

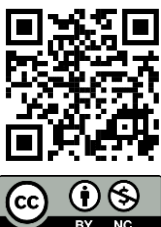
Original ArticleIMPLEMENTATION OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION TO
STRENGTHEN SOCIAL STUDIES LEARNING**Irsan^{1*}, Riyan Maulana²,**¹ Universitas Bina Bangsa Getsempena;² Universitas Alwashliyah Banda Aceh*Corresponding author: irsanbbg@ubbg.ac.id**Abstract**

This research aims to explore the implementation of multicultural education in the education system in Indonesia, as well as its impact on character formation and tolerance among students. In this research, a qualitative approach was used with a case study method in several schools that implemented a multicultural education curriculum. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with teachers, students, as well as analysis of curriculum documents and school activities. The research results show that multicultural education plays an important role in increasing students' understanding of cultural, racial and religious diversity, as well as strengthening attitudes of tolerance and mutual respect between each other. However, challenges in its implementation include a lack of in-depth understanding of the concept of multiculturalism among educators, as well as limited facilities that support optimal implementation of the program. This research suggests the need for more intensive training for teachers and the development of supporting resources in order to create a more inclusive and harmonious educational environment.

Keywords: Multicultural education, tolerance, diversity, character education, Indonesian education system.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has a great diversity of cultures, ethnicities, and religions spread across the islands of Java, Sumatra, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, and finally Papua. The vastness of the islands that Indonesia has is not free from various types of tribes spread across Indonesia, there are 300 recorded ethnic groups and 200 languages spoken. Indonesia itself is a real example of a multicultural country. In diversity displayed in the environment such as traditions, customs, and various traditional ceremonies that are believed by the community to be good values throughout Indonesia. Each regional community has its own uniqueness in terms of culture, ranging from performances, food and homes that add to the multicultural panorama of this nation. This requires effective management in order to unite the country. One of the most essential is multicultural education. Through multicultural education, it can foster a sense of unity amidst differences, as well as encourage tolerance for all existing communities and also forming cooperation between individuals from different backgrounds. (Casram, 2016



Indonesia, with its immense diversity, is highly vulnerable to conflict. These conflicts are often caused by differing understandings and interpretations among communities in agreeing on certain matters. Therefore, multiculturalism exists as a discourse to rekindle harmony and a sense of tolerance for all differences in society. Harmony and tolerance are essential in society to unite all elements of difference, so that these elements of difference can coexist peacefully. A peaceful life, as the goal of multiculturalism, must be accompanied by the implementation of the nation's philosophical values, namely the value of humanity, where humans have limits to receive their rights through the implementation of the rights of others, and recognize that every citizen has the authority to implement rights and obligations. With this, multiculturalism seems to be present in society as an answer to rehabilitate conflicts that occur in plural societies. (Romania, 2016)

Multicultural education is a valuable asset that must be implemented by a country, in building a social foundation for a country that has diversity, one of which is Indonesia. Multicultural education is an important aspect that must be implemented in the education system in the world, to introduce a deep understanding of cultural and societal diversity. Multicultural education needs to be instilled in individuals to enrich knowledge about understanding differences in social status, ethnicity, race, and religion. According to the purpose of instilling it since the education system is to form an intelligent person in dealing with a problem regarding differences between individuals. (Maharani et al., 2024).

In the current era of demographic bonus and accompanied by rapid technological advances, many phenomena trigger friction between individuals and groups, such as those that occur in comedy, soccer, religion, and occur in various x media. This phenomenon causes conflict between individuals and groups. This is very unfortunate, especially in Indonesia, which has the motto "Bhineka Tunggal Ika" which means different but still one. Multicultural education is crucial in the realm of schools to establish harmonious social relations in the community environment. According to (Bintang & Warsono, 2021).

In every event that has been obtained by the author, it can be concluded that multiculturalism in Indonesia seems to be being tested for its patience. One of the conflicts that arose due to multicultural disputes was the case of church burning by community members in the Aceh Singkil area on October 13, 2015. The conflict and the act of burning the church by individuals who called themselves the Youth Concerned about Islam (PPI) in Aceh Singkil was caused by the problem of a Building Permit that was violated by one of the religious groups, namely Christians. The church that was targeted in the conflict was the HKI Gunung Meria Church, one of the churches that was built without community permission in Suka Makmur Village, Aceh Singkil. Etc.

Conflicts that occur are often caused by many different understandings and interpretations between people in agreeing on something. Therefore, multiculturalism is present as a discourse to re-establish harmony and a sense of tolerance for all differences in society. Harmony and tolerance are very necessary in society to unite all elements of difference, so that these elements of difference can live side by side peacefully. Peaceful life as the goal of multiculturalism must be accompanied by the implementation of the nation's philosophical values, namely the value of humanity, where humans have limits to receive their rights through the implementation of the

rights of others, along with recognizing that every citizen has the authority to implement rights and obligations. With this, multiculturalism It seems to be present in society as an answer to rehabilitate conflicts that occur in plural societies (Bintang & Warsono, 2021).

When implementing Multicultural Education in Formal Educational Institutions in Indonesia, there are many limitations that may be experienced. One of them is the implementation of Multicultural Education which aims to reduce negative thoughts about uncontrollable differences in the school environment. (Yani et al., 2020). In the context of Multicultural thinking, according to one of the influential figures in Jombang named Abdul Rahman Wahid or known as Gus Dur, he not only applies classical thinking but also tries to incorporate it with modern thinking. In the context of Islamic religious education, Gus Dur's thinking is static and rejects the concept of alternative education put forward by Paulo Freire which remains political in the context of confrontation with power, so that it tends to rebel against existing power and will automatically lead to retaliation from that power. Therefore, Gus Dur's idea of Multiculturalism deserves to be developed and used as an alternative educational model in Indonesia for various reasons, including:

First, Indonesia is actually a country that has many tribes, nations, religions, with various languages. and brings heterogeneous cultures and diverse traditions and civilizations. *Second*, in the context of pluralism, this has existed since the existence of the Indonesian nation. Third, *because many* people oppose education that emphasizes business, commercialization, and capitalism that favors certain groups or communities, then society also does not want violence and arbitrariness in educational arrangements for the sake of realizing the rights of every person. Fourth, because Multiculturalism education combats fanaticism that leads to various forms of violence and arbitrariness, and provides hope to overcome various social upheavals that have occurred recently. Likewise, Multicultural education is closely related to humanitarian, social, Islamic, and spiritual values.

Multicultural education is an effort to minimize the barriers of diversity in Indonesia's pluralistic society. The multiculturalism taught in Indonesia emphasizes that within the educational environment, everyone involved must be confident in their own culture. The goal of implementing multicultural education is so that everyone with different backgrounds, whether from different customs, cultures, languages, or other backgrounds, can receive equal and fair treatment. (Islam et al., 2017)

At SMPN 1 Diwek, students do not come from just one religion but from several religions, there are Catholic Christians, Muslims and Protestant Christians. So that several times there have been cases of bullying against students who have religions other than Islam, namely Protestant Christians and Catholic Christians, this is caused only because of different religious backgrounds according to one of the teachers at SMPN 1 Diwek. Therefore, Multicultural Education is considered important because it instills the values of differences and diversity as learning for students to assess differences in religion, ethnicity, or race not as a trigger for conflict but as a unifier.

Multicultural learning is closely related to social studies learning. Social studies learning has its own unique characteristics that distinguish it from other learning styles. These characteristics include:

- 1) Social Studies as a Transmission of Civics. This means that social studies learning

also provides examples related to policy elaboration, the nation's noble ideals, and cultural values. Social studies often implements citizenship transitions, such as discussions of competencies related to the history of the nation's struggles and civics education (Hopeman, Hidayah, & Anggraeni, 2022).

- 2) Social Studies as a Social Sciences Education program means that the subject of Social Studies also provides separations at the upper school level, such as the separation of Social Studies subjects into history, sociology, geography, and others (Siska, 2020).
- 3) Social studies as reflective education. John Dewey (in Suleshwari et al., 2021) stated that the school curriculum should facilitate students' needs and interests, thus enabling effective learning environments. Therefore, social studies is expected to provide practical applications relevant to everyday life.
- 4) Social studies as a critique of social life. This means that social studies is expected to develop students' critical thinking to examine societal phenomena that deviate from the norm.
- 5) Social studies as a personal development. Everyone who studies social studies is expected to develop their identity in social skills, so they can become peaceful individuals and become role models in society.

The explanation that has been outlined above, starting from the actual conditions to the factual conditions, raises a problem in the research, namely how multicultural education is implemented in the SMPN 1 Diwek Jombang school institution.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Multicultural education is an educational approach that emphasizes respect for cultural, ethnic, religious, and social diversity in the learning environment. According to Banks (2016), multicultural education focuses not only on recognizing differences but also aims to build social justice and harmony among individuals from diverse backgrounds. In the context of Social Studies (IPS) learning, multicultural education plays a crucial role in instilling national awareness, tolerance, and social empathy in students toward diverse social realities.

Several previous studies have highlighted the relationship between multicultural education and social studies learning. For example, Tilaar (2012) emphasized that multicultural education must be a primary foundation in the national education system so that students can understand Indonesia's diverse social realities. Meanwhile, research by Hidayat (2020) emphasized that a multicultural approach in social studies learning can improve students' critical thinking skills and tolerance. However, most previous studies have focused on conceptual and normative aspects, failing to concretely describe how multicultural education is implemented practically in the classroom, particularly within the context of the social studies curriculum in elementary and secondary schools.

This research aims to fill this research gap by conducting an empirical study of the practical implementation of multicultural education in social studies learning. The research focuses on how teachers design learning strategies, select inclusive materials, and create a learning environment that values diversity. Thus, this study not only describes the importance of multicultural education but also reveals the pedagogical mechanisms and field practices that support the strengthening of multicultural values through social studies.

The novelty of this research lies in its systematic integration of a multicultural approach into social studies learning, taking into account the local social and cultural dynamics of the school. This approach is expected to broaden theoretical understanding while providing practical contributions for social studies teachers in developing contextual, inclusive learning models oriented toward the formation of students' national character amidst the social diversity of Indonesian society.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach based on the core problems contained in the problem formulation. A qualitative approach emphasizes the best understanding in studying the complexity of the social field which includes human interaction, community life, history and culture as well as the relationship between society and the surrounding environment (Setiawan et al. 2024). The method used is phenomenology. The phenomenological method is one of the methods in qualitative research in which researchers investigate phenomena and realities in a region related to regional excellence and local wisdom. In the phenomenological method, the excellence of a region is seen as something that can be developed and utilized for the welfare of society, especially in the field of education. The phenomenological method has unique characteristics where researchers are fully involved and require in-depth data presentation. Therefore, researchers chose the phenomenological method in achieving the objectives of this study. Referring to the description, the researcher is describing the implementation of multiculturalism education implemented through social studies subjects at SMPN 1 Diwek, Jombang. Furthermore, the researcher will also analyze the role of multicultural education development in social studies subjects at SMPN 1 Diwek, Jombang. The general objective of this study is to determine the values of multicultural education as a means of unifying pluralism in Indonesia through the implementation of social studies subjects.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Each lesson will begin as usual, with a prayer to God Almighty for beneficial knowledge. This is done to teach students spiritual values related to the divine, that seeking knowledge is part of worship for every believer, and that they should not forget that they are only ordinary humans who continue to learn from God Almighty. This was explained during the interview by Gs, Gr, Gsp as follows:

- Gs Before learning is carried out, I pray to be given useful knowledge, I always do this habit and then I provide learning objectives.
- Gr Often when I do learning, I don't forget to pray with the children.
- Gsp Just like other teachers, before learning, pray first according to their respective beliefs

From the results of the interview, before starting the lesson, the teachers at SMPN 1 Diwek carried out spiritual activities, namely praying to God Almighty. As is the case in the field, the majority of Muslims do not discriminate against other

religions practiced by several students in the class. This was expressed by one of the students as follows:

- Dad Before the start of the lesson, the teacher always invites students to pray first as usual and does not attack just one religion.
- Pn First, we prayed as usual, led by the teacher. The prayers were according to each person's beliefs, as a form of respect for our non-Muslim friends.
- Pd Yes, sis, we pray before the lesson begins.

The interview results illustrate that there is no discrimination against any one party, but rather that all students receive equal treatment. The next step in learning is to provide appreciation to students in the form of learning motivation. This goal is to encourage students to feel enthusiastic about the learning provided by the teacher. This is captured in the following interview:

Gs: Appreciation is given at the beginning before the learning process begins. It's not without reason that a little appreciation is given, but to provide a certain enthusiasm. This has been explained in the technical guidance to create interesting learning and prevent students from getting bored easily.

Gr: I often provide motivation and appreciation at the beginning, not only that, I also sometimes provide icebreakers in the middle of the lesson. We know that learning is done full day. So, how can a teacher provide motivation and also provide small games for students?

Gsp: I myself am the most senior of several teachers, so as a teacher I often give advice to students about what is happening to teenagers today. If it is about socio-cultural diversity, I give advice either in the middle or at the end regarding differences in ethnicity, culture, religion, the language used, the purpose of all of that I give according to what I get from technical guidance or teacher gatherings and also as a second parent giving advice.

The appreciation, motivation, and advice given by the teachers explained above provide the intent and purpose of creating interesting learning. The school's implementation of a full day makes students feel bored with each lesson. This initial provision encourages students to always be enthusiastic in every social studies lesson.

1. Core activities

Next, we enter the core activities in the main learning process. Core learning activities are a process of providing students with experience and abilities systematically carried out over a certain period of time. Based on observations made on October 24, 2024, the core activities in the Social Studies subject in the independent learning curriculum began as usual, namely repeating the previous lesson or asking generally about what would be taught to students. Next, student representatives were asked to read what had been taught previously so that all students could hear what had been learned previously. After completion, the teacher took over to explain in more detail about what had been learned and before being learned. The material studied was about socio-cultural diversity where

Indonesia has a pluralistic society that is rich in culture, language, and ethnicity spread across various islands. This was expressed by several teachers in interviews and observations below. This

Gs: The next step is to review the material from the previous meeting. As a teacher and facilitator, I give students a chance to explain what they have learned and what conclusions they have drawn. The goal is to ensure they don't forget what they have learned and to continue learning systematically.

Gr: Every time I have a social studies lesson in class, I always review what will be taught to the students. This is done to provide stimulus to the students. Gsp: I often repeat the material, even if only briefly, before moving on to the previous material. Sometimes students forget what they learned previously. Indirectly, I provide stimulation to them.

The explanation given by the teacher above is part of systematic learning. The purpose of repeating and reviewing before learning is so that students feel curious about the next lesson. The method used in this case is in the form of lectures and describing on the blackboard so that students can understand more easily. However, in learning the teacher also uses various media so that students do not get bored easily in learning. He explained that in the social studies learning process, he sometimes uses a projector to display several images about the culture around him and also practices directly to students through cultural performances held during language month. So the media used is more relative and students do not feel bored. As in the interview conducted with students of SMPN 1 Diwek below.

Pl: During lessons, teachers usually use books as learning materials.

Pa: Usually we use books and concept map images that we have made.

Ph: Same as usual, except yesterday there was a cultural exhibition from the class about culture. So projectors and textbooks.

Pj: Yesterday there was a cultural exhibition that was staged, we were asked to observe the culture that was displayed.

Pb: There are also some from the surrounding culture, sis, not only in the classroom.

In interviews conducted with several students, it was stated that the learning used was in the form of PowerPoint presentations, textbooks, and cultural exhibitions held by students at SMPN 1 Diwek. This was also reinforced by the teacher as a facilitator to support the learning process as planned.

The use of local wisdom media is a good choice to introduce students to the diversity of Jombang's local wisdom. Local wisdom can be understood as a collection of wise ideas, full of wisdom, which have existed in the surrounding environment for a long time. This is interpreted as traditions, customs created by the surrounding community. Wisdom can be understood as local ideas full of wisdom, embedded and worthy of being followed by community members. In addition, local wisdom can be used as a way for people to act and behave in solving problems that exist around them. Local wisdom is the initial foundation to bind in the form of existing culture so that its existence is based. Local wisdom can be defined as a work of human creation, through the internalization and interpretation of religious and cultural teachings that are socialized in the

form of norms and used as guidelines in everyday life for society. The above definition provides a view of humans as social beings from part of the universe. who should behave in accordance with existing norms and have good character. The values of local wisdom contained in a social system of society can be internalized, practiced, and taught to the next generation as expressed in the following interview.

Gs: During the lesson I often use power points, books, media made by children such as concept maps made previously. And finally we have a project about local wisdom of Jombang which we will show in the language month which contains about jaran dor, ludruk and several dances originating from Jombang. The use of media that we use to introduce to students is rich in Jombang culture. Students rarely know about it, at most ludruk is known, although in the performance it is not as comprehensive as the initial systematic ceremony before starting, but with the introduction students can learn about culture, how to respond to culture and what actions should be taken in culture and how to introduce it to people who do not know about it. The material on socio - cultural diversity is also repeated again in grade 9 which is different in theme but almost the same in substance so from the results of the performance there are several assignments that I give after the performance. while simultaneously shaping and guiding patterns of daily behavior. Local wisdom- based learning is highly influential in social studies learning, especially in the material on socio- cultural diversity, where the use or display of cultural forms is very efficient in supporting teaching and learning activities.

Conclusion

Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted with several social studies teachers at SMPN 1 Diwek on October 23, 2024, it can be concluded that the implementation of closing learning activities has been carried out systematically and in accordance with the learning process standards regulated in Permendikbud No. 13 of 2014. The closing learning stage not only functions as the end of a session, but also becomes an integral part in strengthening students' understanding of the material that has been studied.

The interviewed teachers demonstrated consistency in implementing end-of-session reflections, whether through collective conclusion-drawing activities, individual or group assignments, or reflective discussions on the material presented. These practices demonstrate a sound pedagogical understanding of managing the final phase of learning as a means to strengthen memory, enhance conceptual understanding, and build active student engagement. Furthermore, some teachers also integrated early-learning review activities by asking about previous material, which indirectly functioned as *advance organizers* to connect prior knowledge with new concepts to be learned.

These findings indicate that teachers not only carry out closing activities as an administrative routine, but also utilize them as a reflective pedagogical strategy to strengthen student learning. Thus, closing activities serve a dual function: as a form of feedback *on* learning outcomes and as a formative evaluation tool for teachers to plan future learning steps, including remedial, enrichment, or academic counseling.

Scientifically, it can be concluded that the implementation of closing activities at SMPN 1 Diwek has integrated the principles of *reflective teaching* and *learner-centered learning*, where teachers act as facilitators who help students build understanding independently and continuously. This finding strengthens the constructivist learning theory that the process of reflection and drawing conclusions at the end of learning is key to the formation of meaningful and sustainable knowledge.

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