



## Curriculum Development at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri 3 Jembrana: Integrating the Merdeka Curriculum, Religious Curriculum, and Balinese Local Wisdom

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### ABSTRACT

Educational transformation at the madrasah level requires the development of a curriculum that is both adaptive to global dynamics and contextualized to local and religious values. This study aims to describe the implementation of curriculum development at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri (MTsN) 3 Jembrana through the integration of the Merdeka Curriculum, religious education curriculum, and local wisdom of the Balinese language. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that the integration of these three curriculum components has created a learning model that is contextual, religiously grounded, and rooted in local culture. Learning strategies were developed using a participatory approach involving teachers, the madrasah principal, and stakeholders, supported by the application of integrative thematic methods and a critical pedagogy approach. The conclusion of this study underscores that the collaboration of national, religious, and local curricula can strengthen students' character and preserve regional languages and cultures amid the currents of globalization.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia has undergone significant transformation in recent years, particularly with the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture. This curriculum is designed to provide greater flexibility in the learning process, with a strong emphasis on developing students' competencies and character. One compelling example of its application can be found at *Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri 3 Jembrana*, Bali. At this institution, the *Merdeka Curriculum* is not only integrated with Islamic religious education but also enriched with the local wisdom of the surrounding community, creating a holistic and integrative educational approach.

The *Merdeka Curriculum* at *Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri 3 Jembrana* emphasizes principles that support the development of students' character and competencies. In this context, education is seen not merely as the transfer of knowledge, but as a process of character formation rooted in religious values and local culture. For example, in subjects related to religious education, students are taught not only to understand sacred texts but also to relate these teachings to their daily lives. This approach fosters a deeper and more meaningful learning experience for the students.

One of the key aspects of the *Merdeka Curriculum* is its flexibility in teaching methods. At *Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri 3 Jembrana*, teachers are given the autonomy to design lesson plans that cater to the needs and characteristics of their students. For instance, in science education, teachers may incorporate field-based experiments involving the local environment, such as Bali's marine ecosystems. In doing so, students are not only exposed to theoretical concepts in the classroom but also gain practical experience that enhances their understanding of the subject matter.

This integrative approach is also evident in the teaching of local wisdom. Jembrana is home to a rich array of traditions and cultural expressions, including customary ceremonies and performing arts. The school leverages this cultural wealth by embedding lessons on local arts and traditions within the curriculum. For example, students are encouraged to learn and appreciate traditional Balinese dance, which not only enriches their cultural knowledge but also fosters a sense of pride and attachment to their regional identity.

More broadly, this integrative model also contributes to the strengthening of national cultural identity. Amidst the intensifying wave of globalization, it is crucial for younger generations to remain aware of and connected to their cultural roots. By instilling the values of local wisdom through education, *Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri 3 Jembrana* plays a pivotal role in preserving Balinese culture while preparing students to become responsible and conscientious citizens.

Overall, the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* at *Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri 3 Jembrana* illustrates a promising potential in shaping an education that is both relevant and contextually grounded. Through the integration of religious education and local wisdom, this madrasah not only prepares students academically but also nurtures their character and cultural identity. Despite challenges in implementation, support from teachers, parents, and the community at large can be key to its success. With this approach, *Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri*

3 *Jembrana* is poised to make a valuable contribution to the advancement of sustainable and culturally responsive education in Indonesia.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a literature review method, which serves as a highly effective approach for collecting and analyzing academic references from various sources, including journals, books, and official reports available in databases such as Mendeley. This method enables the researcher to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic while also identifying trends and patterns that may not be visible when relying solely on primary data or surveys. Literature reviews provide a strong theoretical foundation, which is essential in supporting research arguments and findings (Creswell, 2014).

The analysis focuses on three main aspects: curriculum policy, theories of religious education, and the concept of local wisdom in education. These three elements are interconnected and offer a comprehensive perspective on how education can be integrated with the cultural and religious values embedded in society. Analyzing these aspects requires an understanding of how they interact and influence one another. Curriculum policies that integrate religious education and local wisdom have the potential to create more holistic and contextually relevant learning environments. Nevertheless, challenges in the implementation of such policies must be addressed to ensure the effectiveness of educational outcomes. For instance, adequate teacher training and the development of instructional materials that are relevant to the local context can be essential steps in achieving this integration.

## **FINDINGS**

In Jembrana Regency, there are a total of sixteen madrasahs, consisting of four public and twelve private institutions. *Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri (MTsN) 3 Jembrana* is one of the four public madrasahs in the region. The school is located at Jl. Raya Negara-Gilimanuk KM.10, Kaliakah Village, Negara District, Jembrana Regency, Bali Province. MTsN 3 Jembrana has experienced significant growth over the years. According to the Jembrana Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), the number of students at MTsN 3 Jembrana was 690 in 2021, and this number has since increased to 813 students.

MTsN 3 Jembrana is equivalent in level to a junior high school (SMP). While MTsN is administered under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, SMPs fall under the Ministry of Education and Culture. Despite this administrative difference, both institutions share the common goal of providing quality education and preparing students for higher levels of education, such as *Madrasah Aliyah (MA)* or *Senior High School (SMA)*.

In terms of curriculum development and implementation, MTsN 3 Jembrana adopts the *Merdeka Curriculum* with additional religious content mandated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The religious education component at MTsN 3 Jembrana includes subjects such as Bahasa Arab, Aqidah, Fiqh, Al-Qur'an Hadist, and Sejarah kebudayaan Islam (SKI). Additionally, the madrasah seeks to preserve and promote local wisdom by incorporating Balinese Language as part of its curriculum content. The following section will detail the time allocation for each subject within the curriculum implemented at MTsN 3 Jembrana.

Table 01. Subject Time Allocation in the Curriculum of MTsN 3 Jembrana

NO	Mata Pelajaran	Alokasi JP Per Tahun	Alokasi P5RA Per Tahun	Total JP Per Tahun
	Pendidikan Agama			
1	a) Al-Qur'an Hadist	72		72
2	b) Aqidah Akhlak	72		72
3	c) Fiqih	72		72
4	d) SKI	72		72
5	Bahasa Arab	108		108
6	Pend. Pancasila	64	32	96
7	Bhs Indonesia	160	32	160
8	Matematika	128	32	160
9	Ilmu Pengetahuan Alam	128	32	160
10	Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial	96	32	128
11	Bhs Inggris	96	32	128
12	Pend Jasmani Kesehatan	64	32	64
13	Informatika	64	32	96
14	Seni Rupa	64	32	96
15	Mulok ( Bahasa Bali)	72		72
<b>JUMLAH</b>		1.280	192	1472

Source: Operational Curriculum of Madrasah (KOM) MTsN 3 Jembrana, Academic Year 2024/2025

Based on an analysis of the MTsN 3 Jembrana curriculum document and its supporting components, it was found that the Balinese language instruction implemented at MTsN 3 Jembrana refers to the Decree of the Head of the Bali Province Office of Education, Youth, and Sports No. B.31.434/37404/UPTD.BPTKK/DIKPORA concerning the Curriculum Guidelines for Balinese Language Local Content for Primary and Secondary Education Levels in Bali Province. The expected learning outcomes for Phase D (equivalent to junior secondary school level) indicate that students are expected to possess language skills to communicate and reason in accordance with social, academic, and professional purposes and contexts. Students are expected to critically and creatively comprehend, apply, analyze, and produce information from various types of texts on diverse topics, read and write in Balinese script through multiple media, and synthesize, manipulate, articulate, and express ideas and opinions from various sources.

According to interviews conducted with the Vice Principal for Curriculum and the local content teachers at MTsN 3 Jembrana, Balinese language instruction has been implemented in accordance with the planning, though it has yet to reach its full potential. Several challenges were identified, including: (1) the absence of qualified teachers, (2) a shortage of teaching materials and standardized textbooks, (3) low student interest, and (4) ideological and cultural resistance. These four issues are recurring challenges experienced annually at MTsN 3 Jembrana.

From the interviews with the Balinese language teacher, the most pressing challenge is the teacher's non-linear educational background. Although the teacher holds a Bachelor's degree in Arts and Language Education, it is not specific to the

Balinese language, which hampers effective instruction. MTsN 3 Jembrana currently lacks any teachers with a Bachelor's degree in Balinese Language Education. Other challenges persist, such as the scarcity of teaching materials, students' low motivation, and the lack of parental support. Many parents perceive English as more relevant to modern developments and prefer it over local languages.

## DISCUSSION

The implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* at MTsN 3 Jembrana, as mandated by the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology No. 12 of 2024, reflects a paradigm shift toward a more adaptive, contextual, and learner-centered educational model. This curriculum's flexibility allows educational institutions to develop innovative learning experiences that are rooted in students' local and spiritual needs. This vision aligns with John Dewey's assertion that education must be contextual and relevant to real-life experiences (Dewey, 1938).

At MTsN 3 Jembrana, the *Merdeka Curriculum* is not implemented in isolation but is integrated with Islamic religious education, in accordance with the Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs No. 450 of 2024. This integration represents a practical application of the integrated curriculum model (Fogarty, 1991), where various disciplines are systematically connected within a holistic educational framework. Through the reinforcement of religious subjects such as Arabic, Aqidah, Fiqh, Islamic Cultural History, and Qur'an-Hadith, the school aims to foster not only academic excellence but also strong moral and spiritual character, in line with the goals of both national and Islamic education.

Furthermore, the integration of the *Merdeka Curriculum* with local wisdom—such as the teaching of Balinese language as a local content subject—demonstrates the application of a multicultural approach to education (Banks, 2006). This multicultural education not only familiarizes students with local culture but also instills respect for diversity, tolerance, and cultural identity. Banks emphasized that multicultural education should not be merely ceremonial but must be internalized in curriculum design and learning practices to promote deep cross-cultural understanding. This integration strengthens not only students' religious and cultural values but also their social and cultural intelligence (Gardner, 1999), enabling them to adapt in diverse environments and emerge as global citizens rooted in local identity.

Balinese language instruction at MTsN 3 Jembrana is not merely an effort at cultural preservation; it also serves as a medium for reconstructing contextually relevant Islamic and Hindu values. The application of the *Tri Hita Karana* (THK) philosophy—which emphasizes harmony between humans and God (Parahyangan), among people (Pawongan), and with nature (Palemahan)—is synergized with Islamic values of *hablum minallah* (relation with God), *hablum minannas* (relation with others), and *hablum minal 'alam* (relation with the environment). This synthesis fosters a mutually reinforcing set of local and religious values, illustrating a *local wisdom-based education* approach as advocated by Tilaar (2009). Rahmi (2024), in her article titled "*Synergy of Tri Hita Karana with Islamic Principles Oriented Towards the Socio-Cultural Life of the Jembrana Community*," explains that

the values embedded in both Hindu and Islamic traditions converge and support each other in building social harmony. Therefore, Balinese language learning at MTsN 3 Jembrana goes beyond reading, writing, and cultural appreciation; it fosters the internalization and application of humanitarian values that resonate with both Hindu and Muslim communities in Jembrana.

Cultural activities such as traditional dance integrated into the learning process also reflect the implementation of the experiential learning approach (Kolb, 1984), emphasizing direct student engagement within their cultural context. This approach enhances student engagement, strengthens cultural identity, and fosters emotional bonds with their environment. Rahmi (2024) asserts that experiential learning improves not only cognitive understanding but also nurtures students' affective and psychomotor domains. Moreover, it fosters learner independence, critical thinking, and collaboration—making traditional dance a powerful tool for both cultural preservation and holistic student development.

Challenges in implementing Balinese language local content instruction at MTsN 3 Jembrana reflect both structural and cultural obstacles. Structurally, the lack of qualified educators and limited access to reference materials hinder optimal delivery. In addition to teacher shortages, there is a need to train existing teachers to adapt more flexible and creative pedagogical approaches. Professional development programs are essential in this regard. Teachers must be equipped with a thorough understanding of the *Merdeka Curriculum* principles and be trained to design engaging and effective lessons. Supriyadi (2022) found that well-designed training significantly enhances teachers' abilities to implement new curricula and positively affects student learning outcomes.

Culturally, resistance from some parents who associate Balinese language instruction with Hinduism poses a challenge to interfaith multicultural education. Viewed sociologically through Merton's (1968) theory of latent functions of education, Balinese language instruction serves as a tool for identity reinforcement and social cohesion. Misinterpretation of the cultural value of local content often results in biased perceptions, which educators must proactively address. Thus, strong parental and community support is vital for the successful implementation of the curriculum. Parental involvement in education can build strong synergies between home and school. For example, when parents participate in school activities such as workshops and seminars, they gain a better understanding of and support for the educational approaches being used. This aligns with Rahmawati's (2021) research, which found that parental engagement in education increases student motivation and academic performance.

The social implications of the educational approach adopted by MTsN 3 Jembrana are also significant. By integrating religious education and local wisdom, students are equipped not only with academic knowledge but also with strong moral and ethical values. This character-based education is expected to produce intellectually capable youth with high integrity and social awareness. According to Hidayati (2023), character-focused education contributes to a reduction in deviant behavior among adolescents.

In the face of globalization—marked by the influx of foreign cultures, the dominance of English, and rapid technological advancements—the role of local languages and cultures in education is being eroded. Regional languages such as Balinese face serious challenges in maintaining their relevance in both formal and informal settings. Addressing this issue requires not just technical solutions but also critical and transformative pedagogical strategies. Henry Giroux's (1988) *critical pedagogy* offers a relevant conceptual framework. Through this approach, students are not merely passive learners of Balinese as a subject, but are actively engaged in critical reflection on the strategic significance of preserving local languages as expressions of cultural identity and symbolic resistance to dominant cultural hegemony.

Critical pedagogy emphasizes the importance of education as a tool for emancipation, wherein teachers serve as *transformative intellectuals* (Giroux, 1988) who encourage students to think critically about social realities, including the global cultural domination that tends to marginalize local diversity. In this context, Balinese language instruction must offer a discursive space for learners to explore their cultural roots, unearth local wisdom, and negotiate their identities amid global interconnectedness. The reinforcement of local values in education, therefore, should not be viewed as a form of anti-globalization, but rather as an expression of *glocalization*—a concept that advocates thinking globally while remaining grounded in local wisdom (Robertson, 1995).

Rebranding Balinese language learning through a critical pedagogy approach, thus, entails not merely a linguistic endeavor but a cultural consciousness transformation. This aligns with Freire's (1970) notion of education as a praxis of liberation, where students gain awareness of their cultural realities and are empowered to act as agents of change within their communities. Accordingly, this strategy becomes particularly urgent in the context of *madrasahs*, which play a dual role as guardians of moral values and as preservers of local identity amidst the homogenizing tides of globalization.

## CONCLUSION

The curriculum development at MTsN 3 Jembrana reflects a strategic endeavor to integrate the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Independent Curriculum), religious education, and Balinese language as local wisdom into a coherent and contextual educational framework. This collaboration not only strengthens the identity of the *madrasah* as an Islamic-based educational institution but also enriches students' learning experiences through a culturally and locally rooted pedagogical approach.

The *Kurikulum Merdeka* provides innovative space for teachers to design student-centered learning aligned with contemporary needs. Religious curriculum contributes to the internalization of spiritual, moral, and Islamic character values. Meanwhile, the integration of the Balinese language as a local content subject serves as a tangible effort in preserving cultural heritage and reinforcing local identity. This is deeply rooted in traditional wisdom such as *Tri Hita Karana*, which resonates with Islamic teachings, including *hablum minallah*, *hablum minannas*, and *hablum minal 'alam*.

The synergy among these three curricular components creates an inclusive, contextual, and humanistic educational model that contributes to shaping students who are not only academically capable but also morally upright, culturally grounded, and globally competent. This initiative stands as a practical example of implementing a *glocalization*-based curriculum—thinking globally while being firmly rooted in local cultural values and identity.

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