

**JLPH:**
Journal of Law, Politic
and Humanities

<https://dinastires.org/JLPH> dinasti.info@gmail.com [+62 811 7404 455](tel:+628117404455)

E-ISSN: 2962-2816
P-ISSN: 2747-1985

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.38035/jlph.v4i6>
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Revitalizing Regional Languages to Support Sustainable Development Goals from a Collaborative Governance Perspective

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Abstract: The revitalization of regional languages has become a strategic issue in preserving cultural identity while supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 (quality education), Goal 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and Goal 16 (peaceful and inclusive societies). This study aims to analyze how collaborative governance practices can strengthen regional language revitalization programs as an integral part of sustainable development. The method used is descriptive qualitative with a literature study and policy analysis approach, focusing on the roles of cross-sector actors such as local governments, indigenous communities, educational institutions, and civil society organizations. The results show that the success of regional language revitalization is largely determined by the level of participation and synergy among stakeholders. The collaborative governance model provides a framework that facilitates dialogue, coordination, and sustainable collaboration in the planning and implementation of language policies. Therefore, the revitalization of regional languages is not only a cultural preservation agenda but also a meaningful contribution to inclusive and sustainable development.

Keywords: Regional Language, Revitalization, Sustainable Development Goals, Collaborative Governance, Sustainable Development.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development is a global paradigm aimed at maintaining human well-being on an ongoing basis while preserving environmental sustainability (Cahyani, 2020; Saputra & Heppyana, 2023). In an effort to achieve a balance between development and sustainability, the United Nations (UN) introduced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the global development agenda for 2030. Among the 17 goals, Goal 4 (SDG 4) holds significant relevance to this study as it emphasizes the importance of inclusive, equitable, and quality education, along with respect for cultural and linguistic diversity.

SDG 4 targets the achievement of quality education through approaches that value cultural and linguistic diversity, including the use of mother tongues in education. UNESCO (2016) asserts that mother tongue-based education has been proven to enhance student learning outcomes and strengthen community participation in education. Local languages, as intangible cultural heritage, serve as vital instruments in contextual education and in reinforcing local

identity amid the currents of globalization (Kosonen, 2017). Indonesia is recognized as the country with the highest number of local languages in the world, with approximately 718 languages. However, over 100 of these languages have become extinct or are endangered, according to UNESCO (2019). In Bali, the use of the Balinese language among younger generations has declined significantly due to the influences of globalization, urbanization, and the dominance of the Indonesian language and foreign languages (Arissucilla, 2020; Nita, 2022).

In response to this issue, both central and regional governments, including the Province of Bali, have initiated policies for the revitalization of local languages. The Provincial Government of Bali issued Governor Regulation No. 80 of 2018 concerning the Protection and Use of the Balinese Language, Script, and Literature, as well as the organization of Bali Language Month. This policy aims to revive the use of the Balinese language in public spaces and educational settings, and to foster renewed pride in local culture among younger generations (Mahardika, 2023).

The implementation of this revitalization policy adopts a collaborative governance approach—a governance model that involves multiple stakeholders, including central and regional governments, educational institutions, traditional community organizations, and civil society. Ansell & Gash (as cited in Dewi, 2019) identify six criteria of collaborative governance, one of which is the direct participation of diverse actors in the decision-making and policy implementation process. This is reflected in the Coordination Meeting held in early 2023 in Bali, which involved stakeholders such as Bappeda, the Department of Education, and the Department of Culture at both the provincial and regency/city levels.

The preservation of local languages is not only linked to quality education (SDG 4), but also contributes to poverty reduction (SDG 1), decent work creation (SDG 8), and the reduction of inequality (SDG 10). Mother tongue-based education enhances learning quality and student engagement, while also strengthening the connection between schools, families, and communities (UNESCO, 2016; Kosonen, 2017). In the economic sector, the use of local languages in culture-based tourism generates new economic opportunities for local communities (Cunningham, 2021). Therefore, the revitalization of local languages in Bali constitutes a tangible implementation of sustainable development principles that integrate the dimensions of education, culture, and economy. The collaborative approach embodied in this policy demonstrates that the preservation of local culture is not solely the responsibility of government, but requires the active involvement of all elements of society.

METHOD

This research was conducted in the Province of Bali, selected due to its structured policies in the revitalization of local languages and the continued presence of a significant number of active speakers of local languages across its various regions. The province serves as a relevant case for examining the interrelation between local language revitalization and socio-cultural development. Moreover, this location reflects the dynamics of regional policymaking that support language preservation, making it a rich source of data to address the research questions. By choosing Bali as the research site, the researcher aims to portray the studied phenomenon in a deeper and more contextual manner, particularly in relation to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with special emphasis on SDG 4, which pertains to quality education.

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, as it aims to gain a detailed and comprehensive understanding of social phenomena, especially those concerning the preservation of local languages. The qualitative approach is deemed appropriate since the research focus is not on quantitative measurement, but rather on the exploration of meanings, interpretations, and narratives derived from the experiences and perspectives of stakeholders

involved in language revitalization policies and practices. Consequently, the data collected will consist of narrative descriptions obtained through in-depth interviews, field observations, and relevant documentation. This study emphasizes the importance of engaging directly and contextually with research subjects to authentically and comprehensively reflect the realities on the ground.

The types of data used in this study are qualitative data, including narratives from observations, interviews, and documentation. These data were obtained from two types of sources, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data consist of direct interviews with purposively selected informants, observations of language preservation activities, and field documentation. Meanwhile, secondary data include scientific journals, regulations, statistical data, news articles, and policy or program documents related to revitalization efforts implemented in the Province of Bali. Informants in this study include academics or experts in language and culture, relevant government agencies, cultural preservation figures, and practitioners from the private sector who support local language preservation initiatives, in order to ensure a diversity of perspectives and enhance the validity of the data.

Data collection was carried out through three main techniques: in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were used to explore the views, experiences, and knowledge of informants related to the practices and challenges of local language revitalization. Observations were conducted directly in the field to observe how policies and programs are implemented in practice, and to understand the community's response to these initiatives. In addition, documentation was utilized to collect supplementary data that reinforce the findings from interviews and observations, such as photographs of activities, program documents, and regional policy archives. To ensure data validity, the researcher employed several strategies, including extending the research period if the data were insufficient, increasing rigor in observing and recording data, and applying triangulation of sources and techniques to compare and test the consistency of information from various sources and methods.

For data analysis, the researcher employed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which involves three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During the data reduction stage, the researcher filtered and categorized the collected information to simplify and structure the data for more effective analysis. The summarized data were then presented in narrative form or visual formats such as tables and charts to facilitate readers' understanding of the research findings. Subsequently, the researcher drew conclusions based on the organized data and verified them by rechecking against the initial data and the theoretical framework used. This process was undertaken to ensure that the conclusions drawn were scientifically valid and accountable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Government Efforts in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through Local Language Revitalization Policy in Bali

The efforts of the Provincial Government of Bali in supporting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are reflected in its structured policy on the revitalization of local languages, particularly the Balinese language. One tangible form of this effort is the issuance of Governor Regulation of Bali No. 80 of 2018 concerning the Protection and Use of Balinese Language, Script, and Literature. This regulation serves not only as a manifestation of responsibility toward preserving local cultural heritage but also as a strategic response to the challenges of sustainable development, which demand the inclusion of local identity in development processes (Mahardika, 2023).

This policy directly supports SDG 4 on quality education, particularly Indicator 4.7, which emphasizes inclusive education that respects cultural and linguistic diversity. Through

this policy, the Balinese government has integrated the Balinese language into various educational activities, such as local curriculum in schools, the celebration of the Balinese Language Month (Bulan Bahasa Bali), and Balinese script training for teachers and students (UNESCO, 2016). These efforts not only enhance students' understanding of local culture but also strengthen the link between education and cultural communities.

The revitalization of local languages is also aimed at reinforcing the economic sector, especially the creative economy and cultural tourism. The use of Balinese in tourism promotion, tour guiding, and local art performances positions the language as an added economic value. This aligns with SDG 8, which emphasizes decent work and inclusive economic growth. The Bali Provincial Government acknowledges that the Balinese language is not merely a cultural instrument but also an economic asset that attracts both tourists and local creative industry players (Cunningham, 2021).

However, the implementation of this policy still encounters several challenges. One of the most significant obstacles is the limited budget allocation to support systematic revitalization programs. In many schools, the Balinese language is still not considered a core subject and is often perceived as supplemental. Moreover, there is a shortage of teaching materials and training for local language teachers, which frequently results in suboptimal implementation in the field (Education Office Informant, 2024). In Bali, the use of Balinese among younger generations has declined sharply due to globalization, urbanization, and the dominance of Indonesian and foreign languages (Arissucilla, 2020; Nita, 2022). The reduced interaction of youth in Balinese raises concerns about the future sustainability of active speakers. This problem is exacerbated by the lack of space for using local languages in digital media and public spheres, which are largely dominated by national and international languages.

To respond to these challenges, both the government and local communities have begun to adopt digital approaches in language preservation. One important innovation is the creation of the BASAbali Wiki platform, which serves as a participatory space for students, young speakers, and cultural communities to document and use the Balinese language digitally. This initiative aligns strongly with SDG 9, which promotes innovation and technology-based infrastructure to support cultural sustainability (Sukmawati, 2023).

In addition to technology-based approaches, the Provincial Government of Bali also implements community-based strategies. Programs involving traditional villages (*desa adat*), schools, art communities, and families form an essential foundation in ensuring the continuity of Balinese language usage. Activities such as Balinese script writing competitions, Balinese poetry performances, and community workshops have proven effective in cultivating community pride and love for their own local language (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022).

Collaboration between the central and regional governments in language revitalization programs is another vital element. The Ministry of Education and Culture, through the Language Office (Balai Bahasa), has partnered with the Bali regional government to organize teacher training, develop teaching materials, and implement the Tunas Bahasa Ibu (Mother Tongue Bud) festival. This collaboration not only strengthens policy implementation at the local level but also fosters interinstitutional synergy in achieving culture-based SDGs (MoEC, 2022).

The revitalization of local languages also contributes to reducing social inequality, as mandated by SDG 10. By empowering indigenous communities through their native language, their social and economic positions are elevated. The Balinese language becomes a symbol of empowerment for local communities that have often been marginalized by modernization and urbanization. By involving them in education programs, the creative economy, and cultural activities, language revitalization creates a pathway for more equitable social justice (Bevir, 2022).

The Balinese government's efforts in achieving the SDGs through the local language revitalization policy demonstrate the strong interconnection between local cultural preservation and sustainable development. The Balinese language is positioned not merely as a heritage to be safeguarded but as a strategic instrument in education, economy, and social empowerment. If implemented consistently and collaboratively, this policy has the potential to become a model for SDG implementation rooted in local values and community-based culture.

The Collaborative Governance Perspective in Depicting Government Policy Implementation Toward the Sustainable Development Goals

The Collaborative Governance approach provides a strong analytical framework for understanding how the local language revitalization policy in Bali is implemented in a participatory manner. This model emphasizes the importance of cooperation among various actors, including the government, civil society, academia, the private sector, and local communities, in designing and implementing public policies. In the context of Bali, this model is highly relevant because preserving local languages cannot be achieved by a single entity—it requires cross-sectoral synergy (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

The initial stage in Collaborative Governance, known as starting conditions, reflects the context that triggers collaboration. In Bali, the decline in Balinese language use among the younger generation due to the dominance of Indonesian and foreign languages prompted the formation of collaborative preservation efforts. The government realized that without strong collaboration, the revitalization of local languages would not be effectively realized (Sukmawati, 2023). This condition, therefore, became the main impetus for adopting a multi-actor collaborative approach.

Facilitative leadership is another crucial aspect. The Bali Provincial Government, through the Cultural Office (Dinas Kebudayaan) and the Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda), acted as facilitators in organizing dialogue among stakeholders. A cross-agency coordination meeting held in early 2023 served as an initial forum to align perspectives, jointly design agendas, and establish mutual commitment toward preserving local languages (Kompas, 2023). Such leadership is essential to build mutual trust and shared ownership of the programs.

The institutional design stage was manifested through strong regulatory frameworks such as Governor Regulation No. 80 of 2018. This regulation not only provides a legal umbrella but also serves as a coordination tool for implementation across sectors. For example, schools are required to teach the Balinese language; media outlets are encouraged to use Balinese script; and customary communities are invited to actively participate in the language preservation agenda (Mahardika, 2023). This institutional design creates a collaborative structure that ensures the participation of all stakeholders.

During the collaborative process, all actors involved perform their respective roles. The government allocates funding and infrastructure; cultural communities organize festivals and competitions; academics conduct research and training; while citizens become active users of the local language in their daily lives. This process demonstrates that Collaborative Governance emphasizes not only shared decision-making but also joint implementation (Dwiyanto, 2011).

Challenges in the implementation of Collaborative Governance in Bali include the persistence of sectoral coordination gaps. For example, some schools run local language programs sporadically without adequate community engagement, or cultural organizations lack access to formal policy support. This indicates that trust-building and shared understanding among actors need continuous reinforcement (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

On the other hand, platforms like BASAbali Wiki serve as successful examples of collaboration. This project involves the public, students, and scholars in building an open-access Balinese-language encyclopedia. Through a participatory digital approach, this

initiative supports the principles of Collaborative Governance and serves as a replicable model for other regions (Sukmawati, 2023). It also demonstrates how technological inclusion can strengthen collaborative governance in cultural contexts.

Such collaboration also enhances the achievement of the SDGs, which require multi-sectoral engagement. Within SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals, Collaborative Governance emerges as a key strategy to address the complexity of modern development. Culturally-based policies such as the revitalization of the Balinese language can support multiple SDGs simultaneously—namely education, decent work, inequality reduction, and local cultural preservation.

The role of local communities as primary stakeholders is particularly vital in Collaborative Governance. Without the active involvement of communities as users and heirs of the language, revitalization policies will remain mere slogans. Therefore, this approach ensures that communities are not only beneficiaries but also main actors in the policy process (Clarkson, 1995; Crosby in Noor et al., 2022).

In conclusion, Collaborative Governance offers a comprehensive and strategic perspective for understanding culturally-based public policy. The implementation of local language revitalization in Bali shows that a collaborative approach can produce more inclusive, responsive, and sustainable policies. When consistently applied, Collaborative Governance can strengthen not only the achievement of the SDGs but also the democratization of development at the local level.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion presented earlier, it can be concluded that the revitalization of the Balinese language as a strategy to support SDG 4.7 requires multi-stakeholder involvement within the framework of Collaborative Governance. The Balinese language holds significant value as a marker of cultural identity and local heritage; however, its preservation process still faces numerous challenges. These include limited policy incentives, a shortage of qualified human resources, a lack of innovative learning media, and low participation from younger generations.

Initiatives such as BASAbali Wiki demonstrate the potential of effective collaborative practices. Nevertheless, regulatory and institutional support must be further strengthened. Cross-sectoral collaboration remains suboptimal due to the absence of a well-structured coordination mechanism. Therefore, synergy among government bodies, academic institutions, cultural communities, and the education sector is a critical prerequisite for the sustainable preservation of the Balinese language.

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