Multicultural Education as the Key in Facing Social Diversity in the Digital Era

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Abstract
Multicultural education is key in overcoming intercultural conflicts and increasing understanding between individual students and society. This study explores the implementation of multicultural education at MI Riyadlotul Ulum Kunir Demak as a case study, focusing on the role of multicultural education in dealing with social diversity. Qualitative methods were used to collect data through observation, interviews and document analysis. The results show that MI Riyadlotul Ulum Kunir Demak has adopted a multicultural education approach with initiatives such as a multiculturally oriented curriculum and the use of the latest technology. The impact is an increased student understanding of social diversity and a higher level of tolerance towards cultural and religious differences. However, there are still challenges such as limited resources and the lack of parents' role in supporting multicultural education. Greater efforts are needed from the government to support the implementation of multicultural education explicitly in the curriculum. The results show that multicultural education can help students become more inclusive, open to differences and ready to contribute in a diverse global society. This is an important step in dealing with social diversity in the digital age.

INTRODUCTION

In today's increasingly connected era, social diversity has become an increasingly dominating characteristic of our society. Cross-cultural interaction, global information exchange and access to information technology have changed the social fabric, creating an increasingly complex and diverse world. The main principle in multicultural education is to provide something based on justice and optimal service in order to develop human potential as a resource that has an important role in the future in the life of the nation and state (Nur Syam, 2023).

In this context, education has a crucial role in shaping individuals who are able to face the challenges and opportunities offered by this increasingly complex social diversity. Multicultural education is one of the relevant approaches to address these challenges, helping students understand, appreciate, and interact with diverse cultural backgrounds, religions, and values. The Prophet Muhammad SAW taught them to be human beings with dignity, reconcile between generations in conflict, build communities of togetherness, side by side and complement each other from limitations. mutual respect and respect for these differences and awareness of the rights and obligations of each ethnic group, so that effective, stable and harmonious community relations are established in a multicultural society (Ahmad Halid, 2023).

The existing problems will add scratches to the face of a society that is full of risks in the future. This condition determines the future shape and unity of the Indonesian nation in facing the risk of possible national decline. (Sahal et al., 2018). Given that in Indonesia, social and culture are so diverse and different in each region. Therefore, the potential for conflict is very high and it is possible that it can lead to disunity if not handled properly.

Although the importance of multicultural education has been widely recognized, previous research has mainly focused on general theories and principles. Few in-depth studies have examined the implementation and impact of multicultural education at the primary school level, especially in the context of social diversity faced by local communities. Therefore, there is a need for a concrete case study that investigates how multicultural education is implemented in an elementary school in an area facing social diversity challenges.

This research aims to fill the knowledge gap by conducting a case study at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) Riyadlotul Ulum Kunir, Demak. MI Riyadlotul Ulum is located in an environment that reflects significant cultural and religious diversity. In this study, we will examine how MI Riyadlotul Ulum implements multicultural education, its impact on students' understanding of social diversity, and their level of tolerance towards cultural and religious differences.

The main objective of this study is to identify and analyze how MI Riyadlotul Ulum Kunir Demak implements multicultural education and its impact on students' understanding of social diversity and their level of tolerance. Through a better understanding of the implementation of multicultural education at the primary school level and its impact on students, this research is expected to provide valuable insights for educators, education policy makers and society in dealing with social diversity in an increasingly connected digital era.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Role of Multicultural Education in Reducing Intercultural Conflict and Increasing Understanding Between Individual Students and Society.

The attitude of tolerance and togetherness is one of the important and fundamental pillars to be developed in the school environment. The school is considered as a form of social system in which it consists of components of the school community with various backgrounds, economies, family environments, habits, religions and even different desires, ideals and interests.

Multicultural education becomes very important in an effort to minimize and prevent conflict in some areas. Through an educational approach based on multiculturalism, students will have a more open attitude and mindset to understand and appreciate diversity better. (Palipung,

2016). By being open, students will be able to accept all the differences that exist. They will feel that the social and cultural differences that exist around them are not an obstacle for them to communicate and interact with each other. The differences that exist are considered as part of the beauty created by the Almighty God.

In implementing multicultural education, the elements that play a role include:

a. Cultivation of Multicultural Values

Aspects of multicultural values that need to be instilled include self-identity, equality, objectivity, understanding of differences, tolerance, and empathy. This is the shared responsibility of all teachers who interact with students in the classroom. The classroom is expected to be able to create an atmosphere that supports the application of multiculturalism values without ignoring individual rights. (Puspita, 2018). Good class conditioning and not discriminating against each student from family and ethnic backgrounds is very important for a teacher to do. In addition, teachers must be able to objectively assess and treat their students indiscriminately.

The above is reinforced by Hasan on the importance of inclusive values, compassion, tolerance and respect for differences: that the existence of social conflicts that cause downturns in this country is caused by a lack of desire to accept and appreciate differences, ideas, opinions, and the work and efforts of others, and a lack of desire to protect the weak and helpless, love for fellow human beings, lack of social solidarity, and foster selfish attitudes and lack of feelings or social sensitivity." (Anan, 2020). That mutual respect and love for one another is crucial and important to always be echoed by every layer of society, in this case, educational institutions must be able to accommodate all the differences that exist and package them in the wrapping of love and mutual respect for one another. Differences of opinion in Indonesia, which are so diverse, are indeed unavoidable, but these differences can be found a solution. So that this nation can move forward together through the cooperation of all elements of society. Especially for students, multicultural education is very important to instill in them from an early age. This is done to equip and fortify them from extremist attitudes towards differences.

b. Teaching Personnel (Teachers)

Teachers in implementing a multicultural approach are expected to be flexible and not rigid, pay attention to cultural differences, be inclusive, respect language, be sensitive to gender, be critical of injustice, oppose ethnic discrimination, and respect differences in ability and age. All these factors must be integrated in the learning process and school awareness to accept the differences of each student. (Suradi, 2018). Teachers are a very important element and have a big role in implementing the concept of multicultural education in schools. Teachers can educate students about the importance of multicultural education, motivate students to be able to accept all differences and provide examples of its application.

c. Learning Design

Teachers need to design lessons based on multicultural principles with a focus on emotional and physical skills that encourage collaboration between diverse students. Cooperative learning designs can be used to teach the subject matter. (Sudrajat, 2014). Cooperative learning design is used in order to build understanding for students related to differences. In one small group, students are required to argue among their group members, and accept these differences gracefully. From this, students can learn that even in such a small group, there are many differences. Especially when in a society where there are various people who are certainly different from each other. Whether in terms of opinions, physicality, and so on.

This can create a learning environment that welcomes students from different backgrounds, allowing them to feel valued, accepted, and able to learn from each other. Teachers should pay attention to student diversity and create an inclusive learning environment. (Fitri & Wahyuningsih, 2023).

The use of multicultural learning media can use audio-visual aids that are interesting and entertaining for students, as it allows them to hear, see and participate in learning. This increases students' interest in learning effectively. (Hikmat et al., 2023). The use of appropriate media also affects students' understanding of multicultural education. When presented with material with interesting innovations, students tend to follow it with enthusiasm and are able to understand the content well. Unlike the case when the media used is monotonous, then students will quickly get bored, and tend to be difficult to understand. In addition, video media can also be used to teach about the application of multicultural education in society. So that students become aware of how to apply the concept of multicultural education in everyday life.

2. Factors Affecting Schools' Ability to Prepare Students to Face the Challenges of Social Diversity.

   a. Availability of books and resources

   The availability of books and resources that support multicultural education is still limited in some schools. Textbooks that cover various cultures, information about the history and traditions of different cultures, are still often difficult to find in some schools, which hampers students' ability to learn and creates inequity in the learning process.

   b. Lack of Parental Involvement in Supporting Multicultural Education

   Lack of parental involvement in supporting multicultural education is also an issue that needs attention. Parents can play a significant role in promoting multicultural values in the home environment and supporting the learning process at school. However, at times, parents are often uninvolved or even show no interest in supporting multicultural teaching in schools, which can make it difficult for schools to create an inclusive environment.

   c. Learning materials

   It is important to have specific subjects that focus on Multicultural Education in primary schools, so that the introduction of culture is more structured, organized and comprehensive, rather than just adding cultural elements to other subjects. (Kholik, 2017). So, materials that exclusively describe the values of multicultural education are needed. Not just a complement to a curriculum, but a priority in it.

   In incorporating culturally related materials, inclusive learning can be used. Inclusive learning is an approach that takes into account the diversity of students and creates a learning environment that welcomes students from different backgrounds. In an inclusive environment, students feel valued, accepted and can learn from each other. Therefore, it is important for teachers to pay attention to student diversity and create an inclusive learning environment.

   d. Lack of learners' understanding of multicultural education

   Learners' lack of understanding about multicultural education has an impact that contributes to the emergence of social problems. Overall, the multicultural education approach aims to eliminate stereotypes, selfishness, individualistic orientation and exclusive behavior among learners. Instead, multicultural education encourages a more holistic understanding of

others, recognizing that an individual's existence cannot be separated from an environment influenced by diverse ethnicities, races, religions, cultures and needs. Thus, it is expected that multicultural education can help students in the development of cultural, national identity and understanding of the global community. (Fitri & Wahyuningsih, 2023).

3. Effective strategies in developing multicultural awareness.
   Some effective measures that can be used in developing multicultural awareness are as follows:

   a. Strengthening Understanding of Multicultural Education as Pedagogy

   Pedagogy is related to teaching theories, teaching materials, understanding student characteristics and the teaching techniques used. (Indrapangastuti, 2014). With the strengthening of understanding of multicultural education as pedagogy either through counseling to teachers or teaching will direct the view that multicultural is very important in a learning that will have an internal and external impact on students. The internal impact of multicultural education as pedagogy is that it will change the view and vision of the reality of community life to be more realistic. With this, students will be able to think critically and position themselves according to the environment, because students view that the plurality that exists as a common social feature.

   While from the external side, multicultural education will build individuals and communities to be able to jointly form a real social order with all the diversity and culture that is open and interconnected among others. This will create a harmonious society with a sense of tolerance, harmony, mutual respect, and make people more able to think critically, transformatively, and constructively in carrying out their responsibilities as citizens. (Rosada et al., 2019).

   b. Implementing multicultural education with relevant learning approaches and techniques

   All education providers at the level of policy, management, to implementers (teachers) at various levels, both macro and micro levels, refer to the objectives of national education listed in Article 3 of the National Education System Law Number 20 of 2003 which aims: to develop the potential of students to become individuals who are imbued with human values who are loyal and devoted to God Almighty; who have noble morals and morals; who are healthy, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent; and as citizens, democratic and responsible. (Anwar, 2021).

   Multicultural learning that is included in every subject is a process of guiding and shaping attitudes and instilling values to each student in order to become citizens who are inclusive, pluralist, and respect human rights and justice. Because of this, in guiding and developing multicultural attitudes, teachers must always involve students in the process of searching for information, discussing various issues related to multiculturalism, and reflecting on the values obtained in the learning process.

   The applied learning must be able to run dynamically and combinatively between the teacher's teaching techniques, student characteristics, and multicultural values. Which in turn will make students' affectionate attitudes grow and develop. (Supriatin & Nasution, 2017). So, teachers are required to be innovative in preparing lessons including the use of methods, selection of materials that suit students, and utilization of available media.

   In addition, the "role model" played by academics in religious education institutions in speech, pretense, and behavior is the most strategic alternative and method in implementing multicultural education. (Cahyono, 2017). Because in reality, giving direct examples to students is more important than just teaching them in the form of theory. Students of MI age tend to

digest and then imitate examples from their teachers more easily than understanding theories that sometimes even make them confused.

    c.   Integrating multicultural education in school culture development

School culture is the entire educational process carried out in the school environment that characterizes an educational institution and contains norms and values that can be a reference in the words and actions of students. (Fauziah et al., 2021). So it can be said that school culture also has a big role in Strengthening Character Education (PPK) echoed by the government.

In the policy of Strengthening Character Education through school culture, multicultural education can be applied through various habituation, assistance in extracurricular and non-curricular activities, development of school rules and norms, school celebrations, and celebration of traditions that are in accordance with the values of multicultural education.   Some examples of the integration of multicultural education with school culture include: habituation of school literacy in a variety of Indonesian cultures, traditional dance extracurricular activities, and habituation of respectful attitudes modeled by teachers to students. So that students will indirectly absorb the values of multicultural education (Rosada et al., 2019).

    d.   The synergy of the three education centers in the implementation of multicultural education

A character education will be successful if there is a neat cooperation between the school, family, and community. (Fanny, 2022). Likewise, multicultural education is also included in the context of Strengthening Character Education (PPK). Because multicultural education without involving the three centers of education, namely schools, families, and communities will only be an ordinary renewal movement that has no impact on improving and developing the quality of education. If the school has created an environment that supports multicultural education and in the family and community also creates the same thing. Then it will also affect the success of multicultural education with the development of mutual respect for differences that will have a positive impact in a broad scope even to global culture (Rosada et al., 2019).

    4.   Level of Tolerance of Students of MI Riyadlotul Ulum Kunir Demak

Based on observations from a questionnaire distributed to 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students at MI Riyadhotul Ulum Kunir Demak which contains several multicultural values, such as: tolerance, respect, and so on. Data were obtained on the level of students' understanding of multicultural education as follows: 1) grade 4 with 22 students showed a result of 78%, 2) grade 5 with 15 students showed a result of 89% 3) grade 6 with 29 students showed a result of 95%. From the overall data that has been obtained from 66 students, it can be concluded that the level of student understanding of multicultural education students in grades 4, 5, 6 at MI Riyadhotul Ulum Kunir Demak can be said to be very good. It is also evidenced by the field facts that show these students have understood and applied multicultural values, such as tolerance and mutual respect when in the school environment. This data is taken only from students in grades 4, 5, and 6, because students at these ages already have a fairly stable attitude in their daily lives.

    5.   Implementation of Multicultural Education in MI Riyadlotul Ulum Kunir Demak

The application of the concept of multicultural education in the curriculum has not been a focus for education organizers. Only implicitly contained in the curriculum in force in Indonesia (one of them KTSP). According to the Head of MI Kunir, Mr. Sopiin, the implementation of multicultural education is still not the main concern of the government. Given that there is no

curriculum that explicitly contains the application of the concept of multicultural education in Indonesia." However, some curricula in Indonesia have contained some points of multicultural education such as: recognition and appreciation of diversity, integration of diversity values in learning, development of inclusive teaching materials, and multicultural character education contained in the KTSP curriculum.

Based on the above, the government should begin to pay attention to the application of multicultural education more explicitly and deeply. The lack of explicit implementation of multicultural education in the curriculum in Indonesia will have an impact on the lack of teaching materials that describe in detail about multicultural education, as well as the lack of insight of teachers and students in the application of the concept of multicultural education. As said by Mr. Sopiin, that "in order for the concept of multicultural education to be implemented properly, a curriculum that is explicitly oriented towards multicultural education is needed. Not just a complementary point in the curriculum. Because this will have an impact on the lack of teaching materials or reading materials that can support the implementation process (multicultural education) to the fullest." Furthermore, he said that "this will also have an impact on the competence and insight that teachers and students have about multicultural education is very limited and in the end, the application (of multicultural education) does not run optimally. "Nevertheless, we have also instilled multicultural education for our students as much as possible in order to minimize conflict as a result of differences," he said.

Research Limitations:

1. Focus on the Effect of Multicultural Education on Students' Tolerance Attitudes, especially at MAS Darul Ulum Kudus: This research focuses on the influence of education on students' tolerance attitudes towards social differences, especially in the context of culture and religion. The researcher analyzes the extent to which multicultural education has an impact on reducing intolerant attitudes among students and what influences it.

Further Research Recommendations:

1. The Effect of Multicultural Education on Students' Long-Term Attitude Change: Research could be directed towards measuring the effect of multicultural education on students' long-term attitude change. This could involve monitoring students for several years after graduation to assess whether multicultural education has a lasting impact.
2. Gender Analysis in Multicultural Education: Research can be conducted by examining whether the effects of multicultural education differ between male and female students. This can reveal whether there are differences in how students of both genders respond to diversity from a multicultural education perspective.Dengan melakukan penelitian lebih lanjut dalam bidang ini, kita dapat mengembangkan strategi pendidikan yang lebih efektif untuk mengatasi tantangan keanekaragaman sosial, meningkatkan toleransi, dan mempromosikan pemahaman yang lebih baik antarindividu dalam masyarakat yang beragam seperti Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

Multicultural education plays a key role in increasing students' tolerance of different cultures, religions and other backgrounds in an increasingly multicultural society. Several factors such as curriculum, teaching methods and school environment affect the effectiveness of multicultural education, and it is important to overcome these barriers. Overcoming the barriers created by diversity certainly requires effective strategies or programs in developing multicultural awareness, involving strengthening the understanding of multicultural education as

a pedagogy, using relevant learning techniques, integrating multicultural education in the school culture, and synergizing the three centers of education between school, family, and community.

It is important to integrate multicultural values in the curriculum, involve teachers who have a good understanding of multiculturalism and provide resources such as books and supportive learning media. In addition, the involvement of parents in supporting multicultural education is also important, and learning materials need to be adapted to the diversity of students. In addition, it should be emphasized that multicultural education is not only the responsibility of schools, but also the responsibility of families and communities to create an environment that supports multicultural values and intercultural harmony.

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