



Alih Wahana by Sapardi Djoko Damono: Theoretical and Practical Studies in Education

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Abstract: This conceptual study develops an integrative framework for understanding the role of alih wahana – as theorized by Sapardi Djoko Damono – in contemporary education, particularly in the design of learning materials and the digital transformation of cultural instruction. Anchored in Damono's notion of transposition across forms, values, and media, this paper investigates how the transfer of meaning from a source medium to an instructional medium can function as a pedagogical strategy for strengthening contextual and culturally grounded learning. Employing a conceptual paper design supported by a systematic literature review adapted from Snyder, the study identifies relevant scholarship through Google Scholar and Publish or Perish using key terms related to alih wahana, pedagogy, learning materials, and digitalization. Of 74 identified publications, 38 were selected based on relevance, credibility, and recency. Thematic analysis was conducted across four analytical lenses: alih wahana (AW), education and pedagogy (PP), learning materials and media (BM), and digitalization (DG). The synthesis reveals that alih wahana provides a robust conceptual foundation for transforming cultural values into contemporary pedagogical practices through deliberate recontextualization and mediation. In the digital era, the theory offers a methodological pathway for developing culturally responsive digital learning materials capable of bridging traditional knowledge and modern learning environments. Findings indicate that effective application of alih wahana requires attention to representational fidelity, educator strategies in material development, and contextual factors influencing media transformation. Overall, the study argues that Damono's framework remains highly relevant for advancing culturally informed, media-sensitive, and pedagogically adaptive practices within modern education systems.

INTRODUCTION

The development of information technology and media has greatly impacted how humans access and

process information, especially in education. Poetry learning materials in schools, which were once presented in books, now often appear in audio-visual



formats displayed on liquid crystal displays (LCDs) using laptops and speakers. The adoption of digital learning media has begun to be implemented and has been shown to increase student engagement and comprehension (Afiah et al., 2025).

The transition from print books to videos as a learning medium can be described as an *Alih Wahana*, which focuses on the change from one medium to another. The knowledge or information originally in printed books is transferred to video form. Naturally, this transfer does not happen instantly; it involves a process of adaptation from the source medium—writing on paper in printed books—to writing or even spoken words in videos, which are visual displays of light from laptops on LCDs and the sound of poetry being read through speakers. To understand the process of change, including similarities, forms, and the essence of these platforms, media conversion is a relevant area of study to address these transformations.

Alih wahana, as a study, was initially conceived by Sapardi Djoko Damono in his book *Alih Wahana* (Damono, 2018) and was previously

mentioned in the last chapter of *Sastra Bandingan* (Damono, 2009). The term *alih wahana* introduced by Sapardi relates to the relationships between media or mediums. Here, *wahana* has two basic concepts, namely a *wahana* medium used to express “something” and a device positioned to move or carry “something” from one place to another (Damono, 2018).

This *Alih Wahana* Theory is actually a multidisciplinary study whose scope is not limited to a particular field of science; all interrelated human creations can be analyzed using this study. As a study, *Alih Wahana* provides a new space in the world of education, particularly in the fields of literature and art. The transformation of poetry into music, novels into films, and folk tales into comics not only enriches students' learning experiences but also opens up pedagogical opportunities to inspire contextual, creative, and multidisciplinary learning.

However, *Alih Wahana* as a field of study is still relatively new and “not yet widely known”—to borrow Maneke Budiman's term in his introduction to Sapardi's book (Damono, 2018)—and

tends to be familiar in the study of literature and art. This tendency is understandable considering that in the book *Alih Wahana*, Sapardi explicitly mentions literature and art repeatedly, both in the form of conceptual descriptions and in examples of adaptation. Furthermore, seeing Sapardi as a literary figure leads the public to think that *Alih Wahana* studies are about studying literature.

The large number of literary and artistic studies that use this study reinforces both statements. For example, research on art and culture that has been converted into digital form (Nirwana & Prasetyo Nugroho, 2024); *The Conversion of Eka Kurniawan's Novel Seperti Dendam, Rindu Harus Dibayar Tuntas* (Ahmad & Hinta, 2024); *The Adaptation of the Kancil Fairy Tale in the Creation of Fine Art* (Ramadhanna, 2021); and *The Creation of Interior Batik Motifs from the Transformation of Visual Forms of Intangible Cultural Heritage on the Island of Java* (Sasongko et al., 2025). These studies form the basis of this paper. The broad scope of adaptation does not limit the object of this study. Therefore, even though it was initiated by a writer, it does not mean that *Alih*

Wahana is only for the fields of literature or the humanities. It is possible that the field of education can also use this study, given that the development of science and technology is uncontrollable and affects all fields of science, including education.

Explicitly, Sapardi states on pages 42-43 of his book that transposition discusses the process of "moving back and forth from one type of cultural object to another," where cultural objects refer to human creations (Damono, 2018). This statement reinforces the idea that transposition is not only used in the realm of literature and other humanities. In conceptual terms, this paper attempts to outline the basic concept of transposition and its application as proposed by Sapardi Djoko Damono in the context of education.

METHOD

This research is structured as a conceptual paper, which is a scientific work that develops or clarifies theoretical ideas through critical analysis of existing concepts and models (Jaakkola, 2020). The study of Sapardi Djoko Damono's *Alih Wahana* is applied as a basic framework for

examining the process of transforming values, forms, and media in the context of education. The synthesis is carried out through a literature study that integrates Damono's thoughts with the findings of previous studies that have implemented the concept of Alih Wahana in various learning practices. This approach enables the formulation of a more systematic theoretical basis and the identification of key principles that can be used to design the implementation of Alih Wahana in learning development and teaching tools in an educational environment. With this study, it is hoped that the basic concepts and methods of applying the Alih Wahana Study in the context of education can be developed.

This study uses a conceptual approach (conceptual paper) with a literature review method that aims to develop a theoretical framework and conceptual model for further empirical investigation of the role of cultural heritage transfer in school learning. The approach used refers to the paper approach model initiated by Jaakkola (2020), which emphasizes theoretical construction through critical synthesis of various theories, concepts, and

previous empirical findings. This model was chosen because of its suitability for identifying inter-conceptual relationships, providing explanations of theoretical mechanisms, and offering new models that can be empirically tested in further research stages.

This research was systematically conducted through six main stages, namely 1) identifying issues and finding the focus of the research, 2) collecting sources through a search of relevant scientific literature such as articles from reputable journals, academic books, proceedings, and research reports discussing the topics of cultural transfer, arts education, local wisdom-based learning, and cultural digitization, 3) content analysis to examine relevant main theories, such as Sapardi Djoko Damono's Alih Wahana theory, 4) theory synthesis to integrate the concepts identified in the previous stage into a unified framework of thinking, 5) development of a conceptual model that describes the mechanism of the relationship between the main variables: 'Alih Wahana' as a process of transformation of values and forms, pedagogical practices as the context of implementation, and learning

outcomes as the impact on strengthening cultural identity and 21st-century competencies; 6) at the end of this study is the evaluation and reflection of the conceptual model by comparing the synthesis results with current theories and findings, as well as identifying theoretical and practical implications for further research. Thus, this approach not only produces a comprehensive theoretical formulation but also provides direction for further research that can empirically test the effectiveness of 'alih wahana' in improving the quality of learning in schools.

Data collection was conducted by searching for scientific writings in the form of articles, books, proceedings, and final projects from various national sources related to the topic of 'transition' in school learning. This research was conducted systematically using Google Scholar and Publish or Perish with the search phrases 'alih wahana', 'education', 'learning', 'school', and 'digitalization', and limited to writings published in 2018-2025.

The literature selection and categorization stages were carried out

using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) principle as adapted by Snyder (2019). This process involved three main steps i.e., 1) initial screening based on titles and abstracts, 2) eligibility text check through reading the content, and 3) final inclusion of literature relevant to the research focus. The selection was carried out by considering inclusion criteria such as the relevance of the topic to the Alih Wahana of education and learning, teaching materials and teaching media, digitization, source credibility, and publication novelty. All literature that passed the selection was then categorized into four main themes, which are 'Alih Wahana' (AW) which discusses indications of vehicle transfer that lead to transformation of form or media or value; Education and Learning (PP), which highlights culture-based pedagogical strategies, character education, and contextual learning; Teaching Materials and Teaching Media (BM), which explains the development of culture-based teaching materials and innovations in digital learning media; and Digitization (DG), which highlights digital literacy and the integration of technology in the teaching and learning process. The categorization process was

carried out with the help of the Mendeley reference management application, with each piece of literature being systematically assigned a thematic code (AW, PP, BM, DG) and selection status (Keep, Maybe, Exclude). This method facilitated the process of analyzing conceptual relationships between themes and ensured transparency in the literature selection process. Based on this selection and categorization stage, 74 pieces of literature were found. After undergoing a relevance and quality selection process, 38 pieces of literature were used in the conceptual analysis and synthesis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Basic Concept of Sapardi Djoko Damono's Alih Wahana Theory and Contextual Education

As mentioned in the introduction, this study of Alih Wahana was first introduced by Sapardi in the last chapter of his book *Satra Bandingan* and elaborated in the book *Alih Wahana* (Damono, 2018). Basically, both comparative literature and Alih Wahana have similar methods of application, namely comparison. However, Sapardi found that over time

and with the development of science and knowledge, comparative literature needed to be developed to cover a broader range of subjects because literature has now shifted to a new medium that is far more complex. These reasons, to a certain extent, sparked the birth of transmedia.

The growth of literature is unstoppable. Sapardi believes that comparative literature is limited to the realm of literature alone. In fact, literature has developed beyond the medium of literature, but they are still interrelated, giving rise to a shift in medium. The phenomenon of poetry becoming music: initially, poetry was a literary work in written form, but now it has shifted to songs that are recited and carry the guidelines of musical art, such as melody, beat, tempo, etc. The transformation of novels into films and theatrical performances, such as in the phenomenon of *Cintaku di Kampus Biru* (*My Love at Blue Campus*), is also an example of a phenomenon that has gone beyond comparative literature (Ridlo, 2018). Sapardi believes that these phenomena cannot be resolved by comparative literature, comparative art, or even media studies. Therefore,

Sapardi offers Alih Wahana as a solution.

Provided that the differences between these mediums are still interrelated, the study of medium transfer can be used. So, even though wayang was originally an oral literature in the form of the Ramayana and Baratayudha, it then shifted to writing in books, then to performing arts using puppets manipulated by a dalang, then to audio art on the radio, and then again to novels, such as *Kitab Omong Kosong* by Seno Gumira Adjidharma or *Anak Bajang Menggiring Angin* by Sindhunata. All of these repeated shifts in medium are still related to wayang, so they can be studied using Alih Wahana.

Alih Wahana, as a multidisciplinary study, requires Alih Wahana researchers to have some skills beyond literature, art, film, education, science, or language. This view also dispels the existential crisis of the early roots of Alih Wahana, namely humanities. There was once a belief that each field of study had the ability to solve problems using its own methods and parameters. In reality, it is predicted that the humanities, both now and in the future,

cannot be separated from non-cultural factors, such as industry, economics, politics, technology, and other sciences that were initially considered unrelated to the humanities (Damono, 2018). The study of transmedia was born as a multidimensional bridge in understanding various forms of media that have undergone transition or transformation.

In this article, there is a slight difference in the terminology used to refer to media in Alih Wahana. In Sapardi's book, 'wahana' is referred to as a medium, but in this paper, it is referred to as 'wahana' because it is necessary to standardize the terminology, from the term 'alih wahana' (transition) to refer to each medium using the term 'wahana', thus giving rise to the terms 'wahana sumber' ('source medium') and 'wahana pijakan' ('base medium'). This standardization and adjustment of names is considered to facilitate understanding of the concept and consistency in the use of terminology.

The basic concepts used as a basis in this study are 'wahana sumber', 'wahana pijakan', and 'proses peralihan'. 'Wahana sumber' refers to

various forms of human works and creations, such as art, literature, films, writings, and others that are used as references in the creation of other vehicles, which are then referred to as 'wahana pijakan'. The term 'pijakana' is chosen here because the medium has been transformed into an object or foundation in the study of 'Alih Wahana'. The term "transition process" relates to the factors that underlie the transition or change from 'wahana sumber' to 'wahana pijakan'.

In addition to the terms "wahana" and "medium," Hutcheon and Sanders introduced the term "adaptation," which means adjusting to new conditions (Hutcheon, 2006; Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013; Sanders, 2006). When poetry is transformed into music, there is an adjustment of the medium, which was originally written on paper in accordance with the rules of poetic writing. When it is transformed into music, adjustments are necessary, such as pitch and rhythm, in accordance with the rules of music. Based on this definition, there is actually a similarity and connection between the terms "Alih Wahana" and "adaptation." However, this article does not discuss adaptation;

it will only discuss the study of Alih Wahana according to Sapardi Djoko Damono's ideas.

The Application of Sapardi Djoko Damono's Alih Wahana in Education

Based on Sapardi's explanation in his book, it was found that the study of 'Alih Wahana' should begin with the identification of the sources and bases of the medium. The source acts as the source of research data, and the base acts as the object or foundation of the research. Once the types of media used in each medium are known, research can begin on each medium, both in terms of the constituent elements and the reasons for the transition between media.

The practical implications of media conversion or simple empirical examples will be explained in the following three points.

1. Alih Wahana of the intangible cultural heritage of Damar Kurung in Gresik Regency, which was used as teaching material in the form of a Damar Kurung textbook by elementary school teachers.

The process of transforming the facade of Damar Kurung into teaching materials has undergone an

Alih Wahana. Damar Kurung, which is a cube-shaped lantern decorated with colorful paintings depicting the life of the surrounding community of Gresik, has been transferred into written language symbolized by a series of letters (Kanugroho Novianto & Bayu Segara, n.d.; Nurjanah, 2019). This transfer is an example of transfer in the world of education.

The Damar Kurung facade occupies the 'source medium', while the teaching materials created by teachers occupy the position of 'base medium'. Damar Kurung, as a cultural product, is appreciated by studying its form, shape, aesthetic art, and the stories contained within it. Understanding the information contained in teaching materials in the form of written language is appreciated by reading the series of letters that symbolize language, so that the study is a linguistic study, such as phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. After that, the information from the written language can be captured. The existence of subjects and learning outcomes aligned with the phases of the teaching materials makes these

materials a representation of teachers' creative process. The existence of goals to be achieved by teachers and educational institutions can be referred to as a manifesto for the creation of media.

2. Adapting the Malin Kundang Legend into an Animated Film (Piliang & Andriyani, 2024)

The practical implications of the adaptation concept in the article can be seen in the transformation of oral literature into visual and digital media that is easily accessible to the younger generation. Adaptation bridges the transfer of local values and Minangkabau cultural wisdom, which can be repackaged in the form of animated films for educational and cultural preservation purposes. With the animated film as a medium, elementary school teachers can use it as contextual teaching material that reinforces the learning of character traits of filial piety towards parents. In practical terms, teachers can invite students to compare the oral version of the Malin Kundang story with the animated film version to train students to think critically and appreciate culture. This description

of the implications further reinforces the understanding that the relevance of media conversion is not limited to the field of literature, but can also have empirical implications in digital culture-based education.

3. Transforming Poetry Texts into Non-Fungible Token (NFT) Art Galleries

The practical implications of the transformation concept applied in the research by Kharisma Putriana W. and Muhamma Haryanto were carried out by transforming poetry into a new learning medium, namely, using AI-based NFT Art Gallery digital media (Wardani & Haryanto, 2024). In the context of education, teachers can transform poetry in written text into interactive visual or audio-visual works that are exhibited virtually. An example of this implication is high school students creating a project to transform Chairil Anwar's poetry into a video poem or NFT work featuring illustrations and digital narration. This learning activity not only encourages students to appreciate literary works but also integrates creativity and digital literacy in line with the characteristics of today's students. Thus,

transformation becomes a practical application that functionally and contextually connects literary aesthetics with 21st-century learning technology.

The above description confirms Sapardi's theory that "something" carried by the medium is analogous to a species living in a habitat. Damar Kurung in the habitat of cultural products must adapt to the rules of Gresik cultural products. When Damar Kurung moves to a new habitat in educational materials, it must adapt to its new habitat. This transfer allows for the emergence of various creative processes as a form of adaptation to the new habitat.

Based on these descriptions, there are at least three factors that can influence the Alih Wahana. First, the creator's manifesto related to motivation, goals, views, and ideology that they want to convey from the original medium. Second, the creator's creative process is related to their power or ability to create something new. Third, the new habitat forces the medium to adapt to an environment that is different from the source medium, requiring

compliance with the target medium. From these three descriptions, Sapardi's study of Alih Wahana can cover all three factors, only two factors, or even just one factor.

The concept of transfer as presented by Damono (2018) emphasizes the process of transforming values, forms, and media from the source medium to the target medium in order to reach a new context without losing the original meaning. In the context of education, transfer is not only understood as a translation of form, such as converting text to digital media, but also as a transfer of value, namely the transfer of the source medium (culture, local wisdom, literary works, art) into the learning system.

In a cultural context, anthropologists also reinforce Sapardi Djoko Damono's view with the statement that culture as a system of meaning can be brought to life through education (Ahimsa-Putra, 2023; Koentjaraningrat, 1999). In the context of digital cosmopolitanism, it is mentioned that the local context must remain central even though it

has adapted to a global format (Nirwana & Prasetyo Nugroho, 2024). Thus, it can be said that Sapardi Djoko Damono's theory of Alih Wahana has broad relevance in the field of education, especially in bridging the values of the source medium with modern pedagogy. To understand Damono's transfer in the world of education, three main points must be considered, namely the representation of the source medium to the target medium, the educator's manifesto as a strategy in creating learning materials/media, and the factors behind the transfer changes made by educators as learning materials/media.

CONCLUSION

The Alih Wahana as initiated by Sapardi Djoko Damono plays an important role in education, namely as a creative strategy to transform the values and expressions of source media into a form of learning that is contextual and relevant to the digital age. This concept emphasizes that education does not only function as a means of transferring knowledge, but also as a medium of adaptation through repackaging narratives, music, literature, or oral

traditions into more interactive and participatory formats. Thus, media conversion plays a role in shaping immersive learning experiences, strengthening empathy towards the source media, and fostering collective identity awareness among students. In the context of modern pedagogy, Sapardi Djoko Damono's concept of Alih Wahana has broad relevance, especially in the realm of transferring values found in the source medium to the pedagogical medium. Understanding this theory requires analysis of the representation of the pedagogical medium and the source medium, educators' strategies in developing materials, and factors of change in Alih Wahana.

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