

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION BUILDS TOLERANCE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Multicultural education is an important educational approach for preparing students to understand, appreciate, and respond positively to diversity within society. This study examines the role of multicultural education in fostering tolerant attitudes and strengthening students' character at the elementary school level. In a culturally, ethnically, religiously, and socially diverse country such as Indonesia, the development of tolerance from an early age is essential for preventing prejudice, discrimination, and social conflict. Through multicultural education, students are encouraged to recognize and respect differences in ethnicity, religion, culture, language, traditions, and social backgrounds while developing an understanding of equality and mutual respect. Teachers play a significant role in implementing these values by creating an inclusive, democratic, safe, and supportive learning environment in which every student has equal opportunities to participate and express their perspectives. The implementation of multicultural values can be integrated into curriculum content, classroom activities, cooperative learning, school traditions, and students' daily interactions. This study also identifies several factors that support and hinder the development of tolerant attitudes among elementary school students. Supporting factors include curriculum integration, teacher commitment and competence, inclusive school culture, learning resources, and family involvement. Meanwhile, limited teacher understanding, inadequate learning resources, differences in family backgrounds, and the persistence of stereotypes and prejudice may become challenges in implementation. The study concludes that effective multicultural education can contribute to the development of students who demonstrate tolerance, empathy, respect, openness, and responsibility toward others. Therefore, strengthening multicultural education at the elementary school level is essential for developing a generation capable of living harmoniously and constructively within a diverse society.

Keywords: Multicultural Education, Tolerance, Elementary School, Diversity, Student Character

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A. INTRODUCTION

Multicultural education is a new approach in education that aims to teach students to appreciate similarities and differences with others. Through this education, students' character is formed to be able to understand cultural diversity both in the school environment and outside of school. Tolerance is a major component in multicultural education because it helps increase awareness of diversity in society and nation (Erviana & Fatmawati, 2018: 298). Ainul (Puspita, 2018: 286) stated that multicultural education is a strategy applied in various subjects by using differences such as ethnicity, religion, language, gender, social class, race, ability, and age to facilitate the learning process. This education aims to provide equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their ethnicity, culture, or religion.

The implementation of multicultural education and education at the elementary school level is expected to be able to shape the character of students so that they can accept, appreciate, and respect various forms of differences, as well as avoid discrimination in the diversity of society. Both education emphasizes the value of togetherness, with the aim of building a harmonious life and interaction between individuals. Given the importance of this aspect, both topics are very relevant in the field of education. Therefore, the researcher

assesses the need to create a learning environment that is safe, inclusive, and respectful of diversity. Multicultural education applied in schools reflects the values of diversity that form an attitude of tolerance, thereby encouraging students to understand, appreciate, and accept cultural, ethnic, and religious differences in the school environment (Ananda, 2021: 22). Thus, multicultural education can be concluded as the diversity that exists in society, including ethnicity, culture, customs, religion, race, and others.

Tolerance is a character that can support the creation of harmony. A form of tolerance is a behavior that respects differences in ethnicity, religion, race, language, religious group, gender, and even differences of opinion. Tolerance in elementary school fosters an attitude of mutual respect and respect among every student. Tolerance also improves the social situation of elementary school students because of the presence of diversity. In elementary school, tolerance is very important. Tolerance is important for learners because it allows them to learn to respect each other's opinions and actions and recognize the differences between what is valued by learners, educators, and the rest of society. (Mujiyanto, , 2020). Instilling a tolerant attitude at the elementary school level can be achieved through multicultural education in elementary schools. Multicultural education is an education that includes elements that guide, shape, and condition learners to develop minds and personalities adapted to life in the midst of ethnic, linguistic, socioeconomic, and gender differences. All of these things can happen because of the important role of educators. To fulfill the duties and responsibilities in primary school, it can be achieved by introducing multicultural learning in primary schools.

Tolerance is an attitude that supports the development of harmony in society. Tolerance is defined as the act of respecting differences in ethnicity, religion, race, language, religious organization, gender, and views. At the elementary school level, tolerance encourages students to respect each other and interact well with each other. Tolerance is essential in this context because it helps students understand and appreciate the views and actions of their peers, as well as the differences between students, teachers, and the wider community (Mujiyanto, 2020). Multicultural education in elementary schools plays a role in fostering tolerance.

Tolerance is an approach applied to create peace. This is a trait possessed by individuals to appreciate differences (Sulistiyowati Gandariyah, 2020). Tolerance does not just appear; One way to instill it is through education. Education is a conscious effort to develop a personality that is in accordance with cultural values and life in society (Hamdan Hasbiuan, 2020). Just like society, the school environment also has a wide range of ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious diversity belonging to the students, which contributes to the formation of their personalities through the learning process provided by the teachers.

B. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Indonesia is one of the largest multicultural countries in the world, with vast geographical and socio-cultural diversity. Multicultural education is recognized as an important strategy for building national identity by instilling mutual respect, tolerance, and understanding of cultural, religious, and ethnic differences. This education aims to provide

equal opportunities for all students regardless of their background, so that they can develop their potential optimally.

Multicultural education includes methods and approaches that integrate cultural differences in the learning process. These methods include contribution, enrichment, transformative, and social decision-making. In addition, there are various approaches such as historical, sociological, cultural, psychological, aesthetic, and gender perspectives that all aim to form multicultural consciousness.

Multicultural education in Indonesia must be flexible, integrate local contexts, and aim to form students who value diversity, democracy, and human rights. This is important in building an inclusive, equitable, and peaceful society.

In elementary school, learners begin to learn about the similarities and differences between themselves and others. Learners wonder if their view of the world is different from others because of this awareness. Therefore, it is important to understand that everyone is different and practice appreciating those differences. Elementary schools must increase tolerance so that students can learn to appreciate and respect differences in religion, race, ethnicity, culture, language, and class. The belief that a person is diverse and has traits such as fairness, social, tolerant, and caring increases his empathy for others. Understanding diversity in all its forms can help learners work together and complement their strengths and weaknesses. Diversity is also becoming more recognized and accepted.

Indonesia is a multiculturally diverse society, consisting of various groups that acculturate each other and respect pluralism as a form of cultural diversity that must be preserved. This diversity is reflected in the existence of ethnic groups with their own ways of life and culture, so that they show differences, but live together in one Indonesian society. Examples of cultural tolerance include fostering a sense of love for cultures in Indonesia, respecting the differences in customs around us, learning about Indonesian cultures, and making friends without distinction between ethnicity, race, or culture. This tolerance is closely related to the acceptance of people from different ethnic backgrounds.

Educators have an important role as facilitators who help students learn as well as develop their individuality. Instilling tolerance values in early childhood must be done in an appropriate and effective way so that these goals are achieved (Rahayu & Fitriyah, 2020). Educators are responsible for instilling the value of tolerance in their students. There are five steps in the implementation of tolerant character education in the classroom. First, analyze basic abilities by identifying character values in teaching materials. Second, develop a learning implementation plan that focuses on content related to tolerance. Third, monitor learning based on the material that has been learned. Fourth, conducting an assessment process, and finally evaluating learning outcomes to find out how well students understand the material being taught. (Politics and 2013, 2021) Civic Education also has an important role in this context, as it aims to educate different individuals in aspects such as religion, language, age, and society. This effort is important to form intelligent, competent, and dignified human beings in accordance with Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution.

To develop tolerance, there are three programs that can be implemented, including: (a) organizing art exhibitions that display various cultures. (b) Providing assistance to the poor regardless of race or religion. (c) To hold a National Day celebration that introduces

culture based on nationality and cultural diversity. (d) Creating a communication book that aims to convey messages to parents of students at home. The contents of this book include an important guide for parents and students, with the aim of building student character. Teachers are in charge of instilling these values in school, while parents continue them at home.

The points of reflection on the character of tolerance include the following principles: the purpose of tolerance is to create peace, tolerance is openness and appreciation of differences, respect for individuals and their uniqueness, mutual respect for each other, and love as the basis of tolerance, while fear and indifference are the source of intolerance. Tolerance also means facing difficult situations and enduring discomfort with a lighthearted attitude and letting others be what they are.

In order to improve character such as honesty, tolerance, and peace-loving in early childhood, multicultural education-based learning can be used. Culture or culture influences the way individuals think, feel, and act, not only based on ethnicity or race, but also economic conditions and social background. Multiculturalism recognizes cultural diversity and serves as a guideline for human life

Factors Influencing the Development of Tolerance Attitudes of Elementary School Students to Diversity in Indonesia

In developing an attitude of tolerance towards diversity, there are many factors that affect it, such as the family environment, the community environment, and the school environment. The family environment is a major factor in the development of tolerance attitudes, where parents have a great responsibility to guide the child in this regard. Parents are the closest individuals to the child, and at home, they become a source of norms and values. Therefore, parents should set an example and show a good and correct attitude of tolerance, such as respecting and respecting religious and cultural differences. Parents also need to be involved in guiding their children, not leaving the task entirely to the school. Leaving the responsibility entirely to the school is a big mistake, since the main and most important factor in the development of tolerance attitudes is the family.

In addition to family environmental factors, community environmental factors are also very influential in developing tolerance for diversity. The community environment has a big role in shaping a person's character and mindset, including in terms of tolerance towards religious and cultural differences in society, such as the ability to accept and appreciate these differences. Therefore, choosing a good environment is very important, because a positive environment will make a good impact and form a tolerant character of religious and cultural differences. On the contrary, an environment with negative influences should be avoided as it can damage the good character that a person has.

In addition to family and community environmental factors, the school environment also plays an important role in developing tolerance towards diversity. Schools have a great influence on the mindset of students, especially in forming an attitude of tolerance.

Today, almost all schools use the 2013 Curriculum, which applies a character-based scientific approach. This means that the 2013 Curriculum integrates character education in the learning process, including tolerance towards religious and cultural diversity. This

attitude is taught in elementary school through social studies (Social Sciences) subjects contained in students' thematic books. Through learning about diversity in Indonesia, students can understand diversity and learn to apply tolerance, such as respecting religious, ethnic, and cultural differences in the school environment.

Supporting Factors for the Implementation of Tolerance Through Multicultural Education

1. **Support from the Educational Curriculum:** A curriculum that integrates multicultural education can help students understand the values of tolerance and diversity. Materials that reflect cultural diversity and tolerance values will make it easier for students to learn to appreciate differences.
2. **Commitment of Educators:** Teachers play the role of main facilitators in multicultural education. Teachers who understand the importance of tolerance and diversity and are committed to implementing it in the classroom will create an inclusive and respectful atmosphere.
3. **Inclusive School Environment:** A school environment that supports diversity will strengthen the practice of tolerance. Schools that provide space for students to express and appreciate different cultural, religious, or ethnic backgrounds can help students feel accepted and valued.
4. **Family Role:** Tolerance education is not only the responsibility of the school, but also the family. Families that teach the values of tolerance from an early age will form a child's personality that is open and respectful of differences, which will be strengthened through multicultural education in schools.
5. **Government Policy Support:** Government policies that encourage multicultural education, such as anti-discrimination and character-building programs, strongly support the implementation of tolerance in schools. This regulatory support provides a strong foundation for schools to implement multicultural education programs.
6. **Extracurricular Activities That Respect Diversity:** Extracurricular activities such as cultural days, art exhibitions, or interregional student exchanges can be a medium to build awareness of cultural diversity and foster mutual respect among students.
7. **Collaboration with Local Communities:** Engaging local communities representing different cultural backgrounds in school activities also helps students understand the perspectives of other cultures. This could be through cultural visits, panel discussions with community leaders, or participation in cultural events.
8. **Use of Media and Technology That Supports Multicultural Education:** Learning media such as videos, movies, books, or apps that portray cultural diversity in a positive way can help students get to know and understand other cultures in an interactive and engaging way.

Factors Inhibiting the Implementation of Tolerance Through Multicultural Education

1. **Lack of Teacher Understanding and Skills of Multicultural Education:** Many teachers do not have an adequate understanding of the concept of multicultural education and how

to apply it. This is due to the lack of training or resources that support teachers in teaching tolerance and diversity.

2. **Limitations of an Integrated Curriculum:** An educational curriculum that is less flexible or does not fully integrate multicultural values can be an obstacle to implementing an attitude of tolerance. If the curriculum only focuses on academic aspects without including the value of diversity, the implementation of tolerance is difficult to implement effectively.
3. **Social Stigma and Stereotypes:** Students often grow up in societies that have certain stigmas and stereotypes towards certain groups. This stigma can carry over to school, making it difficult for students to accept differences and have prejudices against other groups.
4. **Lack of Support from Family and Environment:** The family and environment in which students live have a huge influence on their attitudes. If families or environments lack respect for diversity, students may find it difficult to develop an attitude of tolerance, even if schools try hard to teach it.
5. **Social and Economic Differences Among Students:** Economic and social inequality between students can be an inhibiting factor in building an attitude of tolerance. Students who come from different socio-economic backgrounds may feel uncomfortable with each other, thus hindering efforts to appreciate differences.
6. **Limited School Funds and Facilities:** The implementation of multicultural education requires adequate resources and facilities, for example for cultural celebration activities or additional learning materials. Schools with limited funding may struggle to provide such facilities, which impacts the effectiveness of the implementation of tolerance education.
7. **Lack of Government Role in Supporting Multicultural Education:** Lack of strong policy support from the government in encouraging multicultural education can hinder the implementation of tolerance. Without encouraging regulations, it is difficult for schools to prioritize multicultural education in teaching and learning activities.
8. **Influence of Unpositive Media:** Media, especially social media, can influence students' perceptions of diversity. If the media often presents conflicting issues related to religious or cultural differences, students can be influenced to think negatively about other groups, which in turn fosters intolerance.

Attitude Cultivation

Tolerance in elementary schools can be done through multicultural education in elementary schools. Multicultural education is an education that has elements of guiding, forming, and conditioning students to have a mental and personality to get used to living in the midst of differences in both ethnicity, language, socio-economic, and gender differences. All of these things can happen with the important role of teachers. In order to achieve the tasks and responsibilities in elementary schools, the way that can be done is to implement multicultural-based learning in elementary schools.

Multiculturalism teaches students to respect each other, respect, and accept the diversity of cultures, religions, and social backgrounds found in society. by being given a

deep understanding. Students can develop an inclusive attitude, respect each other's differences so as to create a harmonious environment in a multicultural society.

Instilling multicultural values and tolerance in the school environment and community environment is one of the important roles of an educator. Educators have demands to be someone who can be admired and imitated by all students, both in terms of the way of speaking, the way of thinking, and even the way of behaving (Seknun, 2012).

C. CONCLUSION

Indonesia is a multicultural country with a wide diversity of cultures, religions, and ethnicities. Multicultural education is an important strategy to form an inclusive national identity, by instilling an attitude of tolerance and respect for differences. The goal of this education is to provide equal opportunities for all students to develop their potential without discrimination. Multicultural education methods include cultural integration in learning, historical, sociological, cultural, and gender perspectives, aiming to build awareness of diversity.

At the elementary school level, students learn to recognize and appreciate differences. Teachers play the role of facilitators who instill the value of tolerance, while parents continue character education at home. Citizenship Education also forms individuals who value diversity, according to the values of Pancasila. Tolerance programs, such as cultural arts exhibitions and National Day celebrations, help strengthen the multicultural spirit. The values of tolerance include the principles of peace, openness, and respect for the uniqueness of each individual, as well as multiculturalism-based learning that recognizes diversity as a guide to an inclusive and peaceful society.

The development of tolerance attitudes of elementary school students towards diversity in Indonesia is influenced by the family, community, and school environment. The family environment is the main factor, where parents are responsible for setting an example of tolerant attitudes by respecting religious and cultural differences, because the family is the foundation for instilling the value of tolerance. On the other hand, the community environment also plays a big role in shaping children's mindset towards diversity, where a positive environment can foster an attitude of tolerance, while negative influences can hinder good character. The school environment supports an attitude of tolerance through the 2013 Curriculum which emphasizes character education, especially through subjects such as social studies, which teaches students to understand and appreciate the diversity of religions, ethnicities, and cultures in Indonesia.

The implementation of tolerance through multicultural education is supported by an inclusive curriculum that teaches diversity, a teacher's commitment as a facilitator, and a school environment that respects differences. Family also plays an important role in instilling the value of tolerance from an early age. Government policy support and extracurricular activities that celebrate diversity also strengthen student understanding. In addition, collaboration with local communities and the use of media and technology that portray diversity in a positive light help students understand and appreciate cultural differences.

The implementation of tolerance through multicultural education is constrained by various factors. Many teachers still do not understand the concept of multiculturalism and how to apply it due to the lack of training. A curriculum that is less integrated with multicultural values is also an obstacle, especially if it only focuses on academic aspects. In addition, social stigma and stereotypes in society can influence students to have a negative view of other groups. The lack of family and environmental support in respecting diversity also makes it difficult to develop tolerance in students. Socio-economic differences among students can cause discomfort, hindering the acceptance of differences. Limited funds and facilities in schools add challenges in the implementation of multicultural education, especially for cultural activities. Weak government policy support complicates the priorities of multicultural education, and the negative influence of the media, especially social, can add to prejudice against diversity.

Instilling an attitude of tolerance in elementary schools can be done through multicultural education that guides students to live in harmony in the midst of differences, both in ethnicity, language, socio-economic, and gender. The role of teachers is very important in shaping students' mentality and personality so that they are used to appreciating and accepting diversity. Through multicultural-based learning, students are taught to respect the differences in culture, religion, and social backgrounds that exist in society. Teachers act as role models for students, showing attitudes and behaviors that support the creation of an inclusive and harmonious environment in a multicultural society.

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