

INTEGRATING TRI HITA KARANA VALUES TO ENHANCE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION QUALITY FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how integrating cultural and spiritual values can enhance the quality of inclusive education for students with special educational needs. Rather than focusing solely on academic outcomes, this research emphasizes a holistic educational approach grounded in the Balinese philosophy of *Tri Hita Karana*, which promotes harmony between humans and God (*parahyangan*), among humans (*pawongan*), and with the natural environment (*palemahan*). A qualitative case study design was employed at SLB Negeri 1 Buleleng, involving school leaders, teachers, students, and parents. Data were gathered through observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, and validated through triangulation. The data were analyzed through an interactive process consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that integrating *Tri Hita Karana* values contributes to improving inclusive education by fostering students' spiritual awareness, enhancing social collaboration, and strengthening environmental responsibility. These dimensions collectively support the creation of a learning environment that is adaptive, inclusive, and responsive to diverse student needs. This study underscores the importance of embedding local wisdom in educational practices to promote both character development and sustainable educational quality.

Keywords: *Tri Hita Karana*; inclusive education; education quality; special education

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a fundamental role in enhancing the quality of human resources by fostering individuals' intellectual, social, and spiritual development. However, contemporary discussions on educational quality have shifted beyond a narrow focus on academic achievement toward a more comprehensive perspective that includes instructional effectiveness, institutional culture, and value-based educational practices. Educational quality is therefore understood as a multidimensional construct, where effectiveness is reflected in the attainment of learning objectives and efficiency in the optimal use of educational resources (Ramdhani, 2019; Hattie, 2009; OECD, 2019).

Despite this broader perspective, many educational systems still emphasize measurable academic outcomes, often overlooking the role of cultural and value-based dimensions in shaping meaningful learning experiences. In this regard, organizational culture within schools becomes a critical determinant of educational success, as it influences attitudes, behaviors, and collective practices. A well-internalized value system not only strengthens institutional performance but also guides decision-making and fosters sustainable educational improvement (Schein, 2010; Fullan, 2007). However, the integration of culturally grounded values into formal education remains inconsistent and, in many cases, underexplored.

In the Balinese context, the philosophy of *Tri Hita Karana* provides a holistic framework that emphasizes harmony between humans and God (*parahyangan*), among individuals (*pawongan*), and with the natural environment (*palemahan*) (Titib, 2003). While this philosophy has been widely recognized in cultural and social practices, its systematic integration into educational settings, particularly in formal schooling, remains limited. Existing studies tend to position *Tri Hita Karana* as a conceptual foundation for character education, yet empirical

evidence demonstrating its impact on educational quality is still insufficient (UNESCO, 2017; Gay, 2010). More recent studies indicate that local wisdom-based education can strengthen character formation and environmental awareness; however, these studies often lack in-depth analysis of how such values are implemented within structured learning environments (Arnyana, 2022; Suastra, 2017).

Furthermore, the application of *Tri Hita Karana* in education is often reduced to symbolic or ritual practices rather than developed into an integrative pedagogical framework. This limitation indicates a gap between philosophical values and their practical translation into teaching and learning processes. A more comprehensive approach is needed to examine how the dimensions of *parahyangan*, *pawongan*, and *palemahan* can be operationalized to support holistic student development, including cognitive, social, and moral aspects (Suastra, 2017).

This gap becomes more evident in the context of inclusive education, particularly for students with special educational needs. Inclusive education requires adaptive, student-centered approaches that address diverse learning needs while promoting participation, equity, and social inclusion (UNESCO, 2020; Ainscow, 2015). However, current practices in special education tend to prioritize functional and academic skill development, often neglecting the integration of cultural and spiritual values essential to holistic development. Previous studies highlight the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy in enhancing student engagement and participation, yet its application in inclusive settings remains limited and requires further empirical exploration (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2021).

Although SLB Negeri 1 Buleleng has initiated the integration of *Tri Hita Karana* values into its curricular and extracurricular activities, as well as school culture, there is still a lack of empirical research examining how these values are systematically implemented and how they contribute to improving the quality of inclusive education. Previous studies on *Tri Hita Karana* have predominantly focused on general education contexts, with minimal attention given to special education environments. Moreover, existing research in inclusive settings is largely conceptual and has not adequately captured the practical dynamics of implementation (Florian, 2019).

Therefore, this study addresses this gap by providing an integrative, empirical analysis of the implementation of *Tri Hita Karana* in an inclusive education setting for students with special educational needs. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on theoretical perspectives, this research emphasizes how spiritual, social, and environmental values are operationalized in educational practices and how they contribute to enhancing the quality of inclusive education. By doing so, this study offers a novel contribution to the literature by positioning local cultural philosophy not merely as a conceptual framework, but as a practical and transformative approach to inclusive education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Educational quality is increasingly viewed as a multidimensional construct that extends beyond academic achievement to include learning effectiveness, school culture, and character development. John Hattie (2009) emphasizes the role of instructional quality and the learning environment, while UNESCO (2020) highlights equity and accessibility in inclusive education. Similarly, Mel Ainscow (2015) stresses the need for systemic transformation to address learner diversity, and Messiou (2016) underlines meaningful participation as a key principle. However, these perspectives largely focus on structural and pedagogical aspects, leaving a gap in integrating culturally grounded values to shape educational quality.

The role of organizational culture is well recognized, yet its connection with local cultural values remains underexplored. Edgar H. Schein (2010) and Michael Fullan (2007) emphasize the importance of shared values and cultural change in school improvement. In the Balinese context, I Made Titib (2003) describes *Tri Hita Karana* as a framework of harmony between *parahyangan*, *pawongan*, and *palemahan*. This aligns with culturally responsive and

sustaining pedagogy (Gay, 2010; Gloria Ladson-Billings, 2021a; Paris & Alim, 2014) and sustainability principles promoted by UNESCO (2017). Nevertheless, these approaches are often treated separately, resulting in limited empirical integration between global theories and local cultural philosophies.

This gap is more evident in inclusive education for students with special educational needs, where holistic and strength-based approaches are increasingly emphasized (Biesta, 2023). Although local wisdom-based learning has been shown to enhance character and environmental awareness (Suastra, 2017), its application in inclusive settings remains limited. Therefore, this study proposes an integrative analysis of *Tri Hita Karana* to bridge cultural values and inclusive education practices. By examining how spiritual, social, and environmental dimensions are systematically implemented, this study contributes to the development of a culturally grounded, holistic framework for improving inclusive education.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative case study design to conduct an integrative analysis of the implementation of *Tri Hita Karana* to enhance the quality of inclusive education for students with special educational needs. The research was conducted at SLB Negeri 1 Buleleng, Bali, Indonesia, as a special education institution that integrates local cultural values into its educational practices.

The data sources in this study consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from informants through field interactions. In contrast, secondary data were collected from documents, school records, and relevant literature related to inclusive education and the implementation of *Tri Hita Karana*. The informants included the school principal, teachers, parents, and students with special educational needs. They were selected using purposive sampling based on their knowledge, experience, and involvement in implementing inclusive education practices within the school.

The researcher acted as the main research instrument, supported by interview guides, observation sheets, and documentation tools. Data collection techniques included in-depth, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis to obtain comprehensive and accurate data regarding the implementation of *Tri Hita Karana* in the educational process. To ensure data validity, triangulation of sources and techniques was applied.

Data analysis was conducted using an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis focused on identifying patterns of integration among the *parahyangan*, *pawongan*, and *palemahan* dimensions, as well as examining supporting and inhibiting factors and their implications for improving the quality of inclusive education. This approach enabled a systematic and in-depth understanding of how *Tri Hita Karana* contributes to the development of holistic, inclusive, and culturally responsive educational practices for students with special educational needs.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results of this study indicate that *Tri Hita Karana* has been systematically integrated into educational practices at SLB Negeri 1 Buleleng to support the quality of inclusive education for students with special educational needs. The integration of *parahyangan*, *pawongan*, and *palemahan* values is reflected not only in structured learning activities but also in the broader school culture, thereby forming a holistic and inclusive educational environment.

The findings further reveal that implementing *Tri Hita Karana* contributes to observable improvements in students' behavior, participation, and engagement in the learning process. These improvements are consistently identified across observational data and interview results, as reflected in the following three dimensions:

Implementation of Parahyangan

The *parahyangan* dimension is implemented through structured spiritual activities such as daily prayers, routine worship, and students' involvement in religious practices. These activities are consistently conducted before and after lessons and during religious events.

The findings indicate that students demonstrate increased emotional stability and improved motivation to learn following participation in these activities. An interview with a teacher supports this:

“After participating in daily prayer activities, students appear calmer and more focused during the learning process. This is especially noticeable among students who previously showed emotional instability.” (Teacher, Interview Data)

In addition, religious learning is delivered through experiential practices, such as preparing ceremonial materials, which allows students to engage actively according to their abilities. A school principal further stated:

“We do not only teach religious concepts, but we involve students directly in religious practices so they can learn through experience.” (Principal, Interview Data)

These findings suggest that integrating *parahyangan* not only strengthens students' spiritual awareness but also fosters emotional readiness and engagement in inclusive classrooms. The implications of this implementation can be conceptualized as improved emotional regulation, increased intrinsic motivation, greater learning engagement, and the cultivation of spiritual dispositions that contribute to a supportive and inclusive educational environment. The implications of this implementation, both before and after its application, are illustrated in the figure below.

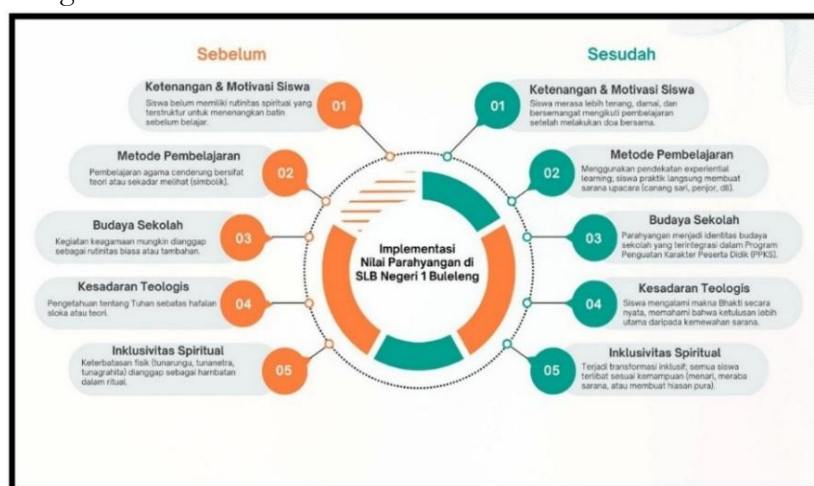


Figure 1. The implications of this implementation of Parahyangan Value

Implementation of Palemahan

The *palemahan* dimension is reflected in environmentally focused activities, including routine school cleaning programs, gardening, waste management, and collaborative environmental initiatives that involve all members of the school community.

The findings show that students demonstrate increased awareness of environmental cleanliness and actively participate in maintaining the school environment. A teacher's statement supports this:

“Students are now more responsible in keeping the environment clean. They remind each other to throw garbage properly and take care of plants in the school garden.” (Teacher, Interview Data)

Students also confirmed this experience:

“I like watering the plants and cleaning the school. It makes the school look nice and comfortable.” (Student, Interview Data)

These activities promote experiential learning, in which students acquire knowledge through direct engagement in real-world environmental practices. This approach further facilitates the development of responsibility and independence among students with special educational needs. The implications of this implementation can be conceptualized as increased environmental awareness, the internalization of responsible behavior, the strengthening of students' autonomy, and the development of functional life skills within authentic learning contexts. The implications of this implementation, both before and after its application, are illustrated in the figure below.

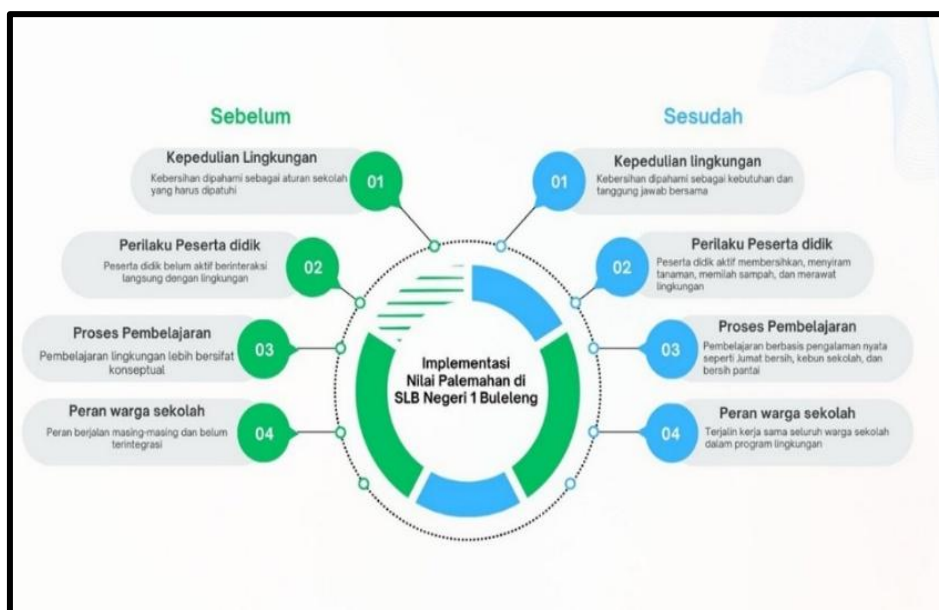


Figure 2. The implications of this implementation of *Palemahan* Value

Implementation of Pawongan

The *pawongan* dimension is implemented through social and collaborative activities, such as group learning, peer support, school community engagement, and communication between teachers and parents.

The findings indicate improvements in students' social interaction, including cooperation, empathy, and participation in group activities. A teacher explained:

“Students are more willing to work together and help each other. Even students with different abilities can collaborate during group activities.” (Teacher, Interview Data)

Parental involvement also plays a significant role, as highlighted in an interview with a parent:

“The school often communicates with us so that we can support our children’s development at home as well.” (Parent, Interview Data)

“These findings demonstrate that *pawongan* values play a significant role in strengthening social relationships and fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment. The implications of this implementation can be conceptualized as improved social competence, the development of empathy and collaborative behaviors, increased student participation, and the creation of an inclusive social climate that promotes mutual respect and shared responsibility. The implications of this implementation, both before and after its application, are illustrated in the figure below.

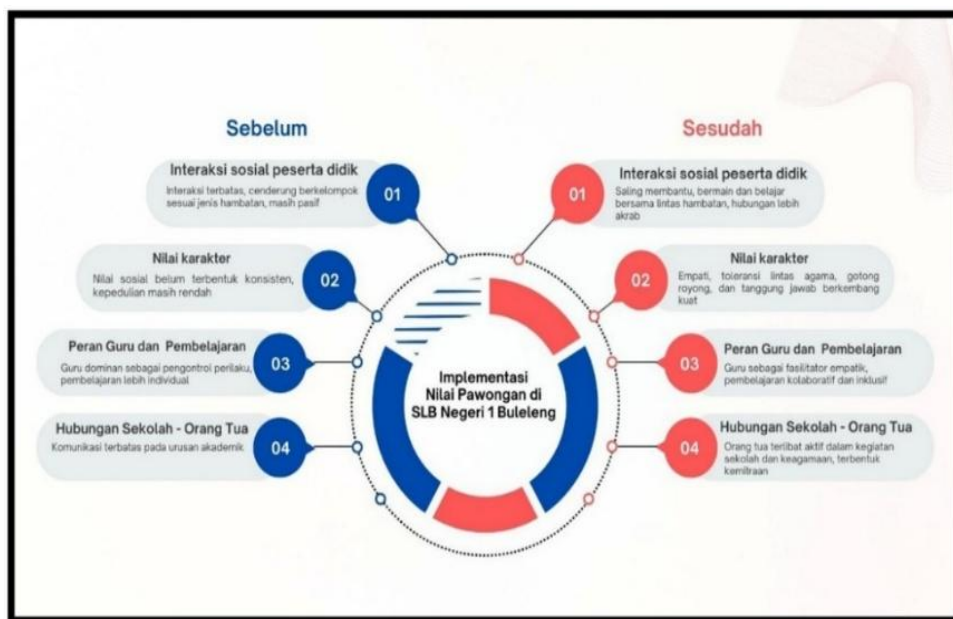


Figure 3. The implications of this implementation of the *Pawongan* Value

Overall, the implementation of *Tri Hita Karana* in SLB Negeri 1 Buleleng demonstrates that integrating spiritual, social, and environmental values can be consistently applied in inclusive education settings. The triangulation of observational, interview, and documentation data confirms that students with special educational needs can actively participate in various school activities according to their abilities. These findings indicate that implementing *Tri Hita Karana* not only supports inclusive practices but also contributes to the development of a holistic educational environment that accommodates diverse student needs.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that integrating *Tri Hita Karana* values significantly improves the quality of inclusive education for students with special educational needs. This contribution is evident through the integration of spiritual (*parahyangan*), social (*pawongan*), and environmental (*palemaban*) dimensions, which collectively foster a more holistic and inclusive learning environment. These findings extend John Hattie's (2009) perspective, which emphasizes the role of the learning environment in shaping educational effectiveness. However, while Hattie highlights general environmental factors, this study demonstrates that culturally embedded values provide a more contextual and meaningful framework for inclusive learning, particularly in local settings.

The implementation of the *parahyangan* dimension highlights the importance of students' spiritual and emotional readiness in the learning process. Structured spiritual practices were found to support emotional regulation and increase motivation to learn. This finding is consistent with Nel Noddings's (2013) argument that emphasizes the importance of a caring educational environment. Nevertheless, unlike Noddings' general framework of care, this study reveals that spirituality-based practices rooted in local culture can serve as a concrete strategy for fostering emotional engagement in inclusive classrooms. A key strength of this approach is its ability to foster a sense of meaning and belonging among students; however, its effectiveness may depend on contextual factors, such as school culture and students' religious backgrounds, which could limit its transferability to more diverse settings.

Furthermore, the shift from theoretical religious instruction to experiential learning reflects a move toward more inclusive and student-centered practices. This finding aligns with the theory of multiple intelligences proposed by Howard Gardner (2011), which advocates accommodating diverse learning styles. Compared to conventional instruction that often

emphasizes uniformity, experiential approaches enable greater accessibility and engagement for students with diverse needs. However, this approach also requires teachers to possess adequate pedagogical competence and creativity, which may not always be present in all educational contexts, thereby posing a potential challenge for broader implementation.

The application of the *palemahan* dimension demonstrates that environmentally oriented learning can promote both awareness and behavioral change among students. Practical environmental activities encourage responsibility and independence, supporting the development of life skills. These findings are consistent with the framework of Education for Sustainable Development promoted by UNESCO (2017). However, this study adds to the existing literature by showing that environmental education grounded in local cultural values can be more impactful than generic sustainability programs. Despite this strength, the implementation of such activities often depends on the availability of resources and school infrastructure, which may vary across institutions.

In addition, the *pawongan* dimension plays a crucial role in enhancing social interaction and fostering inclusive relationships within the school community. Collaborative learning activities were found to promote empathy, cooperation, and active participation. This finding supports the principles of inclusive education proposed by Mel Ainscow (2015), particularly in terms of increasing participation and reducing barriers to learning. However, this study further indicates that social harmony grounded in local cultural values can strengthen these inclusive practices. A notable strength is the development of a supportive social climate; nevertheless, challenges remain in ensuring consistent collaboration among all stakeholders, particularly in schools with diverse student needs and limited support systems.

The study also highlights the importance of collaboration between schools and parents in supporting inclusive education. Active parental involvement contributes to the continuity of support beyond the classroom, reinforcing students' development. This finding aligns with UNICEF's (2019) perspective, which emphasizes stakeholder engagement in inclusive education. However, this study reveals that such collaboration is not always optimal, as differences in parental awareness, time availability, and socio-economic background can influence the level of involvement. This indicates that strengthening school–parent partnerships remains a critical area for improvement. (Urbain et al., 2026).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that integrating *Tri Hita Karana* offers a culturally grounded, holistic framework for improving inclusive education. Compared to general inclusive education models, this approach provides a more contextualized strategy by integrating spiritual, social, and environmental dimensions simultaneously. While this represents a significant strength, the study also reveals that its implementation is highly context-dependent and may face challenges related to teacher readiness, resource availability, and cultural diversity.

However, this study is not without limitations. The focus on a single research site limits the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the qualitative approach, while providing in-depth insights, may not fully capture measurable impacts on student outcomes. Therefore, future research is recommended to examine the implementation of *Tri Hita Karana* across diverse educational contexts and to employ mixed-methods approaches to produce more comprehensive and generalizable evidence.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the integrative implementation of *Tri Hita Karana* significantly enhances the quality of inclusive education for students with special educational needs at SLB Negeri 1 Buleleng. The integration of *parahyangan*, *pawongan*, and *palemahan* fosters holistic development and creates a meaningful and inclusive learning environment. This study also demonstrates that culturally grounded values can serve as a practical and transformative framework for inclusive education, complementing existing models that often focus primarily on structural and pedagogical aspects. However, its effectiveness is influenced by contextual

factors such as teacher readiness, institutional culture, and resource availability. Given the study's focus on a single setting, further research in diverse contexts using mixed methods is recommended to strengthen generalizability.

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