

THE IMPORTANCE OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE 5.0 ERA

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the urgency of multicultural education in elementary schools in the 5.0 era, particularly at SDN 3 Metro Barat. Multicultural education is considered important in facing global challenges, where diversity in ethnicity, religion, and culture is increasingly evident in everyday life. However, the implementation of multicultural education in elementary schools is often still limited and poorly integrated into the curriculum. The issue raised in this study is how multicultural education can be a solution to increase understanding of diversity among elementary school students. The research method used is a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation analysis. Interviews were conducted with teachers and students, while observations focused on students' social interactions inside and outside the classroom. School documentation was analyzed to evaluate the extent to which multicultural education was integrated into the learning program. The results of the study show that although there is awareness of the importance of multicultural education, its implementation is still less than optimal. Teachers feel that they lack support in the form of specific modules and adequate training, while students tend to interact in culturally or religiously homogeneous groups. The discussion of this research reveals that feasible solutions include the development of structured multicultural education modules, training for teachers, and the development of extracurricular programs that focus on cross-cultural activities. In conclusion, multicultural education needs to be implemented more systematically to create an inclusive learning environment and prepare students to face the challenges of diversity in the 5.0 era.

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A. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary landscape marked by unprecedented levels of globalization, it is evident that the world is transitioning into a transformative phase that has been aptly designated as Era 5.0. This particular era is distinguished by an increasingly profound and intricate integration of digital technologies, which are profoundly affecting a myriad of facets of human existence, particularly within the domain of education. On a global scale, Era 5.0 serves as a catalyst that propels societies toward greater inclusivity and promotes the fundamental appreciation of diversity among different cultures and communities. Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that, conversely, there exist persistent and significant challenges associated with issues such as intolerance, racism, and various forms of discrimination, which continue to pose considerable obstacles in numerous nations around the globe. Numerous instances of social conflict that arise from ethnic, religious, and cultural disparities starkly illustrate that numerous societies remain grappling with the effective implementation of the principle of harmonious coexistence within diverse populations.

Focusing on Indonesia, a nation recognized as one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse countries in the world, the emergence of similar challenges has

become increasingly pronounced and palpable. Despite its historical reputation as a bastion of pluralism, Indonesia continues to witness instances of intolerance and discrimination that manifest between various ethnic groups and religious communities, with these issues regrettably permeating even the educational experiences of students. A recent survey conducted by the Setara Institute reveals a troubling trend: instances of intolerance within educational institutions have shown a marked increase in recent years. This alarming phenomenon is particularly evident within elementary schools, where young learners are beginning to exhibit exclusive tendencies and an alarming lack of respect for the diverse differences that characterize their peers. For instance, there have been documented cases of students who express reluctance to engage socially with their classmates solely due to disparities in religious beliefs or varying cultural backgrounds.

If these pressing issues are not addressed with urgency and diligence, the ramifications could extend far into the future, yielding long-term consequences that may be detrimental to societal cohesion. Children who are reared in environments that lack inclusivity and fail to uphold a respect for diversity are inherently at risk of cultivating intolerant attitudes as they mature into adulthood. Such a development undoubtedly poses a significant threat to the social harmony that Indonesia prides itself on, which is fundamentally rooted in the values that celebrate diversity and mutual respect among its citizens. In this critical context, elementary schools emerge as pivotal settings where children embark on their journey of socialization and formal education, thus playing a crucial role in shaping their attitudes and behaviors towards the rich tapestry of diversity that surrounds them.

Consequently, the concept of multicultural education takes on heightened significance, positioning itself as a viable and effective solution to these pressing challenges. Multicultural education is designed not only to familiarize students with the wide array of cultures, ethnicities, and religions that coexist within the Indonesian landscape but also to impart essential lessons regarding the significance of tolerance, collaboration, and mutual respect among diverse groups. Through the adoption of this educational approach, students are not merely passive recipients of knowledge about diversity; rather, they are actively encouraged to celebrate these differences and view them as valuable assets that enrich their social fabric rather than as obstacles that hinder their interactions. By implementing multicultural education programs, schools have the unique opportunity to foster an inclusive learning environment where every student feels a profound sense of acceptance, irrespective of their individual backgrounds.

The proactive implementation of multicultural education within elementary school curricula holds the potential to effectively address the issue of intolerance from its nascent stages. By instilling core values of diversity and respect in young children, there is a sincere hope that these individuals will mature into open-minded and tolerant citizens. This developmental outcome is not only crucial for fostering a harmonious social climate within Indonesia but also plays an instrumental role in preparing the younger generation to navigate an increasingly interconnected global landscape, where intercultural interactions are not merely encouraged but are integral to the fabric of daily life.

Therefore, the urgency of multicultural education in elementary schools is increasing. In the 5.0 Era, the ability to appreciate differences and work together across cultures is a key skill that every individual must have. Through multicultural education, we can create a future generation that is not only academically intelligent but also has an inclusive and tolerant character, ready to face the challenges of an increasingly complex world.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This investigation employs a qualitative research methodology with the express purpose of delving into the pressing need for the incorporation of multicultural education within the framework of elementary educational institutions, particularly in light of the myriad social challenges, including but not limited to intolerance and discrimination, which have become increasingly prevalent in the contemporary context of the 5.0 Era. The rationale behind the selection of this particular methodological approach lies in its capacity to facilitate a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the lived experiences and subjective perceptions of both educators and students operating within a multicultural educational landscape, thereby yielding insights that quantitative methods may overlook.

In terms of data collection strategies employed within the scope of this study, the researchers implemented a tripartite approach characterized by three primary techniques, which included conducting in-depth interviews, engaging in participatory observation, and utilizing documentation analysis. Specifically, in-depth interviews were meticulously carried out with both elementary school educators and their students, aiming to elicit their individual and collective perspectives on the significance of diversity and the practical application of multicultural education within the various dynamics of the school environment. Concurrently, participatory observation was systematically executed within the school settings to facilitate direct observation of the interactions occurring among students, as well as to scrutinize how educators effectively embody and implement the principles of multicultural education in their instructional practices within the classroom. Furthermore, a comprehensive analysis of relevant documentation, encompassing curriculum guidelines, syllabi, and teaching materials, was also undertaken to critically evaluate the extent to which multicultural education has been cohesively and integratively woven into the broader educational learning experience.

Upon the completion of the data collection phase, the subsequent analysis of the gathered information was conducted through the lens of thematic analysis, a rigorously structured process designed to identify, analyze, and report patterns and themes within qualitative data. Initially, the information gleaned from interviews and observational notes was meticulously transcribed, after which it was organized and aligned according to pertinent themes that emerged, such as the varying perceptions of diversity, personal experiences with intolerance, and the practicalities associated with the implementation of multicultural education. Following this thematic alignment, the researchers undertook the task of discerning the principal themes that surfaced, which were then intricately

connected to the overarching research objectives, thus facilitating a deeper comprehension of the critical urgency surrounding the necessity for multicultural education within elementary schools.

In the subsequent stage dedicated to the presentation of data, the findings derived from the thematic analysis were articulated in a narrative format that comprehensively described the various patterns and themes identified throughout the research process. This presentation not only focused on delineating the intricate relationship between the experiences and perceptions held by students and teachers with regard to multicultural education but also elucidated the consequential impact that such education exerts on social interactions and relationships within the context of elementary educational institutions.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research endeavor was meticulously carried out at the educational institution known as SDN 3 Metro Barat, where the primary subjects of investigation comprised both the students enrolled in the school and the teaching staff responsible for their education. The methodological approaches utilized for data collection were diverse and included qualitative techniques such as in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and thorough document analysis to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the educational dynamics at play. Specifically, the interviews were conducted with a carefully selected group of five teachers and ten students, each drawn from various classes within the school to provide a representative sampling of perspectives at SDN 3 Metro Barat. The findings gleaned from the interviews held with the teachers indicated that a significant majority of them possessed a cognizance of the vital role that multicultural education plays, particularly within the intricate landscape of Indonesia, which is characterized by its rich tapestry of ethnicities and religious practices. Nonetheless, the educators also candidly recognized the shortfall in the effective integration of multicultural education into their daily instructional practices, as illustrated by one teacher's assertion, "We frequently engage in discussions about diversity during our Civics lessons, yet we lack specific educational modules that comprehensively impart the significance of respecting and valuing differences among individuals."

Conversely, the insights obtained from the interviews conducted with the students revealed that while most students exhibited an awareness of the concept of diversity, they nevertheless tended to gravitate towards interactions with peers who shared their own similar backgrounds, thereby indicating a disconnection between their theoretical understanding of diversity and their practical social behaviors. One student articulated this sentiment succinctly by stating, "I typically choose to engage in play with friends who share my religious beliefs, as it creates a more comfortable environment for me." These findings poignantly illustrate a notable disparity between the students' cognitive comprehension of diversity and the social interactions they manifest in their everyday lives, thereby underscoring the complexities of fostering inclusivity in educational settings.

Observational research was conducted over a two-week period within the school environment, encompassing both the interior of classrooms and the external areas utilized during breaks and recreational periods. The results derived from these observations clearly indicate that the interactions among students were frequently constrained to groups that were culturally or religiously homogeneous, which raises important questions about the inclusivity of social dynamics within the school. For instance, during recess periods, it was observed that students sharing the same religious affiliations often congregated together and exhibited a reluctance to engage with peers from differing religious backgrounds, thereby reinforcing the divisions that exist within the school community. Furthermore, within the classroom setting, when the instructor addressed topics pertaining to the values associated with diversity, it became evident that students often adopted a passive stance, complying with instructions without demonstrating any substantive interest or engagement with the material being presented.

On one hand, there are instances where teachers endeavor to exemplify principles of tolerance through classroom discussions aimed at promoting understanding and acceptance. However, it appears that, in the absence of more in-depth and interactive pedagogical strategies, these important topics fail to resonate meaningfully with the students, resulting in a missed opportunity for fostering a deeper understanding of multiculturalism. A specific incident that was noted during the observations occurred when a teacher invited students to partake in a discussion about various religious celebrations; during this session, it was apparent that several students exhibited a lack of enthusiasm or even actively chose to disengage from the conversation altogether, highlighting a potential barrier to effective dialogue on such critical issues.

Moreover, an analysis of the documentation available within the school revealed that, despite there being an acknowledgment of the significance of multicultural education embedded within the school's vision and mission statements, the actual implementation of such educational philosophies remains conspicuously absent from the systematically planned learning programs that guide the curriculum. A careful examination of the curriculum and syllabus documents revealed that references to cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity were often relegated to vague and general mentions, typically confined to civics lessons and occasionally appearing within the context of religious education. Notably, there exists a glaring absence of specifically designed modules or educational materials that seek to approach multicultural education in a holistic and comprehensive manner, which is essential for fostering a more inclusive educational environment.

Furthermore, a review of other pertinent documents, such as reports detailing extracurricular activities, indicates that while there are programs aimed at promoting and strengthening diversity—such as initiatives focused on arts and cultural engagement—these opportunities tend to attract only a limited number of students and do not constitute regular activities that involve participation from the entirety of the student body. This suggests that the efforts to promote multicultural education within the school context may be hampered by a lack of widespread engagement and inclusivity, ultimately raising

important questions about the effectiveness of the current strategies employed to cultivate a genuinely diverse and accepting educational atmosphere.

The findings derived from this comprehensive investigation indicate that, despite the recognition of the critical significance associated with the paradigm of multicultural education, the actual execution of this pedagogical approach at SDN 3 Metro Barat remains remarkably constrained and lacks a coherent structure. These results lend credence to the research conducted by Banks (2009), who articulates that multicultural education typically constitutes merely a peripheral component of the overall teaching methodology, when, in reality, it ought to be embraced as a holistic pedagogical framework that permeates all facets of the educational process. Banks further accentuates the necessity of embedding multicultural education within every dimension of learning, encompassing not only the formal curriculum but also the quotidian social interactions and practices that transpire within the school environment.

Conversations held with educators illuminated the fact that the absence of sufficient support mechanisms, which include the provision of instructional modules and specialized training focused on multicultural education, constitutes one of the primary impediments to successful implementation. This observation aligns with the conclusions drawn by Tilaar (2004), who underscores that numerous educators throughout Indonesia perceive themselves as inadequately prepared and lacking the requisite resources to effectively incorporate multicultural education into their teaching practices. Consequently, despite the acknowledgment by educators regarding the significance of this educational framework, the constraints imposed by insufficient material development and the challenges of integrating multicultural education into an already packed teaching schedule emerge as formidable barriers to its successful adoption.

In order to effectively address this pressing issue, one pragmatic solution that warrants consideration involves the development of meticulously structured multicultural education modules, which should be seamlessly integrated into each subject area within the school curriculum. It is imperative that these educational modules are formulated in a manner that not only articulates theoretical discussions surrounding the concepts of diversity but also facilitates opportunities for students to engage in collaborative activities that span across various cultural contexts. For instance, the establishment of a classroom work group exchange program, which actively involves students hailing from diverse backgrounds, can be instituted to significantly enhance their intercultural social interactions and foster mutual understanding.

Moreover, the necessity for specialized training programs aimed at educators cannot be overstated, as such initiatives would equip them with a more profound comprehension of effective methods for teaching multicultural education. This training should encompass pedagogical strategies that promote interactive dialogue and foster critical reflection among students, thereby cultivating an environment conducive to meaningful exchanges. By receiving appropriate and targeted training, teachers will be better positioned to navigate the complexities arising from diversity within the classroom setting and convert these differences into enriching learning opportunities rather than obstacles to education.

The results obtained from observational studies, which indicate a propensity among students to engage predominantly with peers who share similar cultural and religious backgrounds, also correspond with findings presented in the research conducted by Sugiharto (2020). This correlation suggests that, in the absence of a proactive approach that actively promotes cross-cultural interactions, students will inevitably gravitate towards the formation of exclusive groups, thereby perpetuating stereotypes and prejudices. As a viable remedy to this issue, educational institutions could consider the implementation of extracurricular programs specifically designed to focus on cross-cultural activities, such as cultural festivals or artistic endeavors that solicit the participation of all students from diverse backgrounds. These initiatives have the potential to serve as a powerful means of reinforcing a collective sense of unity while simultaneously dismantling social barriers that exist among students.

Furthermore, the insights gleaned from the documentation reinforce the assertion that multicultural education within the context of elementary schools continues to be regarded as a secondary or ancillary topic rather than a central tenet of the educational framework. Thus, it becomes imperative for educational institutions to assume a more proactive role in cultivating an inclusive social environment, one in which differences are celebrated and cross-cultural interactions are not only encouraged but actively facilitated. A tangible step that can be undertaken in this direction is the establishment of cross-cultural discussion forums that engage students, educators, and parents alike in open dialogues addressing issues of diversity and collaboratively seeking resolutions to conflicts that may arise as a result of differing perspectives and backgrounds.

In summation, it is imperative that multicultural education be executed in a manner that is far more systematic and organized, which necessitates the integration of an extensive array of learning materials that are both diverse and inclusive, the provision of robust training programs specifically designed for educators, as well as the formulation of innovative initiatives that actively promote and facilitate meaningful cross-cultural interactions among students from various backgrounds. Through the implementation of such comprehensive strategies, students will not merely engage with the theoretical underpinnings of diversity as an abstract notion, but will also have the opportunity to deeply internalize and embody multicultural values, thereby enabling them to effectively incorporate these principles into their everyday lives and interactions within their communities. Ultimately, this holistic approach to education will not only enrich the students' academic experience but will also foster a more inclusive and harmonious society that values and respects cultural differences.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the comprehensive findings derived from meticulous research conducted at SDN 3 Metro Barat, one can unequivocally conclude that multicultural education exerts a profoundly significant influence in shaping students' identities, enabling them to evolve into individuals who embody tolerance and exhibit a deep respect for diversity, particularly in the context of the contemporary 5.0 era. Despite the fact that there exists a growing awareness among educators regarding the essentiality of multicultural education, the actual implementation of such educational paradigms at the elementary

school level remains inadequately systematic and lacks the necessary structured framework for effectiveness. Throughout their academic experiences, students predominantly engage in interactions that are confined to homogeneous groupings, and concurrently, the pedagogical approaches that educators employ are often insufficiently nuanced, ultimately failing to deeply integrate multicultural education within the routine curriculum that students are exposed to on a daily basis.

Through the methodologies of interviews, detailed observations, and thorough documentation, it has become evident that the execution of multicultural education within this particular school has yet to attain its fullest potential, encompassing both the educational materials utilized in instruction and the variety of social activities available to students. The absence of well-defined educational modules, coupled with the lack of sufficient professional development training opportunities for educators, represents a significant barrier that hinders the successful application of multicultural education principles within the school environment.

As a viable solution to these challenges, there exists a pressing need to cultivate and develop more systematically structured and integratively designed multicultural education modules tailored for each subject area, in conjunction with specialized training programs for teachers, aimed at equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively teach the values of diversity. Furthermore, it is imperative that extracurricular programs, which focus on fostering cross-cultural activities, undergo significant enhancement to promote and encourage a greater level of inclusive social interaction among the student body. Through the implementation of these strategic measures, it is anticipated that multicultural education will assume a more prominent and impactful role in preparing students to adeptly confront the multifaceted global challenges that lie ahead, while simultaneously fostering the creation of a more harmonious and inclusive school environment conducive to learning and growth.

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