CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NEO-HUMANISTIC EDUCATION IN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS

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Abstract:

Neo-humanistic education promotes universal empathy, holistic development, ecological consciousness, and the spiritual growth of learners. As educational paradigms evolve towards more inclusive and value-oriented methodologies, the importance of neo-humanistic education escalates, particularly at the basic level. This study investigates the obstacles and opportunities teachers and administrators face in implementing neo-humanistic pedagogy in primary classes. This study utilises a qualitative case study methodology to evaluate teacher interviews, classroom observations, and an analysis of educational policy texts. The findings highlight multiple structural, pedagogical, and cultural challenges and significant potential to improve students' empathy, environmental stewardship, and comprehensive learning. The research clarifies the effective incorporation of neo-humanistic education into traditional elementary schools.

Keywords: Implementing, neo-humanistic, education, primary, classroom

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the necessity for educational reform has escalated due to global aspirations for more value-oriented, inclusive, and human-centred learning systems. Traditional educational frameworks, which have historically prioritised standardised assessments, memorisation, and cognitive superiority, are becoming scrutinised for their inadequacy in promoting holistic human development. Critics contend that these methods fail to foster emotional intelligence, moral reasoning, creativity, and environmental stewardship, which are vital competencies for 21st-century learners (Maba et al., 2025). As nations address complex global challenges such as climate change, socioeconomic disparity, and cultural fragmentation, education must adapt to equip students as reservoirs of information and as empathetic, responsible citizens (Mantra, 2024).

Neo-humanistic education is a robust pedagogical approach that overcomes these constraints by emphasising universal love, respect for all life forms, individual self-development, and global consciousness (Sahu, 2020). The traditional humanistic perspective encompasses environmental stewardship and the welfare of all beings, advocating for the holistic development of an individual's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual qualities (Joshi, 2026). This

educational paradigm emphasises learning beyond academics by prioritising meditation, mindfulness, community service, and artistic expression as essential components to foster well-rounded, ethically grounded, and socially responsible individuals (Campbell et al., 2020).

Indonesia's education system has recognised the imperative for holistic development by implementing reforms promoting character education and including indigenous knowledge (Wardhani et al., 2022). After the 2013 curriculum reform, there has been an enhanced emphasis on attitudes, abilities, and learning to foster students who exemplify the nation's core principles, including Pancasila, and the character attributes delineated in national policies (Dewi et al., 2024). Despite these initiatives, the full range of neo-humanistic concepts, particularly the spiritual and environmental aspects, has not been adequately integrated into the mainstream curriculum. This constraint reveals a discrepancy between policy rhetoric and classroom practice, emphasising the need for innovative approaches that authentically adopt a holistic view of human development (Mantra et al., 2024).

Bali, noted for its deep spiritual traditions and social ideals, provides a unique cultural environment for implementing neo-humanistic education (Öztemur et al., 2024). The island's primary philosophy, Tri Hita Karana, which emphasises the equilibrium among humanity, nature, and the divinity, is fundamentally congruent with neo-humanistic ideals. This collaboration fosters educational programs that include spirituality, environmental consciousness, and community engagement in the learning process (Mantra et al., 2022). As a pioneering institution, several private schools in Bali have adopted neo-humanistic teaching, presenting a compelling case study on the practicalities and ramifications of this innovative method in an Indonesian elementary school setting.

This study examines the experiences of educators, learners, and administrators at elementary classes throughout the application of neo-humanistic pedagogy. Analysing these viewpoints is crucial, as the philosophy of neo-humanism, despite its theoretical appeal, frequently faces substantial obstacles in implementation. Institutional restrictions, such as inflexible curriculum structures and inadequate resources, may impede instructional flexibility (Kumayas et al., 2025). Cultural variables, including parental expectations and community views, can either promote or obstruct the acceptance of different instructional methods (Mantra et al., 2020). This study provides an in-depth analysis of incorporating neo-humanistic principles into conventional classroom practices by investigating challenges and enablers.

A notable shortcoming in current educational research is the lack of evidence regarding the use of neo-humanistic education in everyday teaching and learning activities, particularly in Indonesia. Most current research focuses on theoretical discussions or broad policy evaluations, overlooking the analysis of classroom-level implementation (Cody & Beling, 2023; Mantra et al., 2022; Nyudak et al., 2021). There is an urgent need for research that documents specific practices, obstacles, and triumphs encountered by educators and students

involved in neo-humanistic education. This study aims to fill that vacuum by offering extensive qualitative data and analysis from direct observation, interviews, and interactive feedback from the elementary classes.

This study examines the integration of neo-humanistic education in primary classes in Bali, highlighting the problems and opportunities encountered during the implementation phase. The study seeks to go from theoretical abstraction to practical results by situating the research inside a classroom context. It aims to discover ways educators and administrators utilise to overcome institutional and cultural barriers, as well as creative approaches that promote the incorporation of neo-humanistic principles into teaching and school culture.

This study aims to contribute to the discourse on educational reform by providing evidence-based recommendations for schools seeking to implement value-oriented, holistic approaches. The findings of elementary classes may serve as a paradigm for other Indonesian educational institutions and beyond, in light of the growing global emphasis on developing ethically aware, emotionally intelligent, and environmentally sensitive students. The study emphasises the necessity of culturally responsive education, demonstrating the interplay between local customs and global educational trends to enhance learning experiences.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research utilised a qualitative case study methodology to gain an in-depth and contextual understanding of implementing neo-humanistic education at Bali private schools. The case study method was chosen for its effectiveness in clarifying complex educational processes in real-world settings. It enabled the researcher to investigate various school stakeholders' thoroughly lived experiences, attitudes, and daily activities, particularly the transformation of abstract neo-humanistic objectives into tangible classroom actions.

Data was collected through three principal methods: semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with eight primary school educators, two school administrators, and six parents to get diverse perspectives on the acceptance and problems of neo-humanistic education. Additionally, classroom observations were conducted over three months in Grades 3-6 to document integrating values such as compassion, mindfulness, and environmental awareness into teaching practices. Supplementary data were gathered through document analysis, including the school's goal and vision statements, instructor lesson plans, and student activity logs, to validate the findings and provide a more comprehensive knowledge of institutional practices.

The gathered data underwent thematic coding analysis, allowing the researcher to identify noteworthy patterns, repeating themes, contradictions, and unique insights from various data sources. The study investigated the expression of neo-humanistic principles in official and informal schooling. Coding categories were derived inductively from the data, allowing for the organic

emergence of topics including teacher autonomy, curricular flexibility, and parental perception. This analytical method guaranteed that the study documented the results of neo-humanistic education and highlighted the socio-cultural factors influencing its implementation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the findings of this study and the discussion are presented descriptively to provide more apparent horizons concerning the results of this study.

Findings

The findings are presented in full and are related to the pre-determined scope of research. The study revealed some notable findings, broadly classified as difficulties and opportunities for implementing neo-humanistic education at Bali private schools. Educators and administrators demonstrated substantial endorsement for character development and comprehensive learning; yet, they also recognised limitations, such as restricted instructional time, rigid curriculum requirements, and inadequate specialised training. Parents exhibited scepticism regarding practices such as yoga, storytelling, and reflection circles, viewing them as non-academic. The research revealed significant prospects for improving student conduct and emotional health via targeted measures. Regularly using value-based practices resulted in improved collaboration among students and increased attentiveness. The subsequent excerpts from interviews highlight the viewpoints of educators and administrators concerning the practical difficulties and perceived benefits of incorporating neo-humanistic education into the classroom.

> *"We champion character education and are committed to nurturing children's development beyond mere academic achievement. However, the challenge lies in time limitations. The official curriculum is replete with academic content, and we encounter pressure to fulfil learning objectives and prepare students for assessments. As a result, there is limited opportunity for activities such as meditation, storytelling, and reflective sessions, despite our recognition of their benefits." (Teacher A)*

> *"My first encounter with neo-humanistic schooling tremendously influenced me due to its emphasis on universal love and respect for all sentient creatures, which strongly aligned with our Balinese beliefs. Translating these concepts into practical lessons, particularly in mathematics and science, has proven to be difficult. I occasionally view myself as fulfilling twin roles: delivering academic instruction while developing novel methods to incorporate values like empathy and mindfulness". (Teacher B)*

> *"Parents have contacted me post-class to enquire about their children's involvement in yoga and reflection circles. They are concerned that it undermines authentic learning, such as mathematics or English. Some assert that it is religious or devoid of a scientific foundation". (Teacher C)*

> *"I strive to clarify how these activities aid children in focusing, regulating their emotions, and developing empathy, yet not all parents are amenable to this."*

(Teacher D)

"Students follow the introduction of morning stillness and fundamental mindfulness exercises, and we have noted a substantial change in student conduct. They appear more composed and respectful towards their instructors and peers." Even minor conflicts among pupils have decreased. These little moments of silence have a significant influence and create a favourable ambience for the day." (School Administrator)

"As an administrator, I unequivocally endorse our school's objective of incorporating neo-humanistic principles while recognising the practical challenges. Educators necessitate improved structured support, particularly regarding class planning and assessment tools that correspond with this methodology. We have made advancements in morning tranquilly, nature-based education, and cultural narratives". (School Administrator)

Implementing neohumanistic education in elementary classes has considerable potential, but it is accompanied by ongoing problems. Discussions with educators and administrators often underscored a profound admiration for character education values, with persistent worries about inadequate time and organisational flexibility. A colleague stated, "We support character education, but we have limited time to include activities like meditation or storytelling in formal lesson plans." This viewpoint highlights a systemic problem, as national curriculum mandates frequently obstruct teachers from incorporating reflective or holistic methods into their standard instruction.

A notable objection emerged from some parents who viewed neo-humanistic practices, including yoga and contemplation circles, as lacking academic rigour. An educator stated, "Certain parents do not understand the reasoning for our incorporation of yoga or meditation circles." They view it as lacking academic rigour. This highlights a cultural and communicative gap between educational programs and familial expectations, emphasising the need for increased community engagement and education about the goals and advantages of holistic approaches.

Despite these limitations, both interviews and classroom observations revealed clear advantages of utilising neo-humanistic approaches. An administrator noted that "students demonstrate heightened calmness and respect after morning silence practice. Furthermore, inter-student tension has decreased." This supports the recognised trend of improved classroom behaviour and emotional regulation following brief reflective interventions, such as breathing exercises or gratitude reflections, particularly in Grade 5 classes.

Classroom observations revealed that Grade 5 children who began the day with brief breathing or gratitude exercises significantly enhanced focus and peer collaboration. These essential yet focused strategies appeared to aid students in managing their emotions and mentally preparing for upcoming learning tasks. Educators saw that the tranquil and focused environment cultivated by these exercises improved classroom management and encouraged positive student interactions throughout the day.

The heightened emotional involvement observed during storytelling

sessions focused on animals and nature was noteworthy. Frequently abundant in moral lessons and cultural symbols, these narratives enhanced pupils' empathy for the characters and situations. This emotional connection promotes deeper reflection on values like kindness, respect, and environmental stewardship. The narrative technique has demonstrated efficacy as a tool for fostering empathy, a crucial component of neo-humanistic education.

Despite these achievements, some educators had challenges integrating neo-humanistic principles into the primary academic curriculum, especially in mathematics and physics. While value-based programs were more easily incorporated into language arts or social studies, instructors expressed uncertainty over including reflective or emotional learning in technical disciplines. This difficulty highlights the need for improved professional development and curricular assistance for educators to integrate neo-humanistic principles across all disciplines effectively.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate a dynamic interplay between institutional limitations and emerging potential in implementing neo-humanistic education at Bali private schools.

A significant obstacle for educators in elementary classes is the rigidity of the national curriculum, which frequently emphasises academic content at the expense of character development and value-oriented education. This method may offer restricted possibilities for fundamental activities of neo-humanistic education, including meditation, contemplation, and storytelling. Educators sometimes experience limitations imposed by time constraints and assessment pressures, which impede their capacity to use holistic methodologies across disciplines consistently. As a result, the ideas of neo-humanistic education are in jeopardy of being overlooked or considered supplementary rather than fundamental to student development.

Despite these limitations, incorporating neo-humanistic principles into culturally relevant frameworks constitutes a feasible approach. The philosophical notion of Tri Hita Karana in Bali, which emphasises harmony among people, nature, and divinity, is fundamentally aligned with neo-humanist principles. Educators can promote holistic principles that resonate with students' lived experiences by incorporating this perspective into the standard curriculum. Environmental science education may investigate ecological equilibrium via the perspective of local customs, whilst social studies could utilise community-centric narratives to analyse cooperation and empathy (Sawitri et al., 2023).

Furthermore, educators can include values while meeting specified learning objectives using integrated pedagogical approaches such as project-based learning, thematic units, and collaborative group activities. Educators in elementary classes have initiated the application of this system, conveying significant life lessons through narratives, rituals, and cultural customs. These initiatives link curricular requirements and holistic development, enabling young children to get an education that is more flexible, relevant, and culturally meaningful (Faridah et al., 2024).

The lack of teacher training and support constitutes a significant obstacle to implementing neo-humanistic education in elementary classrooms. Numerous educators are inadequately equipped to incorporate holistic and value-centred methodologies into their daily instruction due to a deficient professional training in neo-humanistic pedagogy. Without sufficient professional development, educators frequently struggle to integrate national curriculum standards with the complex skills needed to promote students' emotional, social, and spiritual growth (Farani et al., 2024). This mismatch undermines their confidence and adversely impacts the overall quality and consistency of the implementation process.

Ongoing professional development initiatives centred on neo-humanistic education are essential to tackle this challenge. These programs should furnish instructors with practical methodologies, instructional frameworks, and assessment tools that conform to curriculum requirements and overarching educational objectives. Furthermore, training sessions enable instructors to participate in reflective activities, deepening their comprehension of the required pedagogy. This immersive program equips instructors with a solid foundation for their students' personal, social, and academic growth (Mantra et al., 2020).

In addition to formal training, peer mentorship and collaborative learning groups within educational institutions can substantially improve teachers' competencies. Educators who share their experiences, challenges, and practical strategies in neo-humanistic education create a supportive environment that promotes creativity and resilience. Peer mentorship supports ongoing education and career development, systematically allowing instructors to enhance their skills. Schools can ensure the effective and lasting incorporation of neo-humanistic principles into elementary education by investing in teacher empowerment via formal and informal support networks (Bhowmik, 2023).

Parental scepticism towards neo-humanistic education is a significant obstacle to its implementation in elementary schools. Many parents may view activities like yoga, meditation, and reflection circles as non-academic or irrelevant to their children's official schooling. This mistake may result in opposition or inadequate support, jeopardising the overarching developmental goals of neo-humanistic education. Alleviating this misunderstanding is crucial for cultivating a cooperative atmosphere where educators and families collaborate to improve students' well-being and development (Wardhani et al., 2022).

Engaging the community is a potent approach for mitigating parental resistance. Schools may implement outreach programs that enable parents to view and participate in classroom activities and demonstrate neo-humanistic approaches. Classroom visits provide insight into how these strategies cultivate emotional regulation, empathy, and social cohesion among youngsters. Parents are increasingly inclined to appreciate holistic education beyond traditional academics after observing its beneficial impact on their children's behaviour and learning.

Furthermore, courses tailored for parents can be employed to convey the

concepts, goals, and benefits of neo-humanistic education. These courses clarify alternative pedagogical methods and equip parents with pragmatic strategies to reinforce these concepts at home. Parents' support and excitement for neo-humanistic activities markedly intensify when informed and involved. Continuous and transparent communication between educational institutions and families is crucial for cultivating trust and ensuring the enduring success of neo-humanistic education within the community (Karmini et al., 2021).

The findings of this study correspond with global research, demonstrating that value-based education improves the classroom environment and fosters student well-being. Incorporating neo-humanistic activities, including reflection circles and mindfulness exercises, has improved the learning environment by cultivating a more serene and respectful tone. Students participating in these activities frequently demonstrate improved emotional regulation, conflict resolution abilities, and peer interactions, cultivating a supportive classroom environment that facilitates academic and personal growth.

Reflection circles, in which children articulate their thoughts and emotions within a supportive environment, promote the development of empathy and active listening abilities. These seminars allow students to improve their understanding of various perspectives while strengthening ties with their peers. Mindfulness techniques, including focused breathing and appreciation exercises, augment students' awareness of their emotions and reactions, cultivating the emotional intelligence necessary to address social issues within and beyond the classroom.

Social-emotional learning is essential to comprehensive education, providing children with skills that extend beyond traditional academic success. This study illustrates that neo-humanistic education proficiently cultivates these attributes, preparing students to be informed, compassionate, and self-reflective. These findings emphasise the necessity of maintaining and improving value-based methodologies in primary education to ensure ongoing student achievement.

Integrating neo-humanistic education with Balinese cultural traditions creates a strong pathway for learning rather than an obstacle. The Balinese philosophy, especially the notion of Tri Hita Karana, emphasises the significance of harmony among people, the environment, and the deity, rooted in neo-humanistic principles like empathy, compassion, and connectivity. This intrinsic relationship enables educators to deliver holistic education within a culturally meaningful context, augmenting pupils' learning relevance and engagement.

Incorporating local customs, rituals, and narratives into the classroom enhances the educational experience by connecting abstract values to concrete cultural behaviours. Children who see their cultural background reflected in the curriculum find an augmented sense of identity and pride. This link fosters ownership of the educational process since students and educators view the lessons as grounded in their community's experiences. Culturally grounded education preserves and revitalises tradition by integrating it with modern educational goals (Ahadiyyah et al., 2024).

This collaboration amplifies educators' enthusiasm and creativity by offering diverse cultural resources. It promotes innovative pedagogical approaches that emphasise local knowledge while upholding universal human values, portraying neo-humanistic education as supportive of, rather than antagonistic to, Balinese culture; educational institutions can foster a harmonious learning environment where cultural identity and advanced education mutually reinforce each other (Puspadewi et al., 2025).

This study highlights the crucial involvement of educators, school administrators, parents, and the broader community in evaluating the effectiveness of neo-humanistic education. It fosters collaborative projects, ongoing professional development, and policy support to sustain and improve these innovative pedagogical approaches. Institutions implementing the whole framework of neo-humanistic education can develop future generations that are academically proficient and empathetic, conscientious, and responsible global citizens.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the problems and potential opportunities for implementing neo-humanistic pedagogy in primary classrooms, particularly at Bali private schools. The results demonstrate that curricular limitations, insufficient teacher training, and parental concerns provide significant obstacles. Significant chances remain to cultivate empathy, alleviate classroom behavioural problems, and synchronise educational procedures with local cultural norms.

Incorporating neo-humanistic principles into early education has the potential to revolutionise classroom settings and the wider school community. With assistance from school authorities and parents, trained educators can effectively foster a more sympathetic, holistic, and culturally relevant educational experience.

Future efforts should focus on professional development, curricular integration strategies, and community involvement projects that clarify neo-humanistic concepts. Educational institutions can foster a supportive environment that respects universal human values and local traditions, promoting children's academic, emotional, and social growth.

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