



THE IMPORTANCE OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN DEALING WITH STUDENT DIVERSITY

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Abstract

Indonesia is a pluralistic country that is faced with challenges in social life. One of the social problems that often occurs in Indonesia is conflict between individuals or groups in the name of community, ethnic and cultural organizations, one of which is caused by intolerance. So, an educational approach is needed that aims to prevent conflict from an early age. Multicultural education is an educational approach that is oriented towards developing human potential to develop an attitude of respect for various kinds of diversity. This study is a literature review which aims to produce an analytical description of multicultural education in conceptual aspects, the internalization of multicultural education in elementary schools, and the role of multicultural education in efforts to prevent conflict from an early age in elementary schools. Data collection was carried out by searching for articles according to the topic using the Publish or Perish application. The results of this study show that the concept of multicultural education is the process of teaching an attitude of acceptance of diversity; Multicultural education in schools can be carried out with integration in all types of subjects; multicultural education plays a role in efforts to prevent conflict from an early age which can be realized in respecting the differences and diversity of students' backgrounds, social status, beliefs, and ethnicity, culture

Keywords : Multicultural education, conflict prevention, elementary school

Introduction

As the most populous country, Indonesia can be said to be one of the largest multicultural countries in the world with differences in ethnicity, culture and language, gender, diversity of beliefs, as well as economic and social conditions (Suryana, 2015). In this pluralistic situation, it is deemed necessary to develop a tolerant attitude towards elementary school children who are still new to diversity and social situations. Appreciative behavior can be formed and created in diversity so as to create comfort and peace in social life (Farikhatin et al., 2016). Thus, increasing attitudes of respect and acceptance among students can help in realizing a harmonious and harmonious multicultural society. The social diversity of Indonesian society can be viewed from at least two sides, namely the first based on regional differences, ethnicity, customs, religion, and the second based on the level of welfare of the upper and lower levels of society (Nasikun, 2017). The diversity of the Indonesian people can be a strength, a source of wealth and pride, but it can be a challenge. Indonesia's multiculturalism is like a knife with two edges. Even though multiculturalism has the potential to build national civilization, if it is not controlled properly, it can cause various conflicts which can threaten the erosion of unity and unity in national and state life, even the disintegration of the nation. One of the best ways to appreciate the diversity of Indonesian society is to look at two distinct characteristics. The first shows social units formed by ethnic, religious, customary and regional differences, and the second shows sharp vertical differences between the upper and lower levels of society. These differences can be a liability or an asset depending on how they are fostered. With the motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, the

nation's founders hoped that all Indonesian people could live side by side in safety, peace and prosperity. Therefore, it is the duty of educational institutions to strengthen mutual respect for differences so that conflicts do not occur. Amirin (2012) said that there are three essential principles that can be applied in developing multicultural education, namely by integrating learning discussion methods in small groups. Furthermore, with information sensitivity, especially related to issues of multicultural society, because it includes issues of ethnicity, culture and religion, democracy and pluralism, universal humanity and other relevant issues. Lastly, namely a paradigm shift by instilling a sense of mutual respect, sincerity and tolerance for cultural diversity in society by strengthening a spiritual foundation that is sensitive to socio-religious issues. With this background, it can be said that multicultural education in schools, especially in elementary schools, is an urgent effort to prevent conflict from an early age. The purpose of this article is to explain how urgent multicultural education is and how it is implemented in educational institutions (primary schools). This research is a descriptive analysis and is linked to expert opinions about multicultural education in efforts to internalize tolerance, which is then analyzed to find the urgency of multicultural education.

Research Methodology

This research is library research that uses documentation study data collection methods. In library research (Loe, 2017), these stages are 1) introduction, 2) body, 3) conclusion. The source of the research material obtained is based on a review of relevant literature such as scientific articles, books or magazines related to the chosen subject. Data collection is carried out based on a topic or variable in the form of articles, journals, notes, books, etc. (Santosa, 2015). The data analysis used is content analysis. Repeated literature reading and cross-library reviews were carried out to properly assess research results and minimize errors due to researcher incompetence (to avoid misunderstandings when communicating information). Reporting of this research will be carried out by summarizing the results with the principle of simplicity but remaining focused on the study. This is because the researchers' abilities are limited and they cannot carry out a more in-depth and detailed literature review. Apart from that, the simplicity of presenting the results makes it easier for readers to understand the main content of the urgency of multicultural education in elementary schools.

Result & Discussion

Multicultural Education Concept

Multicultural education is understood as a renewal movement to produce the same learning environment and facilities for all students. As a reform movement, the wider community's view of multicultural education is still unfamiliar, and even interpretations of the understanding and meaning of multicultural education are still debated among professional educators. Multiculturalism is a concept and implementation that is not fully understood by all members of society. Each person is born into different conditions than others, brings with them different physical and psychological characteristics, and also has different beliefs that are not yet fully accepted by society's collective mindset. Indonesia's multicultural society can be seen from the diversity of customs, tribes, cultures, and differences in race and religion. This diversity is a challenge in efforts to maintain the unity and integrity of Indonesian society living in diversity. These efforts can be made through learning in schools, especially in elementary schools, to instill in students about diversity. Therefore, a teacher has an obligation to introduce the diversity of the Indonesian nation to students. Teachers can guide students in an effort to exemplify the attitudes that must be shown and carried out in response to the diversity around them. So, teachers need to understand the concept of multicultural education as an insight that must be understood to be transformed in students. The existence of multicultural education in Indonesia is very important as an alternative for resolving conflict. Multicultural education is very important to reduce conflict. With multicultural education, there is great hope that students will not forget the history and cultural roots of their nation. This is appropriate for countries that adhere to a democratic system like Indonesia today. So, students will not be influenced by the culture of other nations and preserve the personality of the Indonesian nation even though they face globalization. In essence, through multicultural education it is hoped that it can help the Indonesian people become a multicultural society, which is able to live side by side with each other in harmony and harmony with the various differences they face in life every day. The results of the literature review state that multicultural education is interpreted simply as education that teaches about diversity, both cultural diversity and other diversity. More broadly, multicultural education is interpreted as education that teaches an emphasis on respecting and respecting differences (diversity) in aspects of culture, religion, ethnicity, background and economic status (Baidhawi, 2015; Adhani, 2014). Multicultural education is a strategy in the learning process to appreciate differences and further how to respond to differences in

everyday life. In addition, through multicultural education it is hoped that it can become a bridge between differences so that inequalities between various social groups in society will disappear (Yaqin, 2005; Shen, 2019). So it is important to implement multicultural education to shape students' social attitudes, which can be done through learning activities by utilizing diversity in everyday interactions without looking at differences, whether differences in race, physical condition, culture, gender or social status of each student (Pratiwi, Masfiah, & Rondli, 2018).

According to J. Bank quoted by Cahyono & Iswati (2017), multicultural education is understood in three ways: from a conceptual perspective as the idea that all students, regardless of gender and social class, ethnicity, race and/or other cultural characteristics, have the opportunity the same for studying in class. From a movement perspective, multicultural education is an effort to transform schools and educational institutions so that students from all levels of society, gender, race and culture have equal learning opportunities. The changes made are not only limited to the curriculum, but also to other aspects such as methods, strategies, learning management and the school environment. Judging from the process, multicultural education can be understood as a process that aims to achieve goals in such a way that educational equality can be achieved by all students. Equality in education, like freedom and justice, is not easy to achieve, so this process must continue. There are at least three views of understanding multicultural education according to J. Banks (2019). First, multicultural education is defined as a philosophical concept of education that is based on humanitarian principles such as freedom, justice, equality, rights to property and dignity. Second, multicultural education is an educational process that involves all aspects of school operations, laws and institutions, and functions as a tool to ensure that students can achieve both academically and non-academically. Third, multicultural education is an educational model that strengthens the idea that students play an important role in the learning and teaching process by considering the life context and background of students. The results of the study regarding the understanding of multicultural education are in accordance with the understanding of multicultural education based on Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. The National Education System Law provides the main definition of multicultural education in Indonesia. According to this law, education is a conscious and planned effort to create an atmosphere and learning process that allows students to actively develop their potential to have religious spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character and the necessary skills. for themselves, society, nation and state. Apart from that, multicultural is an adjective term that describes the condition of (multi) cultural diversity in the form of culture, tradition, politeness, or maintenance. Starting from that, the definition of multicultural education is very important. Based on this, the concept of multicultural education can be understood as the importance of appreciating and respecting differences (diversity) in terms of culture, beliefs, customs, etc. The concept of multicultural education is very important for teachers to understand as the spearhead of education in Indonesia. This is intended so that teachers can instill an attitude of respect for difference and diversity in students from an early age in elementary school to implement tolerance in diversity and prevent conflict through multicultural education. Thus, multicultural education is understood broadly and comprehensively which includes integrating awareness of cultural diversity in subjects, understanding the implications of integration results, adapting learning methods, identifying students and their teaching method needs, and practicing and participating in their differences throughout the participants' learning process. educate.

Multicultural Education in Elementary Schools

Research conducted by Retnasari in (Latifah, 2018) presented the results of the implementation of a multicultural education program by building an understanding of diversity in the school environment in an inclusive diversity paradigm, in an internal program for social science subjects based on multiculturalism, in a coeducational program. And in school subjects. This shows that the multicultural education program is implemented through integration in lessons. In teaching activities, multicultural education must also be provided in classrooms and schools, as well as strengthening students' and teachers' critical awareness of current events (Au, 2017). This process can foster positive values for students. Students and teachers have roles (Kiom, 2017) as class leaders, demonstrators, mediators and evaluators, while students are the subjects of multicultural education. Multicultural education programs are more successfully taught by teachers who have previous experience (Jun, 2016). Multicultural education has several benefits, including preventing radicalization in the era of globalization (Latifah, 2018). The essential aim of multicultural education is for the younger generation to reduce inter-group conflict (SARA) which is usually a radical movement that is common in Indonesia. The ability to be a role model who accepts diversity with full tolerance defines the teacher's role as an educator, who must balance having a holistic understanding of multicultural concepts. This can be demonstrated by an attitude of mutual tolerance,

respect and sincerity towards the diversity of Indonesian society. Therefore, differences in race, customs and religion cannot be an opening for radical movements. Peter, R., & Simatupang, MS (2022) multicultural education can come from getting used to not acting and thinking differently, understanding and respecting other people's ideas, prioritizing equality and a sense of equality and social justice. Lisa's research (Retnasari & Hidayat, 2018) adds an additional approach strategy, where teachers are involved in integrating multicultural values in learning in elementary schools. This can be achieved by implementing multicultural training. There are several aspects involved in transforming multicultural education, namely getting students used to not treating others in a discriminatory manner and understanding and respecting other people's opinions. Education services are a dynamic space where schools are a place to exchange thoughts and opinions, avoiding deviations such as racism or ideas that cannot be used as a feeling of tolerance. Stimulating sympathy and empathy to build culture is a form of respect for others that is in line with the culture of the people of each region. Additionally, we can promote a sense of equality and social justice by providing equal opportunities in schools for all cultures, ethnicities and religions.

Conclusion

Multicultural education can be defined as the importance of appreciating and respecting differences (diversity) in terms of culture, beliefs, customs, etc. It is very important for teachers to understand the concept of multicultural education as the spearhead of education in Indonesia so that teachers can instill an attitude of respect for difference and diversity in students from an early age in elementary school in implementing tolerance for diversity and preventing conflict through multicultural education which can be done by getting students accustomed to not treat other people in a discriminatory manner and understand and respect other people's opinions. Thus, the teacher's role as a teacher is one of the keys to success in multicultural education because students can easily imitate examples and behavior according to the teacher's actions, which is in line with the development of teacher professionalism through multicultural education.

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