

EXPLORING MULTICULTURALISM IMPLEMENTATION TO FOSTER DIVERSITY AMONG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Sandi Budiana

Graduate Student in Applied Linguistics Program at Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia
E-mail: sandibudiana_7317167640@mahasiswa.unj.ac.id

Novi Anoerajekti

Department of Applied Linguistics at Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia
E-mail: novi_anoerajekti@unj.ac.id

Muhammad Kamal bin Abdul Hakim

Department of Applied Linguistics at Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia
E-mail: m.kamal.ah@unj.ac.id

APA Citation: Budiana, S., Anoerajekti, N., & Abdul Hakim, M. K. (2022). Exploring multiculturalism implementation to foster diversity among elementary school students, 5(2), 43-50. <http://doi.org/10.25134/ijli.v5i2.8314>

Received: 29-06-2022

Accepted: 28-08-2022

Published: 30-10-2022

Abstract: This research focuses on analyzing the actual state of implementing multiculturalism and identifying strategies to improve its effectiveness in elementary school students from an early age. The study employs a qualitative method and collects data from elementary school teachers and principals through in-depth interviews, documentation studies, and observation. The data obtained is then analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The study reveals that the majority of elementary school teachers view the implementation of multiculturalism as highly important, while a smaller portion considers it important. Teachers emphasize the importance of multiculturalism in maintaining social harmony, preventing conflicts among residents, fostering awareness of diversity within the country, and upholding national unity and integrity. A significant number of teachers express strong support for the development of teaching materials that integrate multiculturalism. However, the current implementation of multiculturalism lacks a systematic approach in planning, implementation, and evaluation. To enhance the effectiveness of implementing multiculturalism in elementary school students, teachers can employ various strategies.

Keywords: *diversity; learning material; multiculturalism; qualitative approach.*

INTRODUCTION

Cultural differences play a significant role in giving rise to various problems, but it is the persistent intolerance towards these differences that remains a chronic and unresolved issue. This ongoing intolerance continues to manifest itself in different parts of the world, posing significant challenges to societal harmony.

On an international scale, numerous cases have surfaced that illustrate the consequences of intolerance. For instance, there have been incidents where the death of an individual with a certain skin color has ignited mass demonstrations and resulted in the destruction of major cities within a powerful country (Banda, 2020). These events highlight the deeply rooted divisions within societies and the urgent need to address them.

At the national level, intolerance remains a prevalent issue across various regions of

countries. Despite efforts to promote acceptance and understanding, cases of intolerance persist, hindering progress towards a more inclusive society. Zooming in further to the local level, specific cities like Depok and Bogor have gained attention for their high levels of intolerance. Research conducted by Adawiyah *et al.* (2021) indicates that these cities rank among the top ten in terms of intolerance, shedding light on the need for localized interventions and strategies to foster acceptance and cultural diversity.

In order to address this chronic disease of intolerance, there is a pressing need for deeper exploration and understanding of its root causes. By delving into the underlying factors fueling intolerance, society can better formulate effective strategies and initiatives to promote mutual respect, tolerance, and inclusivity.

Indonesia's foundation is rooted in a diverse range of philosophical values encompassing

religion, culture, ethnicity, race, identity, island diversity, and geographical variations (Jayadi *et al.*, 2022). Consequently, it is crucial to introduce and nurture mutual respect and tolerance for cultural differences from an early age, as these values are integral to the nation's identity. The principles of tolerance embedded within the concept of *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* should be comprehended and internalized by the Indonesian society. However, there are instances in society that contradict these values of diversity.

Interestingly, the notion of *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* dates back to the 14th century, mentioned in the Book of Sutasoma by the esteemed poet Mpu Tantular, who lived during the Majapahit kingdom (Khaeruman & Ghazali, 2020). Hence, the doctrine of *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* is an ancient teaching deeply ingrained in the history of Java and the Archipelago, spanning over a millennium (Khamami A. Maftukhin, 2017). Embracing diversity reflects the essence of nationalism and exemplifies love for culture, diversity, neighbors, the environment, and the archipelago (Noorzeha, 2021). However, instilling multicultural values in students within the school system presents a significant challenge. The entrenched structure of schools as national institutions poses obstacles to the implementation of multicultural education (Smagorinsky, 2022).

The term multiculturalism is composed of three fundamental linguistic elements, each contributing to its meaning. Firstly, the prefix "multi-" denotes the concept of "many" or "diverse," highlighting the presence of multiple cultural identities and perspectives within a given context. Secondly, the term "culture" encompasses a vast and intricate system of beliefs, values, practices, and customs that shape individuals and societies. Culture is not confined to tangible aspects but also encompasses intangible elements such as language, traditions, and worldviews (Samsu, 2017).

It is essential to recognize that human beings cannot exist in isolation but are inherently social creatures. In this regard, culture serves as the foundation upon which societies are built, providing individuals with a shared framework of understanding and guiding their interactions with others (Suwardani & Suwardani, 2020). Cultural values and norms shape individuals' behaviors, attitudes, and perspectives, influencing their way of life and societal integration.

Multicultural education, as advocated by Banks (2008), encompasses a comprehensive framework that acknowledges and values the

diversity of cultures and ethnicities. It emphasizes the importance of understanding and appreciating diverse lifestyles, social experiences, personal identities, and educational opportunities for individuals, groups, and nations (Indrawan *et al.*, 2020). Multicultural education goes beyond mere recognition of cultural diversity; it strives to promote inclusivity, social justice, and equal educational opportunities for all students, fostering mutual respect and understanding among diverse communities.

Exploring the linguistic elements and underlying concepts of multiculturalism allows us to delve deeper into the complexity and significance of cultural diversity. It reminds us of the crucial role that culture plays in shaping societies, and the importance of promoting multicultural education as a means to foster inclusive and harmonious communities. By embracing multiculturalism, societies can strive towards a more equitable and culturally enriched future.

Raabe and Bellman propose that biases between different ethnic groups can begin to form early in life, as mentioned by de Bruijn *et al.* (2021). It's particularly crucial to focus on elementary school students when introducing principles of multiculturalism. This age group forms the majority of the student population in basic education. The integration of multicultural teachings in formal education is even more important as affective competence is a primary objective of elementary school learning. This is further underscored by the education policy which assigns a 70% focus on character education and a 30% focus on general knowledge, according to the Education Ministry's Web Manager in 2017.

Parekh (2012) asserts that multicultural education should enable students to understand various viewpoints, belief systems, and common experiences, and to respect other cultures' strengths and limitations. In primary schools, multicultural education plays a pivotal role in fostering students' character in a diverse world. However, challenges exist in implementing these multicultural principles, with one of them being the lack of teaching resources that embrace multicultural values.

Rokhmansyah *et al.* (2021) reveal that there is a scarcity of high-quality non-curriculum books with multicultural themes available for students. Moreover, the core textbooks used for teaching often lack substantial content related to multiculturalism. An analysis of grade 4 textbooks published by the National Education

Ministry's Bookkeeping Center revealed only one reference to the trait of tolerance (Subekti & Sumarlam, 2017).

Textbooks, guided by educators, are crucial for effective teaching and learning (Alsaawi, 2021), and providing books with exemplary characters is essential for helping students develop commendable personality traits (Bayraktar, 2021). The shortage of such resources presents a hurdle for teachers aiming to cultivate multicultural values among students. Additionally, this lack of resources contributes to a narrow understanding of multicultural values among teachers themselves, as indicated by Adam (2021).

Kosasih (2021) defines teaching materials as resources utilized by teachers and students to facilitate learning. These tools are systematically and attractively designed to help achieve educational objectives, namely the acquisition of competencies and sub-competencies in their entirety (Rahayu, 2022). According to Pribadi & Putri (2019), teaching materials can also be understood as resources containing information and knowledge that learners can use to gain the requisite skills and understanding.

This study can shed light on the deficiencies in existing educational resources, such as the insufficient presence of multicultural themes in textbooks. This could act as a catalyst for changes in future educational policies and curriculum development. Moreover, the research emphasizes the importance of enhancing teacher training in the field of multicultural education. This could lead to the refinement of teaching methodologies and create a more inclusive environment for student learning. Ultimately, this research plays a pivotal role in fostering a more tolerant and culturally diverse generation in the future.

This could result in improved pedagogical strategies and foster a more inclusive educational atmosphere for learners. Fundamentally, this research is crucial in molding a future generation that is more understanding and appreciative of cultural diversity. This research plays a pivotal role in fostering a more tolerant and culturally diverse generation in the future.

METHOD

This study employs qualitative methods as described by Sugiyono (2017). According to him, qualitative research is grounded in post-positivism philosophy, and it is used to investigate natural phenomena in non-experimental conditions. In this approach, the researcher plays a significant role, the data sources are selected purposely and

expanded via snowball sampling, and data is collected through triangulation techniques. The analysis is inductive, and the qualitative findings prioritize understanding over broad generalization.

The study's data is gathered from informants that include key respondents and their associates. Specifically, 64 teachers from 10 elementary schools in Bogor City are the primary respondents. Data gathering involved comprehensive interviews aiming to delve into research queries. These interviews were performed via Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). A study of documents was another data collection technique used to collect documents relevant to the research questions. These documents were examined to assess the integration of multicultural values in education. The collected data was subsequently analyzed using a qualitative data analysis procedure devised by Miles and Huberman (2013). This process involves three stages: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The perceptions and insights of elementary school teachers regarding the significance of instilling multiculturalism in students have been traced. It has been found that the majority of teachers (90%) consider the inculcation of multiculturalism to be highly important, while a smaller percentage (10%) deem it important. Teachers provide various reasons for the importance of instilling multiculturalism, including promoting harmony, preventing conflicts among residents (40%), raising awareness of diversity within the country (34%), and maintaining national unity and integrity (19%).

The research findings indicate that elementary school teachers place a high level of importance on instilling multiculturalism in students. The majority of teachers expressed that the inculcation of multiculturalism is highly significant, while a smaller proportion still recognized its importance. This suggests a strong consensus among teachers regarding the value of multicultural education in the elementary school context.

The reasons provided by teachers for the importance of instilling multiculturalism offer further insights into their perceptions. The largest percentage of teachers emphasized the role of multiculturalism in promoting harmony and preventing conflicts among residents. This reflects an understanding that embracing diverse

cultures and fostering inclusive attitudes can contribute to social cohesion and peaceful coexistence within the community.

Another significant reason highlighted by teachers is the awareness of diversity within the country. This indicates an acknowledgment of the multicultural nature of the society and the need to cultivate students' understanding and appreciation of different cultural backgrounds and perspectives. By developing this awareness, students are better equipped to navigate a diverse society and contribute positively to their communities.

Maintaining national unity and integrity emerged as an additional reason mentioned by teachers. This reflects the understanding that multiculturalism, when integrated effectively, can contribute to a sense of national identity and unity, while also recognizing and respecting the diverse cultural heritage that exists within the nation.

The data suggests that elementary school teachers recognize the significance of instilling multiculturalism in students for various reasons, including promoting harmony, raising awareness of diversity, and fostering national unity. These findings emphasize the importance of incorporating multicultural education into the curriculum and implementing effective strategies to develop students' understanding, respect, and appreciation for diverse cultures and perspectives.

The perspectives expressed by elementary school teachers regarding the importance of instilling multiculturalism align with the views of Ki Hajar Dewantoro as mentioned by Sabtaningrum *et al.* (2020). Ki Hajar Dewantoro emphasizes the need for education to be in harmony with Indonesian cultural values and to promote inclusivity across various social, religious, ethnic, belief, and racial backgrounds. This highlights the importance of incorporating multicultural principles into educational practices in order to create a more inclusive and culturally sensitive learning environment.

Furthermore, previous research has shown that a shared understanding of multiculturalism among school principals, teachers, and students can have positive effects on the development of multicultural values. The study conducted by Aeni and Astuti (2020) supports this notion by highlighting the significant role played by educators in fostering a common understanding of multiculturalism. When teachers and school leaders embrace and promote multicultural

principles, it creates a conducive atmosphere for students to learn and appreciate diverse cultures.

These findings underscore the importance of creating a collaborative and supportive educational environment, where all stakeholders, including teachers, school leaders, and students, share a common understanding of the value and significance of multiculturalism. By fostering this shared understanding, schools can effectively promote multicultural values and cultivate a sense of inclusivity and respect among students from different backgrounds.

In summary, the alignment of teachers' perspectives with the views of Ki Hajar Dewantoro and the importance of a shared understanding of multiculturalism among educators emphasize the significance of integrating multicultural principles into education. By embracing multiculturalism and promoting inclusivity, schools can create an environment that values diversity and fosters the development of multicultural values among students.

The investigation delves into the strategies utilized by elementary school teachers to instill multiculturalism in their students. The results reveal that all interviewed teachers (100%) employ an integrative approach, integrating multiculturalism into appropriate themes. This approach ensures that multicultural concepts and values are seamlessly incorporated into various aspects of the curriculum.

Further exploration of the data focuses on how teachers integrate multiculturalism into their instructional practices. The majority of respondents (76%) emphasize the significance of planning as a starting point for integration. They incorporate multiculturalism into their lesson plans, ensuring that it is embedded in the learning objectives, content, and activities. This proactive approach enables teachers to intentionally infuse multicultural perspectives throughout the teaching and learning process. Moreover, it highlights the importance of incorporating multiculturalism from the early stages of instructional planning.

Additionally, the findings reveal that teachers also implement and evaluate the integration of multiculturalism in their lessons. By incorporating multiculturalism into learning activities and assessments, teachers provide opportunities for students to engage with multicultural concepts and demonstrate their understanding of them. This holistic approach ensures that multiculturalism is not limited to theoretical discussions but is actively integrated into students' learning experiences.

It is worth noting that a smaller portion of respondents (24%) mentioned that the inculcation of multiculturalism is facilitated through contextual advice and guidance. This approach suggests that teachers provide students with specific instructions and directions related to multiculturalism, helping them understand and apply multicultural values in real-life contexts.

Overall, the data highlights the importance of an integrative approach to instilling multiculturalism in elementary school students. By incorporating multiculturalism into planning, implementation, and evaluation, teachers ensure that multicultural perspectives are integrated seamlessly into the learning process. This approach enables students to develop a deeper understanding of multicultural concepts and values while fostering their appreciation for diversity.

Additionally, the study reveals the non-systematic implementation of multiculturalism in student learning, as evidenced by the lack of teaching materials and media specifically dedicated to integrating multiculturalism. The majority of teachers (74%) acknowledge the absence of such materials, while the remaining teachers (26%) are uncertain about their availability, suggesting that even if they exist, they are not commonly used. These findings align with previous research in the Indonesian context, which indicates a limited focus on multicultural education themes and a lack of emphasis on the paradigms or principles guiding the implementation of multicultural education in educational settings (Jayadi *et al.*, 2022).

Subsequent interviews regarding the development of a textbook integrating multiculturalism garnered positive responses from teachers. The majority of teachers (98%) expressed support, with 58% indicating strong support and 40% indicating support for the development of teaching materials with multiculturalism integration. Only a small proportion (2%) did not support this development. This teacher support aligns with previous research, which emphasizes the importance of teaching materials, such as modules, in introducing multicultural attitudes and fostering love for the country among students (L. Fatmawati *et al.*, 2018).

Further analysis of the reasons behind supporting the development of teaching materials revealed that the largest percentage (27%) believed that such materials would facilitate students' learning of multiculturalism.

Additionally, 22% of teachers indicated that these teaching materials would make it easier for them to impart multiculturalism. Previous research has also indicated that educators perceive books to play a crucial role in addressing diversity, promoting cultural understanding, and facilitating language acquisition (Adam *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, it has been highlighted that teaching materials should be suitable and engaging for children, featuring colorful illustrations and using simple language (Kusumaningrum & Wahyono, 2019). Considering the significance of teaching materials, the development of multiculturalism references in textbooks would provide guidance for teachers in instilling multicultural values in elementary school students as shown in Figure 1:

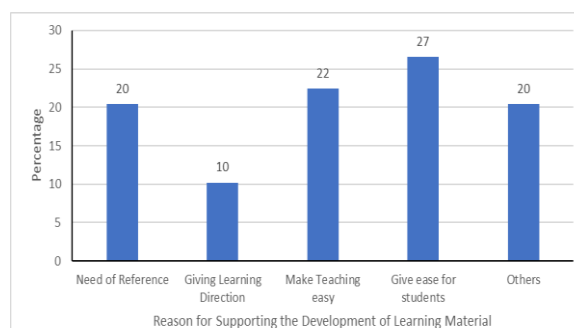


Figure 1. Reason for teachers supporting the development of multicultural based learning material

The findings from in-depth interviews with elementary school teachers regarding suggestions to enhance and improve the effectiveness of instilling multiculturalism are summarized in Figure 2 below.

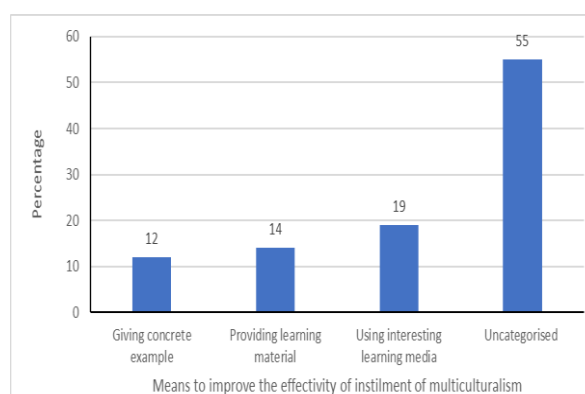


Figure 2. Suggestion from teachers to improve the effectivity of multiculturalism implantation

The data presented in Figure 2 illustrates the strategies proposed by teachers to enhance the effectiveness of instilling multiculturalism in students. These strategies include the use of engaging learning media, provision of teaching materials, and incorporation of real-life examples

of multiculturalism. These recommendations align with previous research on the positive impact of multimedia resources and instructional media on student learning outcomes.

The suggestion to utilize engaging learning media reflects the understanding that students are more likely to be interested and actively participate in learning when multimedia resources are incorporated. The study conducted by Puspitarini and Hanif (2019) supports this notion by demonstrating that students show increased engagement and enthusiasm when exposed to learning materials that utilize various forms of media, such as visuals, videos, and interactive elements. By employing engaging learning media, teachers can create a dynamic and immersive learning environment that captures students' attention and fosters their understanding of multicultural concepts.

Furthermore, the use of instructional media is identified as a strategy to enhance the effectiveness of instilling multiculturalism. The research conducted by Al Mardhiyyah, Latief, and Masduqi (2021) reveals that instructional media can play a crucial role in promoting successful learning outcomes. It has been found that instructional media not only increases student motivation but also helps overcome language barriers in the classroom. By utilizing instructional media, teachers can create a more interactive and inclusive learning experience, enabling students to comprehend and appreciate multiculturalism more effectively.

The integration of real-life examples of multiculturalism as a strategy is crucial in helping students connect theoretical concepts with practical applications. By incorporating real-life examples, teachers can demonstrate the relevance and importance of multiculturalism in everyday life, fostering students' understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures and perspectives. These examples can include multicultural experiences, events, or individuals from various backgrounds, providing students with tangible instances of multiculturalism in action.

The strategies proposed by teachers, including the use of engaging learning media, provision of teaching materials, and incorporation of real-life examples of multiculturalism, align with previous research on the benefits of multimedia resources and instructional media in facilitating effective learning outcomes. By implementing these strategies, teachers can create an engaging and inclusive learning environment that promotes

students' understanding and appreciation of multiculturalism.

Teaching materials hold significant importance in the learning process as they serve as a valuable resource for students, providing them with relevant and meaningful content. In addition to academic knowledge, teaching materials also play a crucial role in the development of students' character and the imparting of moral values.

The research conducted by Sulistiyo *et al.* (2020) focused on English textbooks designed for young learners. The study revealed a strong emphasis on moral values within these textbooks, including kindness, politeness, and empathy. These moral values were consistently presented throughout the materials, reflecting an intentional effort to instill positive character traits in students. By incorporating moral values into teaching materials, educators aim to foster students' understanding of ethical behavior and encourage them to exhibit these values in their daily lives.

Similarly, Puspitasari (2021) conducted a study analyzing three English textbooks used in elementary schools. The research identified the dominant discursive representation of moral values within the textbooks, such as helping others, friendliness, politeness, and tolerance. These moral values were intricately woven into the content, providing students with explicit guidance on how to navigate social interactions and demonstrate respectful behavior. The integration of moral values within teaching materials serves to reinforce the importance of character development and encourages students to embrace positive attitudes and behaviors.

Moreover, both studies highlight that teaching materials, including textbooks, have the potential to integrate not only moral values but also multicultural values. By incorporating multicultural perspectives and experiences within teaching materials, educators can expose students to diverse cultures, beliefs, and practices, fostering an appreciation for multiculturalism. The inclusion of multicultural values within teaching materials enables students to develop a broader understanding of different cultures, promoting empathy, respect, and tolerance.

Overall, the research findings emphasize the significant role of teaching materials in the holistic development of students. By integrating both moral and multicultural values within textbooks and other teaching resources, educators can effectively nurture students' character, promote positive behavior, and cultivate an inclusive and respectful learning environment.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the important role that multicultural education plays in elementary schools. The findings suggest that teachers generally have a good understanding of multiculturalism and how to instill these values in their students. The instillation of multicultural values occurs in various forms, from delivering contextual moral messages and directions within the curriculum, to fostering these values through extracurricular activities and daily habits at school.

A key finding of the study is the need for textbooks that incorporate multicultural education. These textbooks could expand teachers' and students' horizons and provide a more effective way to instill multicultural values. Not only would they simplify the teaching process for educators, but they would also aid students' learning, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of multicultural education.

Thus, improving the systematic planning, implementation, and evaluation of multicultural education, as well as developing more comprehensive teaching resources, are critical steps towards creating a more inclusive and culturally sensitive educational environment. The adoption of these measures can significantly enhance students' understanding and appreciation of diversity, promoting unity and social harmony from an early age.

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