

CULTURAL LITERACY AND THE SPIRIT OF MULTICULTURALISM IN INDONESIA

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Info Artikel

Diajukan: 7-18-2024

Diterima: 8-27-2024

Diterbitkan: 8-27-2024

Keywords:

Cultural Literacy,
Multiculturalism

Kata kunci:

Litersi Budaya,
Multikulturalisme



Lisensi:cc-by-sa

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Abstract

Indonesia has extraordinary cultural riches, consisting of various ethnic groups, languages, traditions and customs which are characteristics of the nation that must be protected and preserved. In the midst of the onslaught of modernization and globalization, it is important to strengthen the spirit of multiculturalism, so that national identity and noble values are maintained. This research aims to explore the role of cultural literacy in maintaining the spirit of multiculturalism in Indonesia. Using a qualitative research method such as library research, this research analyzes various relevant literature sources to understand how cultural literacy can promote diversity and tolerance in society. The research results show that cultural literacy plays an important role in increasing understanding and appreciation of cultural differences, which in turn strengthens the spirit of multiculturalism. This research also discusses the challenges faced in implementing cultural literacy and provides recommendations for overcoming these obstacles.

Abstrak

Indonesia memiliki kekayaan budaya yang luar biasa, yang terdiri dari beragam suku bangsa, bahasa, tradisi, dan adat istiadat menjadi ciri khas bangsa yang harus dijaga dan dilestarikan. Di tengah gempuran modernisasi dan globalisasi, semangat multikulturalisme penting untuk diperkuat, agar identitas bangsa dan nilai-nilai luhur tetap terjaga. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi peran literasi budaya dalam menjaga semangat multikulturalisme di Indonesia. Melalui metode penelitian kualitatif jenis library research, penelitian ini menganalisis berbagai sumber literatur yang relevan untuk memahami bagaimana literasi budaya dapat mempromosikan keberagaman dan toleransi dalam masyarakat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa literasi budaya berperan penting dalam meningkatkan pemahaman dan penghargaan terhadap perbedaan budaya, yang pada gilirannya memperkuat semangat multikulturalisme. Penelitian ini juga membahas tantangan yang dihadapi dalam implementasi literasi budaya serta memberikan rekomendasi untuk mengatasi hambatan tersebut.

Introduction

Indonesia has extraordinary cultural wealth, there are 1,340 ethnic groups in the country (BPS, 2015), it is a truly multicultural country. Diversity of ethnic groups, languages, traditions and customs are characteristics of the nation that must be protected and preserved (Budiono, 2019; Fatimah, 2023; Kamal, 2013; Thahir, 2023). In the midst of the onslaught of modernization and globalization, it is increasingly important to strengthen the spirit of multiculturalism, so that national identity and noble values are maintained (J. Li, 2023; Nurul Hikmah et al., 2023; Rohmat, 2023; Sarmini et al., 2020).

Cultural literacy, as a process of learning and understanding culture, plays an important role in maintaining the spirit of multiculturalism (Dicusara, 2024; García Ochoa et al., 2020; García Ochoa & McDonald, 2020; Pocevičienė, 2023). Through cultural literacy, individuals can broaden their horizons and knowledge about various cultures,



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foster understanding and respect for cultural diversity, traditions and values. And ultimately cultural literacy serves as a foundation for building an inclusive society where every individual can live side by side equally harmonious with a unique cultural identity (Dicusara, 2024; Garcia-Mila et al., 2021; Gita Anggraini, 2023; Lähdesmäki et al., 2022; Morse et al., 2024).

However, in this digital era, there are still many individuals who do not have an adequate level of cultural literacy. This is caused by various factors, such as the development of digital technology, if it is not balanced with self-control, it can result in a decline in literacy levels, minimal access to cultural reading materials, and the influence of foreign culture being more dominant (Araujo, 2022; Astuti et al., 2022; Hadad et al., 2023; Mahpudiz, 2024; Netra et al., 2023; Xiaojuan, 2023).

So it is not uncommon for racial conflicts to occur. Conflicts that occur between different racial groups are due to differences between individuals, differences in interests, cultural differences, and social changes (Elias, 2015; Huzaini, 2022; Kaufman, 2023; Majid, 2022; Riak PhD & Bill, 2022; Thistlethwaite, 2017).

As happened in Indonesia Kompas (2023), first, the 1998 riots occurred in May 1998 in the capital and surrounding areas which triggered community rejection of ethnic Chinese, the Aceh Conflict. Second, the conflict that occurred in the city known as the "Veranda of Mecca" was caused by differences regarding Islamic law and dissatisfaction with the distribution of resources. Until a group emerged called the Aceh Movement in 1977, 1989 and 1998.

Third, the Sampit conflict occurred for 10 days in 2001, it was reported that 469 people died in this case and as many as 108,000 decided to flee. LSI even noted that intelligence failed to detect early symptoms of riots that occurred. Fourth, the West Nusa Tenggara conflict. In 2013 there was a conflict in West Nusa Tenggara which was caused by differences in ethnicity and culture of the local community. To be precise, in Sumbawa Besar Regency, they went on a rampage and damaged and burned several buildings and vehicles there.

Fifth, the case of Religious Conflict in Poso, started with a clash between youth groups, this dispute led to a major conflict caused by religion in Central Sulawesi. The groups involved were Bugis Muslim immigrants with Protestant ethnicity in Poso. Sixth, social conflict in Situbondo, namely a dispute that occurred in 1996 in the Situbondo area. The main cause of this conflict was differences in beliefs which led to anti-Christian and Chinese movements.

Seventh, the expulsion of Papuan students in Yogyakarta, several Papuan students in Yogyakarta who supported independence for West Papua received unpleasant treatment in the eyes of the community. Several mass organizations surrounded their dormitory with several racist words which resulted in the expulsion of Papuan students from Yogyakarta.

From the incident above, it is necessary to conduct a literature study to understand the theories and research results that are relevant to the topic of cultural literacy and multiculturalism so that this dark incident does not happen again. A review of relevant literature shows that cultural literacy has an important role in shaping individual attitudes and behavior towards diversity. Cultural literacy can help individuals develop the ability to think critically about their own culture and other cultures (Dicusara, 2024; García Ochoa et al., 2020b; Hodgson & Harris, 2022; Siliņa-Jasjukeviča & Rancāne, 2022).

This is in line with research conducted by Barella et al. (2023), Hartinah et al. (2023), Hodgson & Harris (2022), Maulana et al. (2024), Weiss et al. (2023) which found that effective multicultural education can increase tolerance and reduce prejudice. In addition,

research by Barella et al. (2023), Ferdman (1990), Jeng et al. (2019), Lara et al. (2023) shows that cultural literacy can strengthen an individual's cultural identity and increase feelings of trust.

However, several studies also show that the implementation of cultural literacy faces various challenges. For example, research by Akbar et al. (2020), Nugraheni & Wiarsih (2023), Peykani & Rad (2016), Siliņa & Rancāne (2022), Sobirin & Susapti (2019), Ulya et al. (2023) found that a lack of support from the government and educational institutions is often an obstacle in implementing cultural literacy programs. In addition, research by Adejunmobi (2008), Damawan & Azizah (2020), Janebova (2022), Santoro & Arani (2015), Tyler et al. (2014) revealed that resistance to change and exclusive cultural practices are also challenges in implementing cultural literacy.

This research aims to describe the role of cultural literacy, challenges in implementing cultural literacy, and recommendations for developing cultural literacy. From these objectives it is hoped that it can build understanding and appreciation for cultural diversity, increase tolerance and mutual respect, and promote national unity and integrity.

Method

This research uses qualitative research methods with a literature study research design. Literature study is a data collection method that is carried out by searching, reading and analyzing written sources to obtain information and data that is relevant to the research topic (Snyder, 2019). Research data was collected from various relevant literature sources, such as books, documents, journals, articles and other online sources, (George, 2008) which discuss cultural literacy and multiculturalism.

The data collection technique used in this research is documentation technique. The data analysis technique used in this research is content analysis (Wilson, 2016). Content analysis is a qualitative data analysis technique carried out by researching and interpreting the contents of texts from written sources that have been collected and developing a comprehensive understanding of the role of cultural literacy in maintaining the spirit of multiculturalism (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Mayring, 2023).

Results and Discussion

1. The Role of Cultural Literacy in Developing a Multicultural Spirit

Cultural literacy has an important function in the advancement of diversity and tolerance in society. As Dicusara (2024), Gita Anggraini (2023), García et al. (2020), Hodgson & Harris (2022) suggests, cultural literacy facilitates individuals' increased understanding of their own and others' cultural backgrounds. Such proficiency includes familiarity with diverse cultural narratives, belief systems, customs, and behaviors. Through the acquisition of cultural literacy, individuals are empowered to appreciate and respect diversity, while simultaneously reducing the biases and prejudices that often fuel discord in multicultural settings.

Braslauskas (2023), Pfeifer & Gertz (2022), Nurita et al. (2019), Wibowo et al. (2019) Articulated a similar viewpoint, asserting that improving critical thinking skills through cultural literacy is conducive to mitigating prejudice and stereotypes. The process of cultural literacy requires a thorough examination and assessment of various cultures, allowing individuals to understand the contextual nuances and significance of each cultural custom. Cultivating this critical thinking capacity is essential in avoiding superficial judgments and detrimental biases directed at alternative cultural frameworks. In the field of education, cultural literacy has

emerged as a valuable instrument for providing lessons about the importance of diversity and inclusivity.

Dicusara (2024), Altun (2023), Ferdman (1990), Siliņa & Rancāne (2022) In his scientific investigation, also supports the idea that cultural literacy plays an important role in strengthening an individual's sense of cultural belonging. By exploring and acknowledging their own cultural heritage, individuals can develop a deep sense of pride and certainty in their cultural identity. This aspect plays an important role in upholding the ethos of multiculturalism, because individuals with a strong cultural identity tend towards inclusivity when engaging with other cultural paradigms. Additionally, cultural literacy serves as a means for individuals to navigate identity crises that commonly manifest in multicultural settings, where cultural gaps can give rise to confusion and internal strife.

Likewise, research conducted by Eden et al. (2024), Cook et al. (2022), Kim (2023), Simamora et al. (2019) states that cultural literacy contributes to the formation of a more inclusive environment. In such an environment, all individuals are valued and embraced, regardless of their cultural origins. The ethos of cultural literacy underscores the importance of respecting and appreciating differences, thereby facilitating harmonious collaboration and effective interactions in diverse environments.

Furthermore, Anggraini (2023), Skorinko et al. (2015), Yilmaz & Argon (2020), Barella et al. (2023) found that cultural literacy can reduce prejudice and discrimination in society. By understanding and appreciating cultural differences, individuals become more open and tolerant towards other cultures. This reduces prejudice and negative stereotypes which are often a source of discrimination and conflict. Cultural literacy also helps individuals develop empathy and understanding of the experiences and perspectives of others, so they can better interact in a diverse society.

Research conducted by Claravall & Walthall (2024), Jaeger et al. (2016), Jayasundara (2022) states that the acquisition of cultural literacy plays an important role in the advancement of social justice. Cultural literacy serves as a mechanism for educating individuals about the importance of equality and justice in diverse societies. Through cultural literacy, individuals can understand and appreciate the diverse cultural contributions that have influenced society. The creation of a just and inclusive society is paramount, ensuring that all individuals are given equal opportunities for involvement and contribution.

Furthermore, research conducted by Nuzzaci (2023), Salih (2022), Tiwari et al. (2024), Carrillo et al. (2022) shows that cultural literacy contributes to the establishment of peace and harmony in society. By cultivating an understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity, individuals can reduce the potential for conflict through constructive dialogue. Cultural literacy equips individuals with effective communication and conflict resolution skills, enabling the peaceful and respectful resolution of differences. Cultivating a peaceful and harmonious social environment is very important.

Additionally, investigations by Guiso et al. (2006), Mahdi (2020), Marks (2009) show that cultural literacy also produces positive outcomes in terms of social and economic progress. Societies that embrace cultural diversity tend to exhibit high levels of creativity and innovation. Cultural literacy encourages collaboration and the exchange of ideas among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, resulting in innovative solutions to diverse social and economic challenges. Additionally, cultural

literacy fosters an inclusive business environment where all individuals feel valued and embraced.

Finally, research conducted by Chen et al. (2022), Ozdemir (2023), Reading & Redford (2022) shows that cultural literacy plays an important role in the formation of a sustainable society. Cultural literacy provides knowledge about the importance of preserving cultural heritage for future generations. By understanding and appreciating cultural values and traditions, individuals can actively contribute to initiatives aimed at cultural preservation. Preserving cultural diversity and transmitting it to future generations is essential to ensure continued enjoyment and appreciation of existing cultural riches.

Based on various research findings regarding the role of cultural literacy above, it can be concluded that with cultural literacy you can understand, appreciate differences between cultures, reduce stereotypes and prejudice, make individuals think critically, by understanding and appreciating their own culture, individuals can develop a sense of pride and self-confidence. towards their cultural identity, teaching individuals about the importance of equality and justice in society, reducing social conflict and fostering attitudes of tolerance and empathy, social and economic development, maintaining and preserving cultural wealth for future generations, and finally creating peace and harmony in society.

2. Challenges in implementing cultural literacy

The implementation of cultural literacy in Indonesia faces many complex challenges. According to Lodiņa & Jurs (2024), Nash et al. (2024) the main obstacle lies in inadequate support from the government and educational institutions. Despite recognition of cultural literacy as an important component of multicultural education, there is often a dearth of explicit guidelines or sufficient funding to sustain cultural literacy initiatives. As a result, there is a dearth of accessible cultural literacy programs for the population, especially in remote areas. Additionally, research conducted by Donald (2012), Miller & Guerrero (2022), Peykani & Rad (2016) shows that resistance to change poses important obstacles to the incorporation of cultural literacy. Many individuals and societal groups find comfort in existing circumstances and express hesitation to embrace the changes necessary to adopt cultural literacy. This resistance generally stems from a lack of understanding or understanding of new and diverse elements. To address this issue, effective education and communication strategies are essential to increase awareness and understanding of the importance of cultural literacy.

Deficiencies in educator training and proficiency in providing cultural literacy education also present obstacles. As per Dicusara (2024), Eden et al. (2024), Forge et al. (2022) many educators today do not have the knowledge and skills necessary to skillfully instill cultural literacy. Educators need specialized training to understand the basic principles of cultural literacy and how to integrate them into their curriculum and instructional methodology. Without adequate training, efforts to embed cultural literacy into formal education may prove ineffective.

Additionally, research by Braden et al. (2022), Fasinro (2024), Sandhu (2012) highlights that non-inclusive curricula stand out as a challenge in the implementation of cultural literacy. Many educational curricula primarily concentrate on the dominant culture while ignoring the cultural diversity prevalent in society. An inclusive curriculum should include materials that reflect cultural diversity and provide space for the recognition and appreciation of all cultures. Without an

inclusive curriculum, the effective implementation of cultural literacy in education remains unattainable.

Furthermore, X. Li & Qi (2022), Nugraheni & Wiarsih (2023) Sobirin & Susapti (2019) emphasized that the absence of resources and facilities to increase cultural literacy also creates challenges. Many educational institutions lack access to critical resources such as books, educational materials, and technology that support cultural literacy. This scarcity of resources can hinder efforts to educate and advocate for cultural literacy among students and communities.

According to research by Glock et al. (2019), Nawaz & Ali (2023) Suryatni & Widana (2023) negative stereotypes and biases towards other cultures can hinder the acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity. These stereotypes and biases are often transmitted across generations and prove difficult to eradicate. Therefore, ongoing initiatives are essential to combat stereotypes and bias through education and intercultural discourse.

In addition, research by Behrman (2002), Fauzi et al. (2023), Sedo (2011) shows that the lack of community involvement in cultural literacy programs is a major obstacle. Many cultural literacy initiatives falter due to the absence of active community involvement. Community involvement is essential to ensure the relevance and acceptance of these programs in society. To overcome this problem, a participatory approach is very important in formulating and implementing cultural literacy programs.

In addition, research by Fawley (2017), Rifai & Susanto (2018), Vrana (2015) shows that differences in educational access and opportunities are also challenges in implementing cultural literacy. Many regions in Indonesia still experience educational disparities, where children from minority groups or remote areas have limited access to quality education. This gap hampers efforts to promote cultural literacy equally across the country.

Research conducted by Sobirin & Susapti (2019), Siliņa & Rancāne (2022), Sánchez (2023) emphasizes the importance of comprehensive support from various stakeholders to achieve successful cultural literacy. Implementing cultural literacy requires harmonious collaboration between government agencies, educational institutions, the general public and private companies. In the absence of strong support from all entities, cultural literacy can face many challenges and complexities. Therefore, building strong and lasting partnerships is very important to increase cultural literacy efforts in Indonesia.

Based on the research results above, it can be concluded that there are several challenges to the implementation of cultural literacy, namely lack of support from the government and educational institutions, resistance to change, lack of teacher training and competence, curriculum that is not inclusive, lack of resources and facilities, the existence of stereotypes and prejudice, lack of Community participation, differences in educational access and opportunities.

3. Recommendations

To overcome the various challenges faced in implementing cultural literacy in Indonesia, a comprehensive and well-organized approach is essential. An important suggestion is increasing government assistance through appropriate policies and financial support. According to Bećirović (2023), Bezerra & Coutinho (2024), Diane et al. (2024), the importance of policies that support multicultural education that is all-encompassing and accessible to all segments of society cannot be overstated. It is

critical for governments to allocate dedicated funds for cultural literacy initiatives and ensure their utilization is efficient and transparent.

Apart from policy and financial support, the provision of ongoing professional training and development for educators is necessary. Dicusara (2024) suggests that teachers trained in cultural literacy are better equipped to convey these concepts in a more effective and stimulating way. Training regimens should include both theoretical and practical components, equipping teachers with the skills necessary to seamlessly integrate cultural literacy into the curriculum and daily teaching practices. Through ongoing training, educators can increase their knowledge base and embrace innovative pedagogical approaches.

The formulation of an inclusive curriculum also has significant weight. As proposed by Chu (2022), Dua et al. (2022) the curriculum should reflect the cultural richness prevalent in society and allow recognition and appreciation of all cultures. An inclusive curriculum can incorporate diverse cultural viewpoints in educational materials, while highlighting the value of embracing differences and encouraging collaboration in diverse settings. It is critical for curricula to be designed with input from a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including teachers, students, and the community.

Research conducted by Didiaryono & Qur'ani (2019), Good et al. (2024) underlines the important role of community involvement in the successful implementation of cultural literacy initiatives. Consequently, the next recommendation is to increase community involvement in the design and implementation of cultural literacy programs. These programs must be developed through a participatory approach, involving local communities at every phase of the process. This not only increases the relevance of the program but also fosters a sense of inclusivity and mutual obligation.

Increasing access to resources and facilities that promote cultural literacy is paramount. According to Eden et al. (2024), Olusola & Eden (2024), ensuring equitable access to educational resources such as books, learning materials, and technology is very important. Collaborative efforts between governments and educational institutions are critical to providing these resources, especially in remote and underserved areas. The use of technology can also play a role in expanding reach to a wider audience by offering digital learning materials and online platforms dedicated to cultural literacy.

Educational strategies that emphasize the development of empathy and intercultural understanding are essential in combating stereotypes and bias. Eden et al. (2024), Olusola & Eden (2024) proposed that education should instill the principles of justice, equality, and encourage positive intercultural communication. Initiatives that engage students from diverse cultural backgrounds in joint projects and interactive assignments can play an important role in reducing prejudice and fostering stronger connections.

UNESCO (2003), ASEAN (2023) underlines the importance of forming collaborations to increase cultural literacy. Various entities including governments, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector must come together to build lasting cultural literacy schemes. These collaborative efforts may include various activities such as cultural exchange programs, workshops, seminars, and cultural festivals involving different community factions.

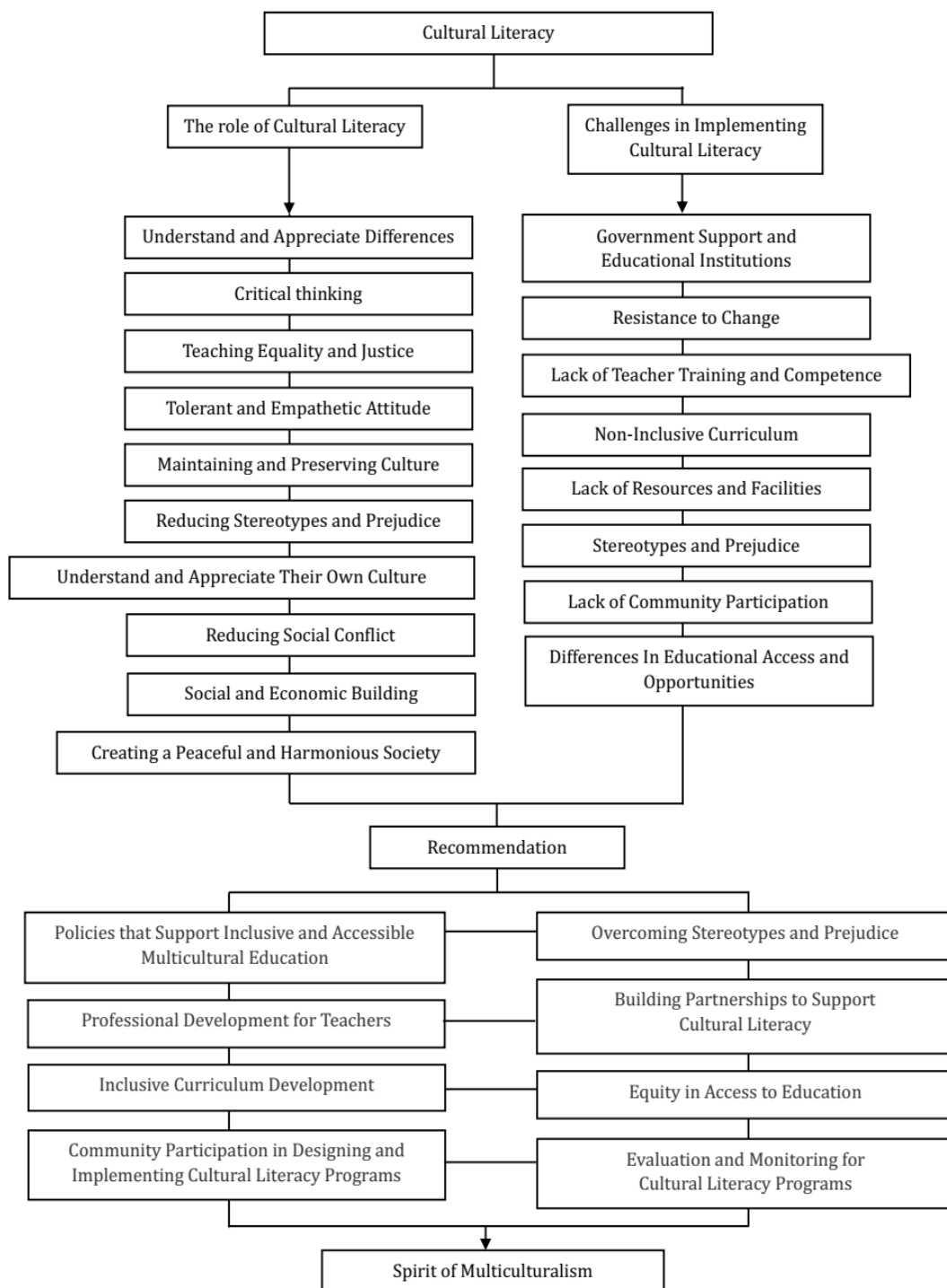
Recent research by Gottschalk & Weise (2023), The World Bank (2020), UNESCO (2023) highlights the importance of equal access to education in increasing

cultural literacy. Prioritizing efforts to narrow education gaps, especially among minority groups and in remote areas, is critical. The government and educational institutions must ensure that every child has the same opportunity to benefit from quality education, including cultural literacy programs.

Effective assessment and monitoring mechanisms are essential for cultural literacy initiatives. Gertler et al. (2011) argue that consistent and thorough evaluation is the key to determining achievements and obstacles in program implementation. The evaluation should involve input from a variety of stakeholders and use a variety of assessment methods such as surveys, interviews, and observations. Through close monitoring, cultural literacy programs can continue to be refined and adapted to meet community needs.

Through these recommendations, it is hoped that cultural literacy can be implemented more effectively in Indonesia, so that the spirit of multiculturalism can continue to be maintained and strengthened. Coordinated and sustained efforts from various parties will ensure that Indonesia's rich cultural diversity can become a source of strength and harmony for all of society.

4. logical framework



Picture
 Logical Framework
 Cultural Literacy and Spirit of Multiculturalism

Conclusion

From the findings of this investigation, it can be concluded that cultural literacy plays an important role in advancing and upholding the essence of multiculturalism in Indonesia. It assists individuals in understanding, appreciating, and engaging with the diverse cultures that exist in society. Through cultural literacy, individuals can improve analytical thinking skills, empathy, and recognition of cultural differences, consequently strengthening social unity and reducing conflict. Having strong cultural literacy allows individuals to embrace and accept diversity, cultivating a constructive and all-encompassing cultural identity.

However, the integration of cultural literacy in Indonesia faces various obstacles, including inadequate policy support and financial resources, reluctance to change, limited capacity, and ingrained stereotypes and biases. To overcome these obstacles, collaborative efforts involving government agencies, educational institutions, the general public, and the business sector are essential. Strong support, appropriate instruction, an all-encompassing syllabus, and active involvement of all elements, are essential in strengthening cultural literacy. As a result, cultural literacy can function as an efficient means of encouraging harmony, societal justice, and sustainable progress in Indonesia's multicultural environment.

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