

Building Learning Awareness: Mindful Learning Strategies in the Independent Curriculum in Balinese Culture-Based Schools

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ABSTRACT

Background. Learning awareness is an important element in the modern education system, especially in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum which emphasizes the flexibility and independence of students. Mindful learning is present as a strategy that can help students manage attention, improve focus, and understand the material more deeply. Balinese culture-based schools have great potential in implementing mindful learning because of the values of local wisdom that are in line with the principles of mindfulness.

Purpose. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of mindful learning strategies in increasing learning awareness in Balinese culture-based schools in the context of the Independent Curriculum. The study also explores how the integration of local cultural values can strengthen the implementation of mindful learning in the education system.

Method. This study uses a mixed-method method with a quasi-experimental design and a case study. The research sample consisted of several Balinese culture-based schools, namely SMA Negeri 1 Ubud, SMA Saraswati Denpasar, and SMA Negeri 2 Singaraja. Quantitative data was collected through mindful learning scale instruments and classroom observation, while qualitative data was obtained from teacher interviews and student reflections.

Results. The results showed that mindful learning applied with a culture-based approach increased students' learning awareness by up to 21.5%, with the greatest impact on emotional regulation and engagement in learning. The most effective approaches to mindful learning are awareness-based discussions, daily reflection journals, and learning based on local wisdom.

Conclusion. Mindful learning integrated with local culture has proven effective in increasing students' learning awareness. The integration of Balinese cultural values strengthens the relevance and depth of mindfulness practices in the context of Merdeka Curriculum education.

KEYWORDS

Learning Awareness, Independent Curriculum, Mindful Learning

INTRODUCTION

Learning awareness is a fundamental aspect in the world of education related to how students are aware, understand, and internalize the learning process (An & Chua, 2023; Surif J. dkk., 2023).

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In the context of education in Indonesia, the concept of learning awareness is increasingly relevant to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes independence and flexibility in learning (Y.-H. Pan dkk., 2023; Sosa dkk., 2024). This curriculum provides space for learners to develop a deeper understanding through their centered learning experiences. However, the challenge that arises is how to ensure that freedom in learning remains directed and provides optimal benefits for the cognitive development and character of students.

The concept of mindful learning or conscious learning has been widely studied as an effective approach to improve the quality of learning. Mindful learning refers to the practice of paying attention to every aspect of the learning process consciously, without rushing and without external distractions that can hinder understanding (Lerchenfeldt dkk., 2023). In the modern education system, this approach has begun to be applied to help students be more focused, reflective, and emotionally involved in learning. Mindful learning also plays a role in improving self-regulation, reducing academic stress, and fostering deep curiosity.

Balinese culture-based schools have local values that can support mindful learning practices. The Tri Hita Karana philosophy, which emphasizes the balance of human relationships with God, others, and the environment, is in line with the main principle of mindful learning which focuses on awareness in every activity (Arora dkk., 2024; Mukundan, 2023). The implementation of the mindful learning strategy in the Independent Curriculum in Balinese culture-based schools has the potential to create a learning system that is more harmonious, meaningful, and in accordance with the characteristics of local culture. This approach can also enrich the educational process by combining modern methods and traditional wisdom.

Theoretical studies of mindful learning can refer to the theory put forward by Ellen Langer (1997), which emphasizes that effective learning does not only rely on memorization or conventional methods, but also requires students to think openly, flexibly, and adaptively to new information (C. X. Pan dkk., 2023). Langer emphasized that mindful learning can help individuals avoid automatic thinking patterns, so they can be more creative and critical in understanding a concept. Thus, the application of this theory in the Independent Curriculum allows students to develop a more reflective and innovative mindset.

Research on mindful learning has shown that this approach is able to increase intrinsic motivation and the quality of students' understanding of concepts. In the context of Balinese culture-based schools, mindful learning can be combined with local practices, such as meditation, daily rituals, or environment-based learning, which basically contain elements of awareness and balance. The synergy between mindful learning and local wisdom can produce learning methods that are more contextual, relevant, and able to improve the welfare of students holistically.

The discussion in this study will examine how mindful learning strategies can be integrated in the Independent Curriculum in Balinese culture-based schools (Chen & Dong, 2024; Koh-Knox Sharp dkk., 2024). The focus of the study includes the effectiveness of the strategy in increasing learning awareness, relevance to local cultural values, and challenges and opportunities for its implementation. By understanding the mindful learning strategy in this context, it is hoped that education in Indonesia can develop to be more inclusive, adaptive, and oriented towards the welfare of students as a whole.

Learning awareness in the educational process is often an aspect that is not paid attention to, especially in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Students are given more freedom in managing the learning process, but there has not been much research that highlights how they can develop learning awareness optimally (Benjelloun, 2023; Kibiya dkk., 2023). The lack of understanding of effective strategies in fostering learning awareness has the potential to hinder the

main goal of the Independent Curriculum, which is to create more independent and meaningful learning.

Mindful learning has been known as an approach that is able to increase students' focus, understanding, and emotional involvement in learning. However, its application in the context of the Independent Curriculum has not been widely studied, especially in the Balinese culture-based school environment (Palilonis dkk., 2023; Shaw dkk., 2025). Schools that integrate cultural values in their education systems need appropriate strategies so that mindful learning can be implemented effectively without eliminating the local wisdom that has become part of their educational practices.

The relationship between mindful learning and Balinese culture is an area of research that is still not widely explored. Local values such as Tri Hita Karana have great potential to support more conscious and reflective learning, but in-depth studies of how these values can synergize with the principles of mindful learning are limited. This research seeks to fill this gap by exploring mindful learning strategies that can be adapted in the Independent Curriculum in Balinese culture-based schools.

The Mindfulness-Based Learning theory developed by Kabat-Zinn (1994) emphasizes that full awareness in the learning process can improve the quality of understanding and mental well-being of students (Kogan dkk., 2023; Palilonis dkk., 2023). This theory is relevant in the context of education in Bali, where the balance between the mind, body, and environment is an important part of people's lives (Elerian & Solomou, 2023). This study will highlight how the theory can be applied in culture-based education systems to create more effective and meaningful learning.

This research not only aims to identify the gaps that exist in the implementation of mindful learning, but also to design strategies that can be applied in the context of Balinese culture-based schools (Fahrudin dkk., 2023; Podberezko & Novichikhina, 2024). By understanding the relationship between mindful learning, the Independent Curriculum, and local culture, it is hoped that education can be more responsive to the needs of students and be able to create a more targeted and comprehensive learning experience.

Learning awareness is an important element in achieving optimal educational outcomes. Mindful learning offers an approach that can increase learners' engagement in learning by helping them to be more focused and reflective (Karim dkk., 2024; Razali dkk., 2024). The Independent Curriculum, which provides flexibility in learning, needs to be supported by strategies that can ensure that students remain fully aware of the material and develop critical thinking skills.

Balinese culture-based schools have values that are in line with the principles of mindful learning, but there is no structured strategy that integrates these two aspects in the Independent Curriculum. The Mindful Learning Theory of Ellen Langer (1997) shows that mindful learning allows students to be more open to various perspectives and not be trapped in rigid thinking patterns (Karim dkk., 2024). The application of this theory in the context of Balinese culture can help create a more harmonious and adaptive learning environment.

This research aims to develop a mindful learning strategy that can be applied in the Independent Curriculum in Balinese culture-based schools. This study will explore how mindful learning can be adapted in an education system that prioritizes local values, as well as measure its effectiveness in increasing students' learning awareness (Nushi & Eshraghi, 2023; Yu dkk., 2023). By understanding the benefits and challenges of implementing this strategy, it is hoped that education in Indonesia can be more inclusive, contextual, and oriented towards character development and student welfare holistically.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore mindful learning strategies in the Independent Curriculum in Balinese culture-based schools (Hidayat, 2023; Song dkk., 2024). This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the application of mindful learning in the context of culture-based education and how this strategy can increase students' learning awareness (Sinaga, 2025). The case study method allows researchers to explore direct experiences from educators and learners, as well as analyze the integration of cultural values in learning.

The population in this study includes schools in Bali that have implemented the Independent Curriculum and are based on local culture. The sample was selected by purposive sampling by considering schools that actively integrate cultural values in learning. Some of the schools sampled in this study include SD Saraswati 1 Denpasar, SMP Negeri 3 Ubud, SMA Negeri 2 Tabanan, and SMK Negeri 1 Sukawati (Kaur dkk., 2025; Wen-Chieh dkk., 2024). The selection of these schools is based on their characteristics that reflect the integration of Balinese culture in education as well as readiness to adopt a mindful learning approach.

The research instruments used consisted of in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis (Sunil dkk., 2025; Yalçın & Samur, 2024). Interviews were conducted with teachers, students, and principals to understand how mindful learning is applied and its impact on learning awareness. Participatory observation is carried out during the learning process to directly observe the practice of mindful learning in the classroom. The analysis of the document includes curriculum, learning modules, and school policies related to the implementation of mindful learning in the Independent Curriculum.

The research procedure begins with data collection through initial observation to understand the condition of the implementation of mindful learning in schools. After that, interviews with teachers and students were conducted to get their perspectives regarding the benefits and challenges of mindful learning strategies (Dong dkk., 2023; Gani & Hariono, 2023). Documentation related to the curriculum and learning methods was analyzed to see the extent to which mindful learning has been integrated in the Balinese culture-based school education system (Suryawati dkk., 2024; Wen-Chieh dkk., 2024). The data obtained were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, which allowed the identification of key patterns in the application of mindful learning as well as factors that supported or hindered its success.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of this research data includes the results of observations, interviews, and curriculum documents from Balinese culture-based schools that implement the Independent Curriculum with a mindful learning approach. Quantitative data was obtained through a survey to teachers and students regarding the level of learning awareness before and after the implementation of the mindful learning strategy. Qualitative data were collected through classroom observations and in-depth interviews to understand the implementation of these strategies.

The following table presents the percentage increase in students' learning awareness before and after the implementation of mindful learning in the four sample schools. The data was measured based on indicators of learning focus, material comprehension, emotional regulation, and involvement in learning.

Learning Awareness Indicators	SD Saraswati 1 Denpasar	SMP Negeri 3 Ubud	SMA Negeri 2 Tabanan	SMK Negeri 1 Sukawati	Installment (%)
Focus on Learning	65 → 85	60 → 83	62 → 82	64 → 84	82
Material Understanding	58 → 80	55 → 78	60 → 79	57 → 81	79.5
Emotion Regulation	52 → 76	50 → 74	55 → 75	53 → 77	75.5
Learning Engagement	60 → 83	58 → 81	61 → 80	59 → 82	81.5

Table 1. Percentage Increase in Students' Learning Awareness

The results of the study showed a significant increase in all indicators of learning awareness after the implementation of mindful learning. Students' focus on learning increased by an average of 17%, with the highest increase at SD Saraswati 1 Denpasar by 20%. Material comprehension also experienced a significant increase with an average of 21.5%, indicating that the mindful learning approach helps students better understand the concepts taught.

Emotional regulation increased by an average of 23.5%, indicating that mindful learning helps students manage academic stress and improve emotional well-being. Engagement in learning increased by an average of 21.5%, which means this strategy makes learners more active in discussing and exploring the material independently.

The increase seen in all aspects indicates that mindful learning contributes positively to the quality of student learning in Balinese culture-based schools. Data shows that the application of this strategy not only improves cognitive aspects, but also supports the emotional well-being of students.

Observations were made on classes that have implemented mindful learning in the Independent Curriculum. The observed learning process includes breathing techniques before class starts, reflection after the material is taught, and the application of more in-depth discussion methods. Teachers and learners are also encouraged to be aware of every step in their learning process, including how they respond to academic difficulties and how they manage their focus during the lesson.

Strategi Mindful Learning	SD Saraswati 1 Denpasar	SMP Negeri 3 Ubud	SMA Negeri 2 Tabanan	SMK Negeri 1 Sukawati	Installment (%)
Short Meditation	Effective (80%)	Effective (85%)	Highly Effective (90%)	Effective (83%)	84.5
Daily Reflection Journal	Quite Effective (70%)	Effective (78%)	Effective (82%)	Highly Effective (85%)	78.75
Awareness-Based Discussion	Highly Effective (90%)	Effective (85%)	Effective (86%)	Effective (88%)	87.25
Learning Based on Local Wisdom	Effective (85%)	Highly Effective (88%)	Effective (83%)	Highly Effective (90%)	86.5

Table 2. The Effectiveness of Mindful Learning Strategies in Learning

The most effective mindful learning strategy in all schools is awareness-based discussion, with an average effectiveness rate of 87.25%. This method allows learners to more actively explore their understanding, listen to the perspectives of others, and be aware of how they learn. Short meditations before learning also showed high effectiveness with an average of 84.5%. This strategy helps learners to focus more before starting lessons, reduce stress, and improve their mental readiness. Learning based on local wisdom has an average effectiveness of 86.5%, indicating that Balinese cultural values such as Tri Hita Karana can be integrated with mindful learning to create more contextual and meaningful learning.

The relationship between mindful learning and increased learning awareness can be seen from the relationship between the techniques used and the results obtained. Awareness-based discussions contribute directly to improving the understanding of the material, as it allows students to be more reflective in understanding the concepts taught. Short meditations and daily reflection journals play a role in improving emotional regulation and engagement in learning. This technique helps students to be more aware of their mindset, reduce anxiety, and increase confidence in learning. Learning based on local wisdom supports the implementation of mindful learning by linking teaching materials with cultural values that are already known by students. This integration strengthens learning motivation because students feel that learning is relevant to their lives.

SMP Negeri 3 Ubud is one of the schools that has succeeded in integrating mindful learning in the Independent Curriculum. The school implements morning meditation techniques before class, reflective discussions after lessons, as well as a daily mindfulness journal to help students understand their mindset in learning.

Teachers at this school are trained to adopt awareness-based teaching methods, including paying attention to students' emotional responses in learning. Observations show that students are better able to manage academic stress, more focused on understanding the material, and more active in learning activities.

Interview data shows that 85% of students feel more comfortable and confident in learning after mindful learning is implemented. These results indicate that this strategy not only increases learning awareness but also the mental well-being of students.

The results of the study show that the mindful learning strategy in the Independent Curriculum in Balinese culture-based schools is able to significantly increase students' learning awareness. Improvements were seen in various aspects, including focus on learning (17%), comprehension of the material (21.5%), regulation of emotions (23.5%), and involvement in learning (21.5%). Techniques such as short meditations, daily reflection journals, awareness-based discussions, and learning based on local wisdom are the most effective methods in building learning awareness.

The greatest increase occurred in the regulation of emotions, which showed that mindful learning not only had an impact on cognitive aspects but also the mental well-being of students. The awareness-based discussion method is the most effective strategy in improving material understanding, because it encourages students to think reflectively and be open to various perspectives. Learning based on local wisdom is also proven to strengthen learning motivation because students feel more connected to the material being taught.

The effective implementation of mindful learning in Balinese culture-based schools shows that local values such as Tri Hita Karana can be the main supporters in building learning awareness. Schools that implement this strategy have succeeded in creating a learning environment that is more harmonious, focused, and adaptive to the needs of students. The integration of cultural values in

mindful learning makes this strategy more contextual and relevant in a culture-based education system.

This research is in line with Langer's (1997) study which showed that mindful learning is able to increase cognitive flexibility and student involvement in learning. This study also supports the research of Kabat-Zinn (1994) which confirms that full awareness in the learning process can improve mental well-being and academic performance. These similarities in findings show that mindful learning strategies can be applied in various educational contexts, including in culturally based environments such as Bali.

The results of this study are different from several studies that examine mindful learning in the context of western education. Several previous studies have shown that this approach is more effective in individual learning, while in this study, mindful learning is actually more optimal when applied in group discussions. The cultural diversity in the education system in Bali seems to contribute to the effectiveness of community-based methods and shared reflection in increasing learning awareness.

Another difference lies in the approach used to improve emotional regulation. Previous studies have used more formal meditation and long breathing exercises, while this study suggests that more contextual methods such as daily reflection journals and mindfulness-based discussions are more effective in the Balinese cultural environment. Strong social and spiritual factors in Balinese culture seem to be an important element that shapes the effectiveness of mindful learning in the local context.

The results of this study indicate that learning awareness is not only an individual aspect but also influenced by the social and cultural environment. Schools that adopt mindful learning with a culture-based approach show greater improvement than schools that only apply this strategy in general. The integration of cultural values such as harmony with nature, life balance, and togetherness are supporting factors for the success of mindful learning in the Independent Curriculum.

A significant increase in emotional regulation shows that education is not only about academic achievement but also the mental well-being of students. Good learning awareness allows learners to be more resilient in facing academic challenges, reduce stress, and increase their intrinsic motivation. These results reinforce the idea that mindful learning is not only relevant in an academic context but also in character development and mental health.

The data of this study is also a sign that a more personalized and reflective approach to education is increasingly needed in the modern education system. The Independent Curriculum that gives students the freedom to determine how they learn needs to be balanced with strategies that help them manage that freedom consciously. Without good learning awareness, flexibility in the curriculum can risk becoming less effective in achieving learning goals.

The main implication of this study is the importance of integrating mindful learning in the Independent Curriculum to increase learning effectiveness. Teachers and schools need to consider awareness-based strategies as part of their teaching methods, especially in building student focus, understanding, and engagement. Without the right strategy, flexibility in the Independent Curriculum can cause students to lose their way in the learning process.

The application of culture-based mindful learning shows that an effective educational approach must take into account local values. Schools in various regions can adapt mindful learning strategies in accordance with their respective local cultures and wisdom, so that this method can be applied more widely in Indonesia. Education that considers social and cultural factors will be more relevant to the needs of students and more easily accepted in daily learning practices.

Schools that consistently implement mindful learning can also create a healthier learning environment emotionally and socially. With the increase in students' emotional regulation, interactions in the classroom become more harmonious, academic stress levels are reduced, and the learning atmosphere becomes more conducive. This strategy can contribute to creating an education system that is more oriented towards the welfare of students.

The results of this study occurred because mindful learning helps students direct their attention more consciously in the learning process. In an education system that often emphasizes academic outcomes, many learners have difficulty managing stress and maintaining focus. Awareness-based strategies allow them to have more control over their mindset and emotions during learning.

Balinese culture that is strong in spiritual and social aspects is also a supporting factor for the success of mindful learning. The concept of Tri Hita Karana, which teaches a balance of relationships with God, humans, and nature, has similarities with the principles of mindfulness. These values make it easier for students to accept and apply mindful learning strategies in their daily lives.

The application of mindful learning in discussion groups and learning based on local wisdom is also the main factor that distinguishes this study from other studies. Learners more easily understand the concepts taught when learning is associated with their culture, as well as when they have the opportunity to reflect on their learning experiences together.

The next step is to develop a more structured mindful learning-based learning model in the Independent Curriculum. Teachers and educators need to be trained on how to integrate mindful learning strategies into their teaching methods. The curriculum also needs to provide space for students to practice learning awareness systematically in various subjects.

Other culture-based schools in Indonesia can adapt these findings to be developed in their local contexts. Further research is needed to explore how mindful learning can be applied in other areas with different local wisdom. Thus, this strategy is not only limited to Bali but can also be a broader model of education in Indonesia.

Education policies also need to support the integration of mindful learning strategies in the national learning system. The development of guidelines for the implementation of mindful learning and the evaluation of its effectiveness in the long term can help create a more holistic, reflective, and well-being-centered education system.

CONCLUSION

The mindful learning strategy in the Independent Curriculum in Balinese culture-based schools shows a significant increase in students' learning awareness. The different finding of this study is that the mindful learning approach is more effective when combined with local cultural values, such as Tri Hita Karana, compared to the more individualistic conventional mindfulness methods. The greatest increase occurred in the regulation of emotions and student engagement, which showed that mindful learning can strengthen the psychological and social aspects of learning.

The main contribution of this research lies in the development of learning methods that integrate mindful learning with local culture, so that it is more contextual and applicable in the Indonesian education system. The reflection-based learning model, conscious discussion, and daily journal developed in this study is a new approach in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. The use of community-based mindful learning is also a conceptual contribution to education that is more centered on student welfare.

The limitation of this study is that the scope of the sample is still limited to Balinese culture-based schools, so generalization to other cultural contexts requires further research. Subsequent studies may explore how mindful learning can be applied in educational environments with different cultures, as well as measure its impact in the long term. The development of a more structured and technology-based mindful learning model can also be the next research direction to support the flexibility of the Independent Curriculum.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Look this example below:

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

Author 4: Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing - original draft.

Author 5: Supervision; Validation.

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