framework	Key Sub-Concepts	Purun Puppet Production Practices	Ecopedagogical Context in the Purun Puppet Production Process
Community-Based Environmental Education (CBEE)	Community as Learning Context	Involvement of children, teachers, and community members in the production process	The community is positioned as the primary learning space and source of knowledge.
	Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer	Shared practices and exchange of experiences in processing purun	Local ecological knowledge is transmitted across generations through collaborative practice.
	Participatory and Collaborative Learning	Group discussions, collective work, observation, and reflection	Learning is constructed through active participation, dialogue, and collaboration rather than one-way instruction.
	Sustainability-Oriented Action	Planning of subsequent puppets and implementation of <i>Purun Puppet Theatre</i>	Ecological learning is oriented toward sustained action and long-term practice, rather than stopping at artifact production.

The production practice of *Purun Paper Puppets* demonstrates that ecological understanding emerged through participants' direct engagement with purun as a peatland plant and as a material embedded in local cultural life. During the initial stages, participatory discussions concerning wetland ecosystems, local utilization practices, and community–environment relationships enabled participants to situate purun within their lived ecological context. These findings indicate that learning was rooted in place, as participants developed ecological understanding not through abstract explanations but through experiences connected to their immediate environments (Jaikrasen & Ketsing, 2025; Yemini et al., 2025). This understanding was subsequently translated into the planning of puppet designs and characters representing human–nature relationships, suggesting that ecological learning simultaneously functioned as a process of cultural contextualization in which place was understood as both an ecological and cultural space (Folke et al., 2021; Ingold, 2017). Furthermore, participants' exploration of purun's material properties—its flexibility, fragility, and strength after processing—demonstrates how material engagement shaped environmental understanding, positioning place as a pedagogical agent through which learning emerged from direct encounters with local ecological materials (Lynch & Mannion, 2021; Rautio et al., 2022). Analytically, these practices suggest that the production of *Purun Paper Puppets* functioned as a process of re-inhabiting place through creative engagement with local materials that re-established meaningful relationships between participants and their environments.

Participants' direct involvement in transforming purun into paper and subsequently into puppet characters further illustrates that ecological learning developed through practice-based engagement rather than through instructional transfer alone. The findings reveal that participants' understanding evolved through repeated interactions among hands, tools, and materials during stages of cutting, shaping, assembling, and refining puppet forms. This process indicates that learning occurred through doing and making, in which knowledge developed through practical engagement rather than theoretical instruction (Davies & Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, 2025; Pearson & Dubé, 2025). Analytically, the interactions among hands, tools, and materials reflect embodied and material learning, as ecological understanding emerged through bodily and sensory experiences situated within real community and environmental contexts (Ingold, 2017; Giusti et al., 2025; Jornet et al., 2025). Moreover, the resolution of technical challenges during production demonstrates knowledge as emergent, whereby understanding developed progressively through experimentation, practice, and reflection on action (Hordern, 2022; Raynard et al., 2025). Thus, the production process functioned not merely as technical training but as a space for ecological learning grounded in lived experience and contextual practice.

These place- and experience-based practices were further strengthened through the involvement of children, teachers, and community members across all stages of production. The findings demonstrate that ecological learning emerged through collaborative interactions, collective labor, discussion, and shared reflection, enabling ecological understanding to develop within social relationships rather than through individual learning alone. Such engagement positions the community as both a learning context and a source of ecological knowledge (Bird et al., 2025; Sturrock & Zandvliet, 2023). Analytically, collaborative work facilitated intergenerational knowledge transfer through the sharing of experiences and practices related to purun processing across generations (Giusti et al., 2018), while group discussions and collective reflection reflected participatory and collaborative learning in which knowledge was constructed dialogically and through active participation (Hu et al., 2024). Furthermore, the planning of subsequent production cycles and the implementation of *Purun Puppet Theatre* indicate an orientation toward sustainability, as ecological learning extended beyond the creation of artifacts toward the continuity of ecological practice and long-term action (Saleem & Dare, 2023; Thanapornsangstuth et al., 2025). Overall, the production of *Purun Paper Puppets* demonstrates that ecological learning emerged through direct engagement with local materials, place-based

creative practices, and community social relations that collectively shaped meaningful and sustainable ecological learning experiences.

Implementation of the Purun Puppet Theatre as an Ecopedagogical Stage

Following the completion of the *Purun Paper Puppets* production process, the resulting puppets were subsequently implemented in *Purun Puppet Theatre* as an *ecopedagogical stage*, through which the ecological and cultural values developed during production were enacted within a performative learning space. This implementation involved 21 participants consisting of students, teachers, parents, creators, and community members, and was conducted across three locations: TK Darul Istiqomah, SDN 5 Bukit Tunggal, and Paviliun Tjilik Riwut. The findings demonstrate that the performance functioned not merely as a medium for delivering ecological messages, but developed into an *ecopedagogical stage* where cultural–ecological meanings were collectively constructed through interactions among puppets, performers, audiences, and the social context of the performance. This condition suggests that understandings of human–nature relationships, previously developed through material engagement and production experiences, were extended into aesthetic experiences that enabled audiences to reinterpret ecological meanings collectively and reflectively. Analytically, the implementation of *Purun Puppet Theatre* is understood within an *Arts-Based Research (ABR)* framework, which positions artistic practice as a *way of knowing*, in which artistic processes, performances, and audience responses are treated as legitimate forms of research data (Boyd & Barry, 2024). From this perspective, the *ecopedagogical stage* is understood as a performative and contextual space in which cultural–ecological meanings are produced through relationships among artworks, performers, audiences, and the social space of performance. Therefore, the implementation of *Purun Puppet Theatre* is positioned not as a final product, but as a space of inquiry where cultural–ecological ideas are tested, interpreted, and collectively reflected upon through aesthetic experience and participatory dialogue. The following section outlines the stages of implementing *Purun Puppet Theatre* as an *ecopedagogical stage* within the ABR framework.

Table 3. Stages of Purun Puppet Theatre Implementation within the Arts-Based Research Framework

ABR Stage	Focus of the ABR Stage	Implementation of the Purun Puppet Theatre
Artistic Framing	Formulation of artistic ideas and horizons of meaning	Development of a human–nature relational narrative grounded in the cultural–ecological context of Kalimantan peatland ecosystems, reflecting values of coexistence; design of purun puppet characters as symbols of a relational cosmology among humans, animals, and forests.
Initial Performance	Exploration and preliminary interpretation of meaning	Pilot performance at Darul Istiqomah Kindergarten as a space for testing the translation of cultural–ecological knowledge through Purun Puppet objects and symbolic narratives; brief dialogues used to examine children’s interpretations of human–nature relationships.
Touring Performances (Performance as Data)	Performance as an event of knowledge production	Performances at SDN 5 Bukit Tunggal Elementary School and the Tjilik Riwut Pavilion treated as arenas for the production of cultural–ecological knowledge, encompassing artistic expression, social interaction, and intergenerational meaning-making.
Audience Response and Dialogue	Participation and negotiation of meaning	Post-performance discussions function as cultural dialogue spaces for interpreting messages of coexistence with nature; audience responses are analyzed as processes of internalizing cultural–ecological values.
Reflection and Artistic Consolidation	Reflection and strengthening of praxis	Collective reflection and enhancement of performative quality indicate the maturation of theatre practice as a cultural–ecological medium; community appreciation serves as an indicator of the effectiveness of the ecopedagogical stage grounded in local culture.

The implementation of *Purun Puppet Theatre* as an *ecopedagogical stage* within the *Arts-Based Research (ABR)* framework demonstrates that artistic meaning-making emerged through the formulation of cultural–ecological narratives and symbolic representations rooted in the peatland ecosystem of Kalimantan. The findings show that the development of human–nature relational narratives, along with the design of *Purun Puppet* characters symbolizing the relational cosmology among humans, animals, and forests, functioned not merely as preparatory artistic activities but as processes through which ecological and cultural understandings were constructed. This suggests that the stage of *artistic framing* operated as an epistemic process in which participants and creators collectively negotiated how cultural–ecological realities would be translated into artistic forms and communicated through performance. Analytically, this process aligns with the understanding of artistic framing as a conceptual space for constructing horizons of cultural–ecological meaning (Fan, 2025; Zhang et al., 2025). In accordance with the principle of *art as a way of knowing*, aesthetic and symbolic decisions at this stage can be understood as an initial form of inquiry through which cultural–ecological realities are explored, interpreted, and artistically represented for audiences (Loroño-Leturiondo & Olazabal, 2025; Pant et al., 2023).

The subsequent implementation through artistic trials and touring performances further demonstrates that *Purun Puppet Theatre* functioned as a dynamic space for producing cultural–ecological meanings. Findings from the initial performance at Darul Istiqomah Kindergarten indicate that the staging provided an exploratory context for examining how visual and symbolic narratives could communicate ecological ideas to early childhood audiences. Meanwhile, performances at SDN 5 Bukit Tunggal Elementary School and Paviliun Tjilik Riwut expanded both the audience composition and the social setting of interpretation, allowing ecological meanings to be negotiated across different contexts. These findings indicate that performance functioned not as a one-directional medium of message delivery, but as a relational and situated event through which audiences actively participated in meaning-making. Analytically, this process reflects the notion of *performance as data* within ABR (Boyd & Barry, 2024), while also aligning with perspectives on performativity that understand cultural–ecological knowledge as produced through dynamic relations among performers, audiences, and spatial contexts rather than statically embedded within the artwork itself (Chen, 2025; Meng, 2025). Accordingly, *Purun Puppet Theatre* operated as a living arena for the production of cultural–ecological knowledge rather than merely as a medium for transmitting ecological messages.



Figure 2. Performance of the Purun Puppet Theatre

The dimensions of audience response, dialogue, and artistic reflection further demonstrate that *Purun Puppet Theatre* functioned as a participatory and reflective *ecopedagogical stage* through which cultural–ecological meanings were continuously interpreted and reconstructed. Findings from post-performance dialogues indicate that audiences actively reflected on values of coexistence with nature and the importance of safeguarding peatland ecosystems as part of their cultural order. Rather than functioning as a space for instructional evaluation, dialogue enabled participants to collectively interpret ecological messages and relate them to everyday experiences and local environmental concerns. This suggests that audience engagement contributed to the production of shared ecological meanings through participatory reflection. Analytically, dialogue can therefore be understood as a mechanism of collective meaning production rather than as a form of evaluative instruction (Ingram, 2025; Van Houte & Rast, 2024). Furthermore, the increasing performative quality of subsequent performances, alongside community appreciation for the integration of performing arts, cultural–ecological messages, and local purun materials, indicates that artistic practice within *Arts-Based Research* (ABR) functioned adaptively and transformatively through ongoing reflection (Loroño-Leturiondo & Olazabal, 2025; Muhumuza et al., 2025). Taken together, these processes position *Purun Puppet Theatre* as an *ecopedagogical stage* that produces cultural–ecological knowledge through sustained relationships among art, community, and collective reflection.

Grounded in the overall *Arts-Based Research* process – encompassing artistic framing, performance as a research event, audience dialogue, and continuous reflection – demonstrates that *Purun Puppet Theatre* generated cultural–ecological knowledge through interactions among objects, materials, performers, and audiences rather than functioning merely as a theatrical presentation. Findings indicate that ecological and cultural meanings emerged through performative experiences in which puppets, narratives, and audience participation collectively shaped understanding. Analytically, this process aligns with the ABR perspective that understands knowledge not as an *a priori* finding, but as meaning generated through artistic and performative experience (Boyd & Barry, 2024). This interpretation is further informed by the concept of *Object Theatre* (Smith, 2024), which positions objects and materials as primary carriers of meaning rather than neutral props, and strengthened by Orenstein (2023) puppet theatre tradition, which frames puppets as living symbolic media within relational performance contexts. Through this framework, puppets and materials on stage functioned as mechanisms of knowledge production that translated ecological and cultural experiences into symbolic–artistic language, enabling *ecopedagogical* and cultural values to be mediated to audiences

through the experience of performance. The following section elaborates on how such cultural–ecological knowledge is produced.

Table 4. Knowledge Production in the Implementation of the Purun Puppet Theatre

Object Theatre Principle	Operationalization of the Ecopedagogical Stage	Cultural–Ecological Knowledge Produced
Object as Meaning Carrier	Purun puppets function as the central narrative devices and symbols of human–nature relationships	Cultural–ecological knowledge of human–nature coexistence constructed through symbols, local narratives, and ethics of living together
Material as Non-Neutral	Purun is presented as a peatland plant embedded within cultural–ecological contexts	Cultural–ecological knowledge of purun as part of living systems, traditional practices of use, and local ecological identity
Object as Performative Subject	Purun puppets “speak” through movement and on-stage relational dynamics	Cultural–ecological knowledge that recognizes non-human entities as meaningful subjects within a relational cosmology
Human–Object Relations as Sources of Meaning	Performers act as mediators between puppets and audiences	Cultural–ecological knowledge of non-dominative human–nature relationships grounded in community ethical values
Reduction of Realistic Representation	Simplified puppet forms open spaces for symbolic interpretation	Reflective cultural–ecological knowledge that enables audiences to interpret environmental issues through symbols and cultural imagination
Object as Symbolic Medium	Animals and humans are represented as symbols of ecological relationships	Cultural–ecological knowledge concerning human moral responsibility toward nature as part of socio-cultural order
Material as Dramaturgy	The material qualities of purun shape the language and structure of performance	Cultural–ecological knowledge of limits, vulnerability, and adaptive wisdom in relating to nature
Objects Living in Relation	Meanings of Purun puppets emerge through narrative context, spatial setting, and audience engagement	Relational cultural–ecological knowledge that understands the environment as a living system embedded in community practices and values

The implementation of *Object Theatre* principles within *Purun Puppet Theatre* demonstrates how puppets functioned as mechanisms for producing cultural–ecological knowledge within the *ecopedagogical stage*. Findings from the narrative involving the gibbon—a forest animal native to Kalimantan—and *Pak Tani*, situated within a shared living landscape, indicate that ecological meanings emerged through symbolic actions and relational tensions rather than through explicit moral instruction. The conflict in which the gibbon steals crops reflects tensions arising from overlapping human and non-human living spaces, while *Pak Tani*'s decision to release the animal signifies an ethical orientation toward coexistence and the limitation of human dominance over nature. Furthermore, the narrative transformation, in which the gibbon expresses remorse and commits to not repeating its actions, demonstrates the emergence of cultural–ecological meanings concerning responsibility, ecological limits, and coexistence within shared environments. Analytically, these findings suggest that *Purun Puppets* functioned not as illustrative props or psychological representations of characters, but as symbolic objects that articulated human–nature relationships through performative actions, consistent with Steve Smith (2024) conception of *Object Theatre*. In line with *Arts-Based Research*, such knowledge was not transmitted instructionally, but emerged through audiences' artistic and performative experiences shaped by relationships among objects, materials, narrative, and the social context of performance (Boyd & Barry, 2024).

The material qualities of purun further demonstrate that ecological meaning within *Purun Puppet Theatre* was shaped not only through narrative, but also through participants' and audiences' encounters with materiality itself. Findings indicate that purun functioned simultaneously as an artistic medium and a cultural–ecological entity, carrying meanings rooted in peatland ecosystems, local utilization practices, and inherited environmental knowledge. Within the performance context, the texture, flexibility, and limitations of purun directly influenced stage language and dramatic structure, indicating that dramaturgical possibilities emerged through negotiation between narrative intention and material capacity. This suggests that ecological understanding developed not only through symbolic stories, but also through sensory and aesthetic experiences of material engagement. Analytically, this aligns with the principles of *material as non-neutral* and *material as dramaturgy*, which position material as an active component in meaning production rather than as a passive artistic medium. Such interpretation is consistent with ecological anthropology perspectives on *materiality and meaning*, which understand materials as active agents in shaping meaning and relationships (Pinho, 2023), as well as cultural ecology perspectives emphasizing that human–nature relationships are constructed through inherited, learned, and socially negotiated material practices (Cockerill et al., 2024; Reyes-García & McKey, 2025). Consequently, audiences did not merely observe a story, but encountered ecological

understanding through aesthetic experiences that positioned nature as a living system with its own limits, vulnerabilities, and rhythms, requiring ethical consideration in human–nature relations.

Within *Purun Puppet Theatre*, puppets functioned not merely as representational tools manipulated by performers, but as performative subjects through which ecological meanings were communicated and negotiated on stage. Findings indicate that *Purun Puppets* articulated meaning through movement, rhythm, and relational dynamics emerging between puppets, performers, and audiences, allowing human–nature relationships to be experienced as reciprocal rather than hierarchical. This suggests that performers functioned less as narrative authorities and more as mediators facilitating encounters between puppets and audiences, thereby enabling ecological meanings to emerge relationally through performance. Analytically, this perspective resonates with the puppet theatre tradition articulated by Orenstein (2023), which understands puppets as living symbolic media embedded within relational performance contexts rather than as extensions of actors’ psychology. Such interpretation also intersects with relational cosmologies and posthuman perspectives in cultural–ecological studies that recognize non-human entities as meaningful subjects possessing agency within networks of life (Aspøy, 2024; Nelson, 2025). Accordingly, human–object relations become sources of meaning that position ecological life as constituted through reciprocal relations between humans and more-than-human entities, while the stage functions as an *ecopedagogical space* for cultivating cultural–ecological empathy and recognition of non-human agency (Griniuk, 2024; Harre et al., 2025).

Rather than relying on realistic representation, *Purun Puppet Theatre* employed symbolic forms that encouraged audiences to interpret ecological meanings reflectively. Findings indicate that the simplified forms of *Purun Puppets* enabled audiences to engage with environmental issues through symbolic interpretation, allowing ecological relationships and moral responsibilities to be understood beyond literal or individualized narratives. In this context, animals and humans were presented less as psychologically complex characters than as representations of ecological relations embedded within socio-cultural orders, enabling the narrative to function as a reflective device for reconsidering human positions within shared systems of life. Analytically, this process aligns with *Object Theatre* traditions, in which simplicity of form is intended not to mimic reality mimetically but to redirect attention toward meaning-making through symbols and relationships (Smith, 2024). Such symbolic engagement also expands cultural imagination and facilitates critical reflection on ecological issues (Foley, 2023; River, 2021). When objects become meaningful through narrative structures, performance spaces, and audience engagement, the resulting cultural–ecological knowledge becomes relational and contextual, consistent with *Arts-Based Research* perspectives that conceptualize knowledge as emerging through artistic and performative experience rather than through the direct transmission of ecological messages (Boyd & Barry, 2024; Morris & Paris, 2022).

Implications of the Purun Puppet Theatre for the Sustainability of Cultural and Environmental Wisdom

Post-performance reflections and dialogues demonstrate that the implications of *Purun Puppet Theatre* extended beyond the performative event itself, contributing to the sustainability of environmental and cultural wisdom through ongoing processes of interpretation and collective meaning-making. Findings from discussions involving teachers, parents, creators, and community members indicate that ecological and cultural understandings emerged as participants reinterpreted narratives, puppet characters, and the use of purun materials in relation to everyday experiences and local environmental realities. Rather than functioning as a space for satisfaction evaluation or instructional assessment, post-performance discussions became arenas in which ecological values, cultural memories, and community ethics concerning human–nature relationships were collectively negotiated and reflected upon. This suggests that the *ecopedagogical stage* continued beyond the performance itself, operating as an ongoing pedagogical process through reflective and dialogical engagement. Analytically, this process can be understood within the broader *Arts-Based Research* (ABR) framework, which conceptualizes reflective discussions as epistemic spaces for translating cultural–ecological knowledge through performative relationships among artworks, audiences, and social contexts (Boyd & Barry, 2024; Loroño-Leturiondo & Olazabal, 2025; Kuznetsova & Ranczakowska, 2025). This interpretation also aligns with *art-ecopedagogical* perspectives that understand ecological and cultural awareness as developing through the articulation of experiences, emotions, and values emerging after aesthetic engagement (Hannigan et al., 2025; Stabler, 2025). Based on these reflective outcomes, the implications of *Purun Puppet Theatre* for the sustainability of environmental and cultural wisdom can be articulated as follows:

Table 5. Sustainability Implications of the Purun Puppet Theatre

Aspect of Implication	Key Findings from FGDs	Direction of Cultural-Ecopedagogical Knowledge Translation	Significance for the Sustainability of Wisdom
Internalization of Environmental Wisdom through Aesthetic and Narrative Experience	“I began to feel that animals are not enemies, but companions in life who should be protected” (Student Responses, FGD/01); “Children remember the characters and stories more than direct advice” (Teacher Responses, FGD/02); “After watching the performance, children became more caring toward animals and forests” (Parent Responses, FGD/03).	Environmental values are not received as normative rules or prohibitions, but internalized through emotional and symbolic identification. Narratives and puppets facilitate affective learning, moral imagination, and embodied ecological awareness.	Ecological awareness grows from meaningful aesthetic experiences, increasing the likelihood of long-term retention and the formation of everyday cultural-ecological practices.
Reactualization of Cultural Wisdom through Purun Material as Living Knowledge	“Purun used to be associated with mats, but now it can become a medium for children’s learning” (Creator Responses, FGD/04); “Children are more interested in making puppets from natural materials than playing with factory-made toys” (Teacher Responses, FGD/02).	Purun functions as a connector of cultural memory and a medium for intergenerational knowledge translation. Local wisdom appears not as a static symbol but as a material practice relevant to contemporary ecological issues.	Local wisdom is repositioned as living, adaptive, and contextual knowledge, enhancing its potential for sustainability in present-day social practices.
Formation of Non-Dominative Human-Nature Relational Awareness	“The gibbon is not evil; perhaps it is hungry because its forest is damaged” (Student Responses, FGD/01); “We need to share living space with nature, not always blame animals” (Parent Responses, FGD/03).	Human-nature relationships are understood ethically and reciprocally, grounded in limits and responsibility rather than domination. Performances instill a relational cosmology through symbols and performative experience.	The development of non-exploitative perspectives toward nature provides an ethical foundation for the sustainability of human-environment relations.
Strengthening Sustainability through Community-Based Learning	“This method can be reused in thematic learning because children understand more easily” (Teacher Responses, FGD/02); “We are interested in continuing purun puppet production for future activities” (Community Responses, FGD/05).	Sustainability is understood not as the preservation of artifacts, but as the continuity of practices, narratives, and social relations reproduced within community contexts.	The Purun Puppet Theatre functions as a socially and culturally reproductive ecopedagogical practice, creating opportunities for long-term, community-based sustainability.

The *Purun Puppet Theatre* internalizes environmental wisdom through aesthetic and narrative experiences rather than through the direct transmission of moral messages. Students’ responses, such as “I began to feel that animals are not enemies, but companions in life who should be protected” (FGD/01), indicate that ecological values are understood relationally and empathetically. Teachers further observed that “Children remember the characters and stories more than direct advice” (FGD/02), while parents reported that “After watching the performance, children became more caring toward animals and forests” (FGD/03). These findings align with experiential learning perspectives that emphasize meaning-making through direct experience (Novaes, 2025; Warners et al., 2025), as well as with narrative learning approaches that position storytelling as a primary medium for the internalization of values (D’Orto & Tasquier, 2025). Within the framework of affective learning and moral imagination (Manggau et al., 2025; Sunassee et al., 2021), emotional engagement with puppet characters enables children to imagine the perspectives of non-human beings and to develop ecological empathy. This process is embodied in nature, as understanding is constructed not solely at a cognitive level but through integrated sensory, emotional, and symbolic experiences, thereby increasing the likelihood that the resulting ecological awareness will endure and influence children’s attitudes in their relationships with nature.

Consistent with the internalization of ecological values through aesthetic experience, the subsequent implications illustrate how purun materiality functions to reactualize cultural wisdom as living knowledge. Creators associated purun with cultural memories of the past, reflected in statements such as “Purun used to be associated with mats, but now it can become a medium for children’s learning” (FGD/04). Teachers also observed that “Children are more interested in making puppets from natural materials than playing with factory-made toys” (FGD/02), suggesting that learning occurs through direct material engagement. These findings align with perspectives from material culture studies and ecological anthropology, which view materials not as passive objects but as carriers of knowledge and social relations transmitted through everyday practices (Brice & Thorpe, 2021). Concepts of embodied learning and learning-as-practice further explain how knowledge is constructed through interactions among the body, tools, and environment (Johansen, 2025; Li & Jones, 2025).

Within this framework, purun does not function as a static or nostalgic cultural symbol, but as a material practice that bridges cultural memory with present ecological concerns, thereby repositioning local wisdom as living, contextual knowledge with the potential for intergenerational transmission through shared experience.

Building on the material-based understanding of cultural wisdom embedded in practice, the next implication points to the formation of a non-dominative relational awareness between humans and nature. Students interpreted the conflict between the gibbon and *Pak Tari* relationally, as reflected in the statement: “*The gibbon is not evil; perhaps it is hungry because its forest is damaged*” (FGD/01). Parents similarly emphasized coexistence, stating that “*We need to share living space with nature, not always blame animals*” (FGD/03). Teachers further emphasized the importance of coexistence and of understanding nature as a subject rather than as an object to be controlled (FGD/02), signaling the emergence of ethical awareness regarding human–nature relations as reciprocal relationships grounded in limits and responsibility. These findings are consistent with the concept of relational ontology in ecological and cultural studies, which conceptualizes humans and non-humans as interconnected within networks of interdependence (Paul et al., 2021; Riley et al., 2024). Within the framework of critical ecopedagogy, this shift represents a transition from anthropocentric paradigms toward relational cosmologies that recognize nature as possessing agency and intrinsic value (Kopnina et al., 2024; Riechers et al., 2025). Through symbolic and performative experience, the performance enables audiences to experience and interpret human–nature relationships contextually, fostering ecological awareness rooted in lived ethical experience rather than abstract norms.

Beyond its effects on individual meaning-making and ethical human–nature relations, the final implication of the reflective discussions highlights the strengthening of sustainability through community-based learning. Teachers expressed expectations for reusing performance methods, noting that “*This method can be reused in thematic learning because children understand more easily*” (FGD/02). Community members also expressed interest in continuity, stating that “*We are interested in continuing purun puppet production for future activities*” (FGD/05). These findings indicate that sustainability is understood not merely as the preservation of artifacts but as the continuity of social practices, narratives, and relationships that are continuously reproduced. These findings align with concepts of community-based learning and community-based environmental education, which position communities as primary learning spaces and as agents of sustainability in the transmission of ecological knowledge (Rodríguez-Zurita et al., 2025; Saifi et al., 2024). Within an ecopedagogical framework, sustainability is achieved when learning processes enable communities to actively participate in producing and transmitting knowledge rooted in their lived contexts (Phuangsuwan et al., 2025; Thanapornsangsuth et al., 2025). Accordingly, the *Purun Puppet Theatre* can be understood as a socially and culturally reproductive ecopedagogical practice, as it creates space for environmental and cultural wisdom to be continually produced, reinterpreted, and transmitted through sustained community engagement.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this study demonstrates that *Purun Puppet* operates as an arts-based *ecopedagogy* system structured through three epistemic stages: the formation of praxis (*formation of praxis*), knowledge production (*knowledge production*), and the translation of cultural–ecological knowledge (*knowledge translation*). At the production stage, the *Participatory Action Research* approach positions the process of creating *Purun Paper Puppets* as a place- and community-based pedagogical praxis that establishes epistemic conditions through material engagement, critical reflection, and social collaboration. The implementation stage, framed through *Arts-Based Research*, conceptualizes performance as an arena for the production of cultural–ecological knowledge, in which meaning emerges through performative relationships among objects, materials, performers, audiences, and social contexts. The subsequent implications stage situates post-performance reflective discussions as spaces for knowledge translation, where performative and symbolic experiences are articulated into reflective understanding, ethical values, and orientations toward community social practices. Based on these three epistemic stages, the findings indicate that *Purun Puppet Theatre* functions as an *ecopedagogical stage* that systematically produces and translates cultural–ecological knowledge, while affirming the role of art as a reflective, participatory, and contextual pedagogical medium for sustaining environmentally grounded cultural wisdom. The implications of these findings further suggest that *Purun Puppet Theatre* is not merely relevant as an artistic practice or educational medium, but also holds strategic potential as an *ecopedagogy* framework that can be replicated and contextualized within environmental and cultural education.

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