



INCORPORATING BALINESE LOCAL WISDOM INTO PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES: A CASE STUDY OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

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Article Info

Article history:

Received Jun 04, 2025

Revised Jul 09, 2025

Accepted Aug 07, 2025

Keywords:

Balinese

Wisdom

Pedagogy

Approach

School

ABSTRACT

This study examines the incorporation of local wisdom into pedagogical approaches in junior high schools in Bali, emphasizing how educators integrate Balinese cultural values and practices into classroom instruction. This research examines the utilization of local wisdom, the teaching methods employed, and the problems faced in various educational environments through culturally responsive pedagogy. A qualitative case study methodology encompassed classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with educators and administrators, and an analysis of instructional documents. Research indicates that Balinese philosophies, such as Tri Hita Karana and Tat Twam Asi, and other local wisdom together with community-oriented practices, are amalgamated through storytelling, project-based learning, reflective writing, and experiential instruction. These methodologies promote student involvement, cultural consciousness, and moral advancement. Nonetheless, obstacles hinder its implementation, such as time limitations, the absence of culturally pertinent teaching materials, insufficient professional development, and demands from the conventional curriculum. The study underscores differences in integration methods based on regional and institutional contexts prioritizing reflective and discussion-oriented approaches. The findings confirm that teaching grounded on local wisdom increases the significance and effectiveness of education, while simultaneously acting as a vehicle for cultural preservation. The study advocates for enhanced institutional support, educator training, and curriculum adaptability to foster culturally relevant education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Like other culturally rich areas of Indonesia, education in Bali bears a dual obligation: it must provide students with the intellectual competencies necessary for success in a modernizing world, while fostering their connection to cultural legacy. In Balinese society, education has traditionally functioned as a method of intellectual advancement and a medium for conserving and conveying indigenous values, customs, and spiritual ideas. This comprehensive perspective on education is intricately woven into community life, where ethical character and social cohesion have equal significance to academic achievement (Susilo et al., 2022). The impact of globalization on educational aims and content has raised worries regarding the diminishment of indigenous knowledge within formal education (Maba et al., 2025). Consequently, there has been a revitalized demand to anchor education in indigenous knowledge, ensuring that students maintain a connection to their traditional heritage while addressing modern concerns.

Balinese local wisdom, exemplified by notions such as Tri Hita Karana (three sources of harmony), Tat Twam Asi (the belief in the unity of all beings) provides profound philosophical, ecological, and ethical foundations (Udiyana & Arnyana, 2022). These ideals foster harmony with nature, compassion for others, and concepts of social collaboration that correspond with contemporary educational objectives, including sustainability, empathy, and civic duty. Incorporating such insights into pedagogical approaches can enhance the relevance and engagement of learning, particularly for students whose lives are connected to these values (Atmaja et al., 2025). When students observe their identities and daily experiences in the classroom, learning transforms into a profound activity rather than merely a transmission of knowledge (Widiastuti & Mantra, 2024). This is especially crucial at the junior high school level, where students interrogate their societal responsibilities and establish more profound links to their cultural and social contexts.

Incorporating indigenous wisdom into education is not novel; nonetheless, most current writing in Indonesia has concentrated on primary education or extracurricular and character development activities (Widiastuti et al., 2022). Research has lauded the use of local narratives, religious ceremonies, and cultural festivities to enhance moral education in primary schools (Puspadewi et al., 2025). Nevertheless, research has infrequently examined the adaptation of these methods for adolescents in formal disciplines such as Bahasa Indonesia, Civic Education, or Science at the junior high school level. Furthermore, much of the existing literature is predominantly conceptual or descriptive, without thoroughly examining real classroom practices. Consequently, a restricted comprehension exists of how local wisdom is effectively and pedagogically integrated into the daily teaching practices of secondary-level educators (Dewi et al., 2025).

This study tackles a significant research gap by incorporating local wisdom into pedagogical approaches employed in junior high schools in Bali. It aims to elucidate how educators integrate Balinese cultural knowledge into their teaching methodologies, the specific types of local wisdom highlighted, and the students' reactions to these approaches (Astawa et al., 2025). The study investigates variations in teaching methods in junior high schools and the problems educators encounter in executing culturally sensitive instruction. Previous research recognizes the significance of local content but fails to analyze its implementation in the classroom comprehensively. They also neglect the spatial and infrastructural disparities that could influence the quality and extent of implementation. This study enhances the discussion on localized education reform in Indonesia by examining these factors empirically.

A significant deficiency in the literature is the absence of teacher and student perspectives in dialogues concerning culturally responsive pedagogy in Bali. Much research predominantly focuses on policy documents or curriculum design, while giving scant consideration to the viewpoints and experiences of individuals engaged in teaching and learning (Mantra et al., 2020). It is the educators' responsibility for course design and delivery, and students who interact with them daily, that may illuminate the practical obstacles and innovative solutions associated with the incorporation of local wisdom (Mantra et al., 2019). This study investigates instructional content and practices while emphasizing the lived experiences of educators and learners. Comprehending their perspectives is essential for formulating professional development programs, facilitating local curriculum implementation, and devising policies that authentically address practical realities.

The research is theoretically based on culturally responsive pedagogy, which posits that students achieve optimal learning when instructional methods align with their cultural backgrounds. This theory posits that information is not culturally neutral and that effective teaching must connect with students' life experiences, values, and identities. This method is congruent with local philosophies in Bali that prioritize balance, empathy, and collective responsibility (Sawitri et al., 2023). The study also utilizes constructivist learning theory, which posits that learners construct knowledge through significant experiences. This study examines how teachers enhance student learning by integrating these two frameworks, focusing on material delivery and the establishment of culturally relevant learning environments.

This study emphasizes that teaching approaches, including local wisdom, can improve student involvement, moral growth, and the building of cultural identity in junior high schools. The research does not seek to assess academic achievements quantitatively; however, it posits that children in classrooms incorporating local wisdom will exhibit enhanced involvement, reflective thinking, and appreciation for cultural values. The assumptions are evaluated using qualitative approaches, such as classroom observations, interviews, and examining instructional materials. The research focuses on integrating local wisdom within course content, pedagogical strategies, and classroom dynamics.

This research seeks to investigate the pedagogical integration of local knowledge into junior high school teaching practices in Bali, emphasizing instructional approaches and contextual obstacles. It aims to foster a culturally



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inclusive and responsive educational framework, reconciling national curricular requirements with local cultural identity. The findings of this study may influence curriculum creation, teacher training initiatives, and policy decisions in Bali and other culturally varied areas of Indonesia experiencing analogous conflicts between global educational standards and local values.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilized a qualitative research methodology with a case study technique to examine the integration of local knowledge into teaching methods in junior high schools in Bali. The qualitative paradigm was selected to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of instructional techniques, cultural contexts, and the lived experiences of educators and learners. The case study method was deemed most suitable because of its efficacy in encapsulating the intricacies of actual classroom scenarios and the distinctive cultural context in which the schools. The research examined three junior high schools to offer a diverse viewpoint on integrating local wisdom across distinct socio-geographic contexts. These schools were intentionally chosen due to their recognized initiatives to incorporate local cultural elements into the curriculum. The research examined classroom interactions, instructional resources, educator preparation, and student involvement to create a thorough depiction of the educational environment.

Data collection was conducted using comprehensive semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Nine teachers and school principals participated in interviews, and classroom observations were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, Civic Education, and Religion classrooms, where the integration of local wisdom was most prevalent. The interviews sought to elucidate educators' aims, strategies, and perceived obstacles in applying approaches grounded in local wisdom. Classroom observations provided immediate information on teaching methods and student reactions. Teaching materials, including lesson plans, textbooks, worksheets, and visual aids, were assessed to assess the local wisdom's explicitness and systematic integration. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, and observation notes were recorded using standardized field note templates to maintain uniformity. Data source triangulation was utilized to augment the credibility and reliability of the findings.

The data analysis employed a thematic methodology, based on a framework for coding and theme construction. The transcribed data and observation notes were first analyzed through open coding to discern recurring concepts and patterns. The codes were further categorized according to types of local wisdom employed, educational methodologies, student participation, and obstacles encountered by educators. The emerging themes were honed through repeated readings and verification against the findings from document analysis. Member verification was performed to ensure dependability by presenting preliminary interpretations to selected participants for validation. Ethical principles were maintained during the research, encompassing informed consent, confidentiality, and respectful adherence to cultural and institutional norms. This research offers a comprehensive and substantiated account of how Balinese junior high school teachers use local wisdom in their pedagogical practices by amalgamating several data collection methods and meticulous analysis

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study's results and comments provide a comprehensive analysis of the integration of local knowledge into teaching methodologies in junior high schools in Bali. The study reveals many ways instructors integrate Balinese cultural values, beliefs, and practices into their instruction, based on data gathered from classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis. This study offers excerpts from teacher interviews and classroom observations at junior high schools around Bali to elucidate the incorporation of local wisdom in pedagogical methods. These excerpts illustrate how educators convert cultural values into specific instructional practices, demonstrating their dedication to maintaining Balinese identity inside the official education system. The snippets humanize the data, showing that local knowledge is not only an abstract notion but a tangible and dynamic element of everyday teaching and learning in Bali's varied educational settings.

“I consistently initiate my Civic Education lectures with a brief narrative rooted in local traditions. I associate Tri Hita Karana with environmental stewardship. Students respond better when relating the subject matter to their community observations.” (Teacher A)

“Our class project involved students visiting a temple to interview priests regarding Tat Twam Asi. They produced posters and reflections. However, it is challenging to replicate this each semester due to insufficient support and transportation.” (Teacher B).

“Our educators utilize the rice fields to elucidate natural cycles in science. They discuss local wisdom and communal collaboration. The issue arises when students are absent due to familial rites or agricultural assistance.” (School Principal)

Classroom observations in junior high schools in Bali demonstrated varied yet intentional methods of incorporating local wisdom into education. In the urban school, the Bahasa Indonesia instructor employed a Balinese folktale to foster discussions on mutual respect, informed by the idea of *saling asah, asih, asuh*. Students actively participated in the narrative, establishing links to their personal and communal experiences via reflective journaling. At the semi-urban school, a religion lesson focused on the principle of *Tat Twam Asi*, wherein students exchanged real-life instances of compassion and developed role-plays that demonstrated temple etiquette and ethical conduct, promoting empathy and cultural awareness. Simultaneously, in the rural school, a Civic Education session commenced with a stroll to the rice fields, where the instructor presented the traditional Subak irrigation system as an exemplar of communal collaboration and environmental stewardship. Students were urged to connect these practices to civic duties, and despite occasional external diversions, overall engagement and participation remained elevated. These observations illustrate that local wisdom is actively integrated into the classroom via context-specific and culturally relevant pedagogical approaches, significantly improving student engagement and ethical growth.

Incorporating local wisdom into Civic Education and Bahasa Indonesia teachings within the urban school context was firmly based on the Balinese philosophy of *Tri Hita Karana*, alongside local proverbs and community rituals. Educators utilized storytelling, group discussions, and reflective journaling as fundamental pedagogical approaches to engage pupils with these cultural values. Moral narratives and traditional proverbs were employed to initiate classroom dialogues on harmony and ethical conduct, whereas journaling facilitated personal reflection on these principles among students. Nonetheless, despite the efficacy of these methods in promoting student involvement, educators indicated considerable difficulties. These factors encompassed insufficient time for cultural integration, stemming from the urgency to fulfill national academic standards and curricular coverage mandates within a predetermined schedule.

In the semi-urban school, the Religion and Bahasa Indonesia topics were noted to integrate the philosophical concept of *Tat Twam Asi*, which underscores compassion and spiritual unity. Educators included insights from temple visits and aspects of Balinese folklore to enhance the educational experience. The observed instructional methods were predominantly project-based learning and experiential activities, facilitating meaningful student engagement with cultural customs. Examples encompassed collaborative work on temple etiquette or dramatizations of folklore. Nonetheless, execution was obstructed by insufficient instructional resources and inadequate educator training in culturally sensitive pedagogy. Consequently, despite a robust commitment to incorporate local wisdom, educators perceived limitations in regularly providing high-quality, culturally-informed teachings.

In the rural educational setting, Civic Education and Science courses emphasized using Subak (the traditional Balinese irrigation system), indigenous agricultural expertise, and the communal practice of *ngayah* (volunteer service). Field-based learning and contextual instruction predominated the pedagogical method, wherein educators engaged students directly in rice fields and community environments to observe and analyze these systems in operation. This practical approach effectively linked students' everyday experiences with curricular material. Nonetheless, obstacles, including restricted access to technology for instructional preparation or enhancement and inconsistent student attendance, sometimes attributed to household obligations or involvement in community events, were apparent. Notwithstanding these challenges, rural educators demonstrated considerable initiative in leveraging their surroundings as an educational resource to preserve indigenous knowledge in the learning process.

This study's findings emphasize the innovative and contextually relevant approaches junior high school teachers in Bali employ to incorporate local wisdom into their pedagogical practices. Philosophies like *Tri Hita Karana* and *Tat Twam Asi*, along with practices, demonstrate educators' profound recognition of the cultural richness inherent in Balinese society. These artistic elements enhance the curriculum while promoting character development and reinforcing students' cultural identification. The results from interviews and classroom observations indicate that this integration is not superficial or ornamental; it is intrinsic to classroom discourse, learning activities, and student-teacher interactions. This aligns with the tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy, which underscores the significance of connecting instruction to students' cultural contexts to enhance the relevance and engagement of learning (Ernawati et al., 2024).



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A notable finding from the study is the disparity in integrating local wisdom across various educational environments. Urban schools typically employ more introspective and discussion-oriented methodologies, whereas semi-urban and rural schools predominantly utilize experiential and project-based learning grounded in the local context. This variation illustrates the impact of local context, resources, and community connections on educational decisions. Incorporating storytelling in urban classrooms and using rice fields as educational environments in rural communities are both pedagogically effective and culturally validating. These findings correspond with the constructivist perspective of learning, wherein knowledge is developed through active interaction with one's environment and experiences. This variation underscores that culturally responsive teaching is not a static formula but a dynamic activity influenced by culture and context. This supports the study related to Balinese local wisdom used in the classroom (Arjaya et al., 2024)

Notwithstanding the apparent advantages, the results indicate numerous problems educators encounter in executing strategies that include local wisdom. The conflict between national curriculum requirements and the aspiration to deliver culturally relevant education is a persistent issue. Educators voiced apprehension regarding insufficient time, standardized evaluations, and inadequate institutional backing, all hindering their capacity to cultivate and maintain pedagogy rooted in local expertise effectively. In rural areas, supplementary obstacles, including insufficient infrastructure and student accessibility, exacerbate implementation difficulties. These difficulties indicate that although teachers exhibit significant educational enthusiasm, systemic improvements are necessary to facilitate broader and more profound incorporation of local cultural elements. These findings corroborate earlier research (Faridah et al., 2024) advocating for policy alignment and professional development to enhance culturally responsive education in Indonesia.

A significant observation is the favorable student reaction to culturally integrated education. In the observed schools, children exhibited increased engagement, enhanced participation, and greater personal interest when classes incorporated culturally relevant themes or behaviors. Discussions centered on Tat Twam Asi promoted empathy and enabled students to share personal narratives, cultivating a sense of belonging and mutual respect inside the classroom. This supports the premise that incorporating local knowledge improves academic achievement and students' ethical and social growth. Moreover, these activities advance the overarching objective of education in Bali, which is to cultivate young individuals who are both intellectually proficient and ethically principled, as well as culturally informed.

The study theoretically validates the significance of culturally responsive pedagogy and enhances it by integrating indigenous knowledge systems within the community context. The current study illustrates that the fundamental principles of validating students' cultural heritage, culturally relevant content, and inclusive pedagogy are equally pertinent and essential for the community. Nonetheless, the findings indicate the necessity to indigenize these theories further to correspond with local spiritual and philosophical frameworks, such as Tri Hita Karana, which offers a distinctive worldview not entirely included by Western models. This presents an opportunity to establish a localized theoretical framework to inform teacher training, curriculum development, and educational policy in culturally diverse areas.

Incorporating local wisdom into junior high school pedagogical approaches in Bali represents both an educational advantage and a cultural necessity. Educators in junior high schools exhibit innovative methodologies that integrate cultural knowledge into the classroom, leading to more significant and character-driven learning experiences. Nevertheless, systemic obstacles such as inflexible curricula, constrained resources, and insufficient training must be resolved to guarantee the sustainability and scalability of these initiatives. The study underscores the significance of culturally responsive pedagogy and advocates for its alignment with local philosophical traditions. Consequently, education in Bali can exemplify the coexistence of contemporary pedagogy with traditional knowledge in cultivating well-rounded, culturally grounded individuals.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined the incorporation of local wisdom into pedagogical approaches in junior high schools throughout Bali, emphasizing how educators employ Balinese cultural values, beliefs, and practices to enhance their instructional methods. The results indicate that educators employ various culturally responsive techniques, including storytelling, reflective journaling, and experiential learning, consistent with local philosophies like Tri Hita Karana, Tat Twam Asi, and other local wisdom. These culturally rooted methodologies were observed to enhance student engagement, promote moral and cultural comprehension, and render academic content more pertinent to students'

everyday experiences. The study identified many obstacles, including time constraints, insufficient training, restricted teaching resources, and curricular inflexibility, which impede the continuous application of local wisdom-based methodologies. The study validates the significance of culturally responsive pedagogy in facilitating academic success and developing identity and ethics in varied educational contexts. The study ultimately confirms the necessity for systemic assistance to maintain and expand culturally integrated education in Bali and analogous situations.

To enhance the incorporation of local wisdom into classroom practices, it is imperative to offer specialized professional development programs for educators centered on culturally responsive pedagogy. These training sessions should provide educators with practical techniques to develop lesson plans, activities, and evaluations that integrate national curriculum standards with local cultural context. Furthermore, school administrations and local education authorities should cooperate to establish localized teaching modules and learning resources that incorporate Balinese knowledge, thus alleviating individual teachers' responsibility to produce materials individually. Ultimately, incorporating these approaches into official teacher education programs at universities can guarantee that future educators are adequately equipped to undertake culturally relevant instruction effectively.

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