

Dynamics of Multiculturalism in Indonesian Elementary Schools in the Global Landscape

Luqman Azhary^{*1}, Wasino Wasino², Eko Handoyo²

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Salatiga, Salatiga, Indonesia

²Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: luqmanazhary199@iainsalatiga.ac.id

Abstract. This study aims to explore the dynamics of multicultural education at SD Mataram Semarang in a global context. The background of this study is based on the increasing need to teach multicultural values in dealing with complex social situations in a diverse society such as Indonesia. The methodology used in the study consisted of observation, interviews with teachers and students, and analysis of documentation related to extracurricular activities. The results of the observations showed that SD Mataram has various extracurricular programs that integrate local and national cultures, which contribute to increasing students' understanding and appreciation of cultural differences. The results of the interviews indicated that teachers were very enthusiastic about implementing multicultural education despite facing several challenges, such as lack of adequate training. Documentation from school activities, such as cultural festivals and club activities, showed active participation of students in celebrating diversity. The important findings of this study emphasize the role of multicultural education as an effort to shape more tolerant and inclusive characters among students. This study is expected to contribute not only to educational policies at the local school of SD Mataram, but also to the practice of multicultural education more broadly in Indonesia and globally.

Keywords: multiculturalism; dynamics; global landscape

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is an archipelago consisting of more than 17,000 islands with extraordinary cultural diversity. Indonesia includes around 300 ethnic groups and more than 700 languages. Multiculturalism in this country is expressed by the motto "Bhineka Tunggal Ika" which means "different but still one." However, with such differences, there are challenges. Dynamic socio-economic and political factors trigger tensions and conflicts between cultural groups. Therefore, harmonious interactions are needed which must be built through education at the elementary school level to create understanding among students (Supriatin: 2017). Therefore, multicultural education should not be considered as an additional curriculum but rather a core need for sustainability and social harmony.

The strength and beauty of the Indonesian nation lies in its diversity, which on the other hand presents its own challenges for the education system, especially elementary education. Elementary schools are responsible for building students' character and identity. Therefore, elementary schools must be prioritized in implementing multicultural education so that the values of tolerance, respect for differences, and inclusive attitudes can be instilled in students

(Arfa & Lasaiba: 2022). Multicultural education can involve fostering respect and cultural harmony among students themselves (Elhefni & Wahyudi: 2017)

Multicultural education in Indonesia has gone through a very long journey with various influences of social, political, and cultural dynamics that this country has. Since the formulation of independence, efforts to understand and accept diversity have become a very integral part of national education. The concept of multicultural education was only seen explicitly in 2000 when the government integrated it into the Law on the National Education System, which emphasized the provision of a curriculum to educate national insight and intercultural understanding (Utari :2023). Here, multicultural education can be seen not only as pedagogy but also a strategic way to achieve a harmonious society amidst ethnic and cultural pluralism

Pendidikan multikultural juga dikembangkan di Indonesia, sejalan dengan aspirasi dunia regarding social justice and human rights. In addition to Indonesia, many other countries also implement inclusive education as stated and emphasized by several international organizations such as UNESCO (Haq : 2023). This means that multicultural education can be a tool that helps build bridges of understanding between diverse

groups in society, reduce stereotypes, and foster respect and tolerance for each other (Marzuki : 2020).

Multicultural education in Indonesia also grows in diverse academic environments, such as Islamic boarding schools. As conventional Islamic educational institutions, Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia have taken steps to incorporate multicultural values into their curriculum. To produce a society that understands Islamic teachings alone, but also respects the diversity of other religions and lives in harmony with all groups in society (Hoon: 2013). This illustrates that multicultural education is a concept that is not only limited to the public school system, but extends to various domains of non-formal education.

In the world of education, the implementation of multicultural education in elementary schools is very important in preparing students to adapt to the rapidly growing diversity. A curriculum that instills respect and knowledge of differences not only teaches students the concept of diversity but also trains them to become future leaders who will embrace inclusion and therefore value differences (Windayani: 2024). However, most schools in Indonesia implement education through a homogeneous approach; that is, cultural diversity does not receive much attention. This poses real difficulties for educators and education policy makers (Latifah: 2021)

The implementation of multicultural education in Indonesian elementary schools will not be free from various challenges. This happens because most teachers do not fully understand the concept and practice of multicultural education, so they are less able to teach diversity to students (Asmuri: 2017). In addition, the existing curriculum is also still less responsive in facilitating an understanding of cultural pluralism and values. In this optimistic change and globalization, serious concerns arise, students struggle with various issues related to tolerance, discrimination, and self-identification dilemmas (Dalimunthe: 2023). The lack of resources and support from parents and the community can also be an obstacle to the implementation of effective multicultural education at the elementary school level (Fajrussalam : 2020).

The development of technology and access to global information have also had an impact on the dynamics of Indonesia's multiculturalism. Globalization provides a lot of understanding and intercultural experience, but it can also lead to the erosion of local values (Windayani: 2024). In this

case, multicultural education is a vehicle that combines global knowledge with local wisdom so that students learn to appreciate both. The application of an inclusive education model based on cultural diversity in elementary schools is very relevant to facing this challenge (Wahyudi: 2021).

Multicultural education is not a theoretical concept, but rather requires practical application in daily activities at school. Namely, providing a comfortable and safe learning environment for all students to socialize and learn from each other without discrimination (Rosyad & Ma'arif: 2020). Extracurricular programs that are oriented towards diversity can expose students to direct experiences in feeling and understanding multicultural values; these programs include cultural festivals and project-based activities (Hidayat: 2020). The application of an inclusive education model in elementary schools with a multicultural approach can be a good software to appreciate differences and celebrate those differences.

The role of teachers in multicultural education is crucial. In this context, teachers do not only act as transmitters of knowledge, but more as agents of change who are able to build a learning environment that is free from discrimination and intolerance (Prakasih: 2021). When teachers train themselves to be more sensitive to diversity, teachers can also facilitate students in developing attitudes of mutual respect and cooperation even though they have different backgrounds. Multicultural education acts as a mediator to ease the social tensions that occur in it and foster solidarity among students so that a better, more harmonious, and more productive generation is created (Kholish: 2022).

This study aims to determine the existence and implementation of multicultural education in elementary schools in Indonesia in the global dynamics that shape the character of tolerant and inclusive students. From here, various challenges faced by schools in implementing multicultural education will be identified and explained briefly while outlining opportunities to improve the effectiveness of such education. In turn, this study is expected to provide a strong basis for improving educational practices in elementary schools.

In addition, another aspect that this study aims to achieve is a better understanding of teachers' and students' views on multicultural education. This study attempts to find out their beliefs and attitudes towards the values of cultural diversity in everyday learning environments at school. By examining these opinions, this study is expected to explain how multicultural education can be

integrated into existing teaching practices and how it affects classroom dynamics.

This study also tries to look at the extracurricular activities that have been used in the issue of cultural diversity in teaching. This study will look at how many extracurricular activities currently cover many aspects of culture and provide sufficient basis for students to know and appreciate differences. With this knowledge, it is hoped that suggestions can be made to change and create extracurricular activities that better meet the desires of diversity in Indonesian society. The final objective of this study is to formulate strategies that can be used by

Stakeholders in fostering an inclusive learning environment in primary schools. It is hoped that these suggestions will improve educational practices not only at the school level but also in national education policies, creating a generation that is better prepared for a diverse global society. The findings of this study will enrich the development of a more coherent and civilized nation by better understanding how multiculturalism functions in primary schools.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach to describe the multicultural interactions that occur in elementary schools in Indonesia. Qualitative research is appropriate because it ensures an in-depth understanding of the complex social, cultural, and educational environment of the phenomenon being studied. Qualitative research provides an opportunity for respondents teachers, students, parents, etc. to share how they view multicultural education in their local context (Najmina: 2018).

This research was conducted at SD Mataram, Semarang. SD Mataram was chosen because of its uniqueness and diversity of characteristics. Students at SD Mataram come from various religious, tribal, and ethnic backgrounds. Starting from Islam, Confucianism, Christianity, Catholicism. Including several Javanese, Chinese, and Papuan ethnicities. Therefore, this greatly shows the multiculturalism situation in Indonesia.

The main data collection method in this study was in-depth interviews. These in-depth interviews were conducted with various informants consisting of principals, teachers, and parent representatives to obtain a holistic understanding of the implementation of multicultural education in elementary schools. The interview questions were designed based on

their personal experiences and challenges related to multicultural education, as well as their expectations of multicultural education (Ainscow: 2016). In addition, the researcher also used participant observation in several classes, where the researcher witnessed the dynamics between students and the learning process to determine how multicultural values are translated into everyday practice.

In addition to conducting interviews and observations, supporting data collection activities include document analysis. The documents reviewed include school curricula, activity reports, and teaching materials related to multicultural education learning. Through these documents, an overview can be obtained of how well the curriculum integrates multicultural education and the alignment between theory and practice (Rahayu, 2015). Other data sets from this document analysis will help triangulate the findings from interviews and observations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Multicultural education is present in Indonesian elementary schools as the most basic step to form students who are tolerant and appreciate diversity. The results of the study show that multicultural education has been implemented well in SD Mataram Semarang. Teachers have actively instilled multicultural values in learning. Although the implementation varies, they strive for activities that introduce students to cultural diversity both through lesson materials that provide information about the historical relationships between different ethnic groups in Indonesia and extracurricular activities such as cultural performances. This shows the school's commitment to creating a learning atmosphere that is adaptive to the diversity of student backgrounds.

Challenges in implementing multicultural education in SD Mataram Semarang are still found. The main obstacle found is the lack of teacher training in teaching multicultural materials. Many teachers feel uncomfortable teaching sensitive topics related to race and culture. Another factor is the influence of the social environment which still has negative stereotypes towards certain groups, this also affects the learning process. However, to overcome this challenge, many teachers try to build effective communication between students and between parents of students for learning at home.

From the students' perspective, the implementation of multicultural education makes their attitudes and behaviors positive. The results of the study showed that students involved in programs related to multicultural education were more open and tolerant of friends from different backgrounds; this is in line with Soekmono (2020) who stated that multicultural education will be more successful if implemented in open and diverse conditions among students. Activities such as class discussions, group assignments, cultural festivals help provide a forum for students to learn from each other's experiences which enrich their insights into the values of diversity which are very important in building social awareness and unity among students.

Multicultural education is present in elementary schools to better prepare students to face global challenges. In other words, students will be exposed to cultural diversity and shared human values, then prepare them to face people from different backgrounds in an increasingly connected world (Irawati & Winario, 2020). In this case, multicultural education is a way to develop solidarity and empathy—strong characters that are much needed today.

From a policy perspective, this study notes that government support is important in strengthening multicultural education in elementary schools, especially SD Mataram Semarang. Policies that articulate and prioritize changes towards inclusive and multicultural education must be strengthened—giving teachers a clear foundation for integrating these values into the educational process. Development strategies proposed in this study include providing ongoing training for teachers and developing curricula that are appropriate to local and global contexts.

Although the journey of multicultural education in Indonesia has not reached a perfect point, research results show that there has been significant progress in efforts to build a society that respects each other and is inclusive (Irawati & Winario, 2020). The existence of multicultural education as implemented in SD Mataram is expected to support, reduce social conflict, and create a conducive learning environment for students from various backgrounds, both cultural, ethnic, and religious. This is also the key to building togetherness amidst diversity in Indonesia, so that it becomes a strength in facing global challenges in the future.

The existence and implementation of multicultural education in SD Mataram is a serious effort in building the next generation who respect

diversity and are committed to peace. It is hoped that the results of this study can be a reference and example for better educational policies and practices in the future, a more inclusive and harmonious environment in education throughout Indonesia, and creating a more tolerant and civilized future for the nation.

In interviews with several educators at SD Mataram Semarang, it was revealed that multicultural education has been absorbed into the learning process at this school. They emphasized that the values of diversity must be taught to young learners as part of efforts to create an inclusive school climate. "We want students to learn to appreciate differences and understand that everyone has a unique background. This is important to foster mutual respect in the classroom," said one of them. This reflects what this school strives for—a young generation that is ready and prepared to be tolerant of different cultures.

The students also gave positive feedback. The results of the interviews with the students stated that most of them were happy because they would learn about other cultures and take part in the traditions and customs of certain ethnic groups. "I am happy when we celebrate my friends' cultural holidays in class. It makes me realize that we are all different but can have fun together." This shows that multicultural education in SD Mataram is not only theoretical on paper but direct experience is given to students to make them understand and appreciate diversity.

Another way that Mataram Elementary School teachers do this is through inter-subject collaboration. They try to link multicultural values in the context of different lessons. For example, PPKn and SBdP subjects. One teacher said, "Through this, students can see the relevance of multicultural values in everyday life and other related aspects in their learning". This makes the values in the students' souls more holistic.

This also reveals the challenges in implementing multicultural education. Some teachers said it was very difficult to convey sensitive material that was sometimes difficult for young students to understand. Another teacher complained, "Sometimes, students have difficulty understanding it when we talk about deeper issues of cultural differences. We try to introduce it gradually." This suggests that more teacher training is needed to enable them to teach this material confidently and effectively.

Students also demonstrated awareness of the issues around them. Although they enjoyed

learning about diversity, some students shared their experiences with minor disputes that occurred between classmates from different backgrounds. Another student mentioned the importance of discussions to resolve differences, saying, "We usually sit down and talk when we have a disagreement until everyone calms down. Discussions help us understand each other." This suggests that knowledge of multicultural values helps students both academically and socially.

Both teachers and students agreed that in addition to focusing on multicultural education in the academic environment, multicultural education should also be instilled as part of character values and daily behavior. They emphasized the need to strengthen horizontal education that would involve students in social and cultural activities that would encourage them to interact and cooperate with others from different backgrounds. One teacher stated, "What happens outside the classroom with activities involving different students is very important to build friendship and respect for each other."

The results of interviews at SD Mataram Semarang show that the implementation of multicultural education has had a positive impact on students and teachers. Although there are many challenges to be faced, the commitment to instilling the values of diversity and respecting differences remains a priority. Hopefully, with the ongoing strengthening, SD Mataram can contribute to a more harmonious and inclusive future for Indonesia.

In SD Mataram Semarang, the observation result shows that the school is very committed to implementing multicultural education through various extracurricular programs. Currently, more than five extracurricular activities related to local culture and diversity of Indonesia have been introduced. Traditional arts, regional dances, and karawitan activities involve students to learn and celebrate different cultures; this creates a sufficient foundation for them to be more sensitive to diversity and also their respective cultural backgrounds.

One of the interesting extracurricular activities is the traditional arts club held every weekend. In this club, children learn various traditional arts styles from various regions in Indonesia, including dance, music, and crafts. This activity not only teaches them about other cultures, but also strengthens their cultural self-esteem. Observations show that students involved in this activity are more open in interacting with classmates who come from different backgrounds.

In addition, SD Mataram holds an annual cultural festival involving all students and parents. This festival is an opportunity to discuss and showcase various cultures through performances, demonstrations, and shows. This activity not only involves students but also discusses the details of the event among them, thus increasing their sense of solidarity; seeing so many students happily telling their unique cultural stories shows that this cultural festival is more than just informative but also fun.

Although extracurricular activities at SD Mataram already cover various aspects of culture, several challenges must be considered. The first challenge is the number of lesson hours allowed for cultural extracurricular activities is not too much. One of the teachers admitted, "It is often difficult for us to find the right time for all these activities. We are determined to make it happen." This shows that time constraints are still an obstacle and frequent curriculum changes can affect the implementation of these activities.

Overall, this gives us an understanding that SD Mataram Semarang has been very successful in implementing multicultural education through extracurricular activities that encourage students to learn and appreciate different cultures. A more sustained commitment from school administrators is needed in increasing and enhancing these cultural activities, considering more flexible scheduling that can provide space for these activities. With the support of teachers, parents, and the community, multicultural education in elementary schools will gain new momentum for continued optimism about its impact on Indonesia's young generation.

CONCLUSION

The results of observations and interviews at SD Mataram Semarang show that the implementation of multicultural education in this school has a positive impact in creating an inclusive learning environment that respects diversity. Extracurricular activities such as regional arts, cultural dances, and cultural festivals organized by this school enrich students' experiences and also build an attitude of mutual respect. Teachers integrate multicultural values into the curriculum and support students to interact positively. The attitude of tolerance among students reflects this. Although a greater challenge is training teachers who have to deal with social stigma, this observation proves that SD Mataram is trying to improve multicultural education

through efforts that involve building a better generation that is ready to engage with global dynamics. Through collaboration between schools, parents and the community, it is hoped that multicultural education can be more deeply rooted and create a more tolerant and civilized national character.

REFERENCE

- Ainscow, M. (2016). "From exclusion to inclusion: The role of educators in promoting social justice." *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 20(7), 682-695. doi:10.1080/13603116.2016.1152609.
- Arfa, A. M. and Lasaiba, M. A. (2022). Pendidikan multikultural dan implementasinya di dunia pendidikan. *Geoforum*, 1(2), 36-49. <https://doi.org/10.30598/geoforumvoll1iss2pp36-49>
- Asmuri, A. (2017). Pendidikan multikultural (telaah terhadap sistem pendidikan nasional dan pendidikan agama islam). *POTENSIA: Jurnal Kependidikan Islam*, 2(1), 25. <https://doi.org/10.24014/potensia.v2i1.2530>
- Dalimunthe, D. S. (2023). Transformasi pendidikan agama islam: memperkuat nilai-nilai spiritual, etika, dan pemahaman keislaman dalam konteks modern. *Al-Murabbi Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 1(1), 75-96. <https://doi.org/10.62086/al-murabbi.v1i1.426>
- Fajrussalam, H., Ruswandi, U., & Erihadiana, M. (2020). Strategi pengembangan pendidikan multikultural di jawa barat. *Edueksos : Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial & Ekonomi*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.24235/edueksos.v9i1.6385>
- Haq, M. Z., Samosir, L., Arane, K. M., & Endrardewi, L. S. (2023). Greeting tradition to build interreligious peace in indonesia: multicultural education perspective. *Progresiva : Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Pendidikan Islam*, 12(01), 71-84. <https://doi.org/10.22219/progresiva.v12i01.25778>
- Hidayat, R., BUNYAMIN, B., & Malihah, E. (2020). Pendidikan resolusi konflik melalui pembelajaran multikultural pada pendidikan formal. *Buana Ilmu*, 5(1), 24-35. <https://doi.org/10.36805/bi.v5i1.1212>
- Hoon, C. Y. (2013). Multicultural citizenship education in indonesia: the case of a chinese christian school. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 44(3), 490-510. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022463413000349>
- Kholish, A. and Wafa, M. C. A. (2022). Pendidikan multikultural di pondok pesantren tradisional dan modern sebagai upaya menjaga negara kesatuan republik indonesia (studi di pondok pesantren asy syamsuriyah brebes). *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Dan Sains Islam Interdisipliner*, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.59944/jipsi.v1i1.1>
- Latifah, N., Marini, A., & Maksum, A. (2021). Pendidikan multikultural di sekolah dasar (sebuah studi pustaka). *Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar Nusantara*, 6(2), 42-51. <https://doi.org/10.29407/jpdn.v6i2.15051>
- Marzuki, M., Miftahuddin, M., & Murdiono, M. (2020). Multicultural education in salaf pesantren and prevention of religious radicalism in indonesia. *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendidikan*, 39(1), 12-25. <https://doi.org/10.21831/cp.v39i1.22900>
- Najmina, N. (2018). Pendidikan multikultural dalam membentuk karakter bangsa indonesia. *Jupiiis: Jurnal Pendidikan Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial*, 10(1), 52. <https://doi.org/10.24114/jupiiis.v10i1.8389>
- Prakasih, R. C., Firman, F., & Rusdinal, R. (2021). Nilai nasionalisme dan anti radikalisme dalam pendidikan multikultural. *Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia*, 2(2), 294-303. <https://doi.org/10.36418/japendi.v2i2.103>
- Rahayu, M. (2015). Pelaksanaan standar pengelolaan pendidikan di sekolah dasar kecamatan ngemplak kabupaten sleman. *Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu Pendidikan*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.21831/jppifip.v8i1.4929>
- Rosyad, A. M. and Ma'arif, M. A. (2020). Paradigma pendidikan demokrasi dan pendidikan islam dalam menghadapi tantangan globalisasi di indonesia. *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 3(1), 75-99. <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v3i1.491>
- Supriatin, A. and Nasution, A. R. (2017). Implementasi pendidikan multikultural dalam praktik pendidikan di indonesia. *Elementary: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, 3(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.32332/elementary.v3i1.785>
- Utari, T. (2023). The evolution of multicultural education indonesia 2000-2022: bibliometric analysis, google scholar. *J-Mpi (Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam)*, 8(1), 20-30. <https://doi.org/10.18860/jmpi.v1i1.17684>
- Wahyudi, A. (2021). Pendidikan berwawasan multikultural di lembaga pendidikan islam: konsepsi dan implementasinya di mi negeri paju ponorogo. *Journal PIWULANG*, 3(2), 123. <https://doi.org/10.32478/piwulang.v3i2.658>
- Windayani, N. L. I., Dewi, N. W. R., Laia, B., Sriartha, I. P., & Mudana, W. (2024). Membangun kesadaran multikultural melalui

- implementasi model pendidikan inklusif di sekolah. *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Citra Bakti*, 11(2), 383-396.
<https://doi.org/10.38048/jipcb.v11i2.2889>
- Soekmono, R. and Ningtyas, D. P. (2020). Model pembelajaran pendidikan multikultural melalui pendekatan proyek kolaboratif. *Jurnal Obsesi : Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 4(2), 1029.
<https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v4i2.444>