




an Analysis of the Application of Multicultural Education for Senior High School Students at the Sultan Iskandar Muda Foundation in Combating Interfaith Intolerance

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the implementation of multicultural education at the Sultan Iskandar Muda Education Foundation High School (YPSIM) in an effort to combat attitudes of interreligious intolerance among students. Multicultural education at YPSIM is implemented through a learning approach that integrates the values of tolerance, respect for diversity and mutual respect. The research methods used were observation, interviews and questionnaires involving school principals, teachers and students as respondents. The research results show that school principals play an active role in formulating policies that support inclusion, provide worship facilities for various religions, and involve the community to strengthen multicultural values. Support from the foundation, diversity of students and staff, and parent participation are strong supporting factors. However, several challenges such as conservative perceptions from outside the school, limited teacher training, and limited facilities hinder the optimal implementation of multicultural education. Overall, this research shows that the implementation of multicultural education at YPSIM contributes to reducing attitudes of interreligious intolerance in schools. This research recommends the implementation of multicultural education in other schools to form tolerant and inclusive student characters.

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INTRODUCTION

Multicultural education is one of the topics in the subject of Pancasila and Civic Education. This topic should be emphasized more in the development of students' character and attitudes, where the substance of the learning focuses on how to cultivate citizens who respect and value differences and promote peace. Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System emphasizes that

the goal of Civic Education is to "equip students with knowledge and basic skills related to the role of citizens and the substance of defending the country, so that they can become citizens who can be relied upon by the Indonesian nation" (Nanggala, 2020).

Pancasila and Civic Education aims to achieve key objectives. First, by enhancing students' knowledge and character about ethics, morals, and principles in nationhood. Second, by shaping attitudes, personalities, and behaviors that align with the noble values of the Indonesian nation. If these two objectives are achieved, it will produce students who are capable of taking action using the concepts and principles they have learned. This will also influence the Civic Education subject. The role of the school principal can support the success of implementing multicultural education by serving as a link between students, parents, and the surrounding community (Siregar et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the principal must have a sense of responsibility and the traits found in multicultural education values. This ensures that the implementation runs smoothly. This context shows that Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn) is not only focused on providing knowledge but also instilling the value of mutual respect (tolerance). Therefore, the teaching and learning activities, as well as the programs for implementing multicultural education in schools, heavily depend on the principal's and teachers' ability to convey and organize the programs effectively. Thus, every success and achievement made by students is based on cooperation between the principal, teachers, students, and parents.

Based on the above explanation, it can be concluded that the purpose of education in Pancasila and Civic Education is not only to apply cognitive aspects, but also to touch on affective and psychomotor aspects. From the cognitive aspect, Indonesian education aims to educate students to have intelligent knowledge. Then, from the affective (attitude) aspect, the purpose of education is to form responsible character in students, making them citizens with attitudes in line with the character values of the Indonesian nation. Lastly, the psychomotor (skills) aspect aims to educate students to acquire skills that are beneficial to themselves and society.

Although efforts to instill tolerance have been implemented through Pancasila and Civic Education from elementary to higher education levels, in reality, not all schools pay attention to the implementation and understanding of tolerance itself. This has led to students in many schools developing intolerant attitudes and characters. This is evident from the continued incidents in schools around Medan, where students mock their peers during religious

practices and harbor animosity toward friends of different faiths. In such cases, students who mock others have shown a decline in character, and this issue must be addressed to prevent it from persisting.

Tolerance is the attitude of respecting and accepting cultural, religious, and ideological differences. It is crucial in efforts to create good citizens, as fostering tolerance among students will lead to a peaceful nation, free from conflicts rooted in race, religion, and ethnicity (SARA).

A study on Multicultural Education was conducted titled "Managing Multicultural Education: An Ethnographic Study at Sultan Iskandar Muda High School, Medan" (As'ad, 2019). The research concluded that the school applies an integrated classroom model where students of different religions—Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism—learn together during religious education classes. In the classroom, each teacher presents the material collectively alongside the shared content.

The implementation of Multicultural Education at Sultan Iskandar Muda Foundation School has been very successful. The school has established four places of worship within the school for the six religions officially recognized in Indonesia. This is a unique approach that should be adopted by other schools in Indonesia.

Many schools in Indonesia merely claim to implement multicultural education, but in reality, it is not always realized. It is common for schools to provide prayer rooms only for Muslim students, while students of other faiths only study religion in class during their religious education lessons. This situation fosters intolerance among students toward those of different religions. In my observations at other schools, I found several issues related to intolerance among students, including: (1) During religious activities, non-Muslim students gather in the open field, while Muslim students are in the prayer room. Muslim students mock their peers in the field, claiming they have no proper place of worship, which disrupts the atmosphere of worship; (2) There are debates among students about issues that may lead to division.

The cause of these issues in schools is the lack of emphasis on the importance of tolerance and mutual respect in the school environment. Additionally, the way teachers deliver multicultural education content often relies on lectures, making it difficult for younger students, especially those in elementary school, to understand the message.

Based on the above, the author is interested in investigating this issue with the title "Analysis of the Implementation of Multicultural Education for High School Students at the Sultan Iskandar Muda Foundation in Combating Interfaith Intolerance." With this title, the researcher aims to understand the

extent to which multicultural education is applied at this school and how the role of the school principal ensures the values of tolerance are upheld, so that multicultural education can be effectively realized. This research is intended for the Sultan Iskandar Muda Foundation School to serve as a model for other schools in Indonesia in implementing multicultural education.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used by the researcher in this study employs observation techniques by observing the school environment and monitoring the activities carried out in the implementation of Multicultural Education. Additionally, the researcher used survey techniques, such as questionnaires and interviews, to collect data from respondents. The type of data used is qualitative data, which is descriptive and cannot be expressed in numbers. The focus is on the implementation of multicultural education and the role of the school principal in maintaining the multicultural education that has been realized.

In data collection, the researcher used several techniques, namely, Observation is the activity of gathering data by directly observing the object being studied. The observation will be conducted at the Sultan Iskandar Muda Foundation School on Jl. Sunggal. The researcher aims to observe how the implementation of multicultural education at the school is going and how the principal carries out their role in the application of multicultural education. Interviews involve conversations with a specific purpose. The conversation takes place between two parties: the interviewer and the interviewee (respondent). Interviews are conducted with individuals who are considered to have valuable information needed for the study, and whose input will strengthen the research findings. In this study, the respondents include the school principal, Mr. Adri Hermawan, S.Pd.I., M.Psi, and the students at the school.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The principal at SMA Yayasan Perguruan Sultan Iskandar Muda (YPSIM) plays a crucial role in ensuring the continuity and effectiveness of multicultural education. As a leader, the principal must serve as a role model for both students and staff in terms of embracing diversity. The principal's open and inclusive attitude helps create an environment that supports religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity. By setting a positive example, the principal influences not only the students' mindsets but also contributes significantly to fostering a school culture that prioritizes respect and tolerance. This aligns with the

research conducted by (As'ad, 2019), which shows that the role of leadership in demonstrating inclusivity is highly influential in shaping a multicultural school culture.

In addition to setting an example in diversity, the principal also plays a key role in formulating policies that support multicultural education. The principal is responsible for ensuring that the policies implemented within the school foster an inclusive atmosphere, such as policies promoting the use of inclusive language, eliminating discrimination, and ensuring that the curriculum integrates various cultural and religious aspects. For example, the principal makes sure that the school's curriculum includes content reflecting diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. With clear and firm policies in place, the principal provides a clear direction for the entire school community in living together harmoniously. This is supported by research conducted by (Lubis, 2024; Ritonga et al., 2022), which highlights that education policies promoting diversity are essential to creating an inclusive and multicultural school environment.

Moreover, the principal also plays a significant role in creating an inclusive learning environment. The principal is tasked with ensuring a safe, comfortable, and open space for all students, regardless of their religious, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds. In this regard, the principal encourages the implementation of programs that promote cross-religious cooperation, such as social activities or group projects that involve students from various backgrounds. These programs offer students opportunities to interact and collaborate on tasks or activities together. This is consistent with the research conducted by (Lubis & Ritonga, 2023), which found that an inclusive environment is crucial for the effective implementation of multicultural education.

The principal also serves as a facilitator for teachers in implementing multicultural education in the classroom. As a facilitator, the principal provides relevant training and resources to support teachers in developing more inclusive teaching approaches. This training may include topics such as multicultural classroom management, developing inclusive curricula, and addressing the challenges of diversity in the classroom. It is essential for teachers to provide students with profound learning experiences that emphasize tolerance and respect for differences. This aligns with the findings of (Kloudia et al., 2024; Rasyid et al., 2024), who stated that ongoing teacher training is important to improving teachers' understanding of multicultural issues in schools.

In addition to being a facilitator, the principal also acts as a mediator in resolving conflicts that may arise among students, particularly those related to intolerance or religious differences. When conflicts occur, the principal must be a neutral and wise party. By using a dialogue-based approach, the principal can emphasize the importance of tolerance and mutual respect among students. In this case, the principal encourages students to see and understand each other's perspectives, thereby minimizing potential conflicts. Research by (Kadarsih et al., 2020) revealed that the principal's role as a mediator is vital in creating a peaceful school environment and reducing tensions among students from different backgrounds.

Collaboration between the principal, parents, and the community is also an essential factor in maintaining multicultural education at SMA YPSIM. The principal needs to establish a cooperative relationship with the parents and the surrounding community to reinforce the multicultural values that are applied at school. By involving parents in various social programs or socialization events, the principal ensures that the values taught at school are also accepted and reinforced at home. Active participation from parents is crucial in supporting multicultural education because the family is the first place where a child's understanding of diversity is shaped. This is in line with the findings of (Darlis et al., 2023), who stated that parental involvement significantly influences the success of multicultural education at school.

Several supporting factors facilitate the principal's role in maintaining multicultural education at YPSIM. One of the main factors is the strong support from the foundation, which has a firm commitment to multicultural education. This commitment allows the principal to implement policies and programs that promote diversity in the school. With this support, the principal can develop various initiatives to strengthen multicultural education. Research conducted by (Nanggala, 2020) revealed that support from the foundation is crucial for the sustainability of multicultural education in schools.

The diversity of students and staff also serves as a valuable supporting factor in maintaining multicultural education. At SMA YPSIM, the presence of students and staff from various religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds provides an opportunity for everyone to learn about diversity directly. This diversity enriches the students' learning experience and broadens their understanding of differences. With such a diverse background, students can share their experiences and perspectives, helping them build better relationships with one another. This aligns with the findings of (Dewi et al., 2021), which suggests that the diversity of students and staff can be a major strength in developing an inclusive school culture.

The curriculum implemented at SMA YPSIM is another supporting factor in promoting multicultural education. This curriculum already incorporates diversity aspects in several subjects and provides space for extracurricular activities that foster interfaith cooperation. Programs like these encourage students to better understand diversity and build a sense of tolerance within themselves. Additionally, social activities and group projects involving students from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds further support the goal of multicultural education. Research by (Herida, 2023) indicates that a curriculum that includes diversity is highly effective in creating an inclusive school environment.

Despite the many supporting factors, there are several challenges that may hinder the implementation of multicultural education at SMA YPSIM. One of the primary challenges is the conservative religious backgrounds of some students. Some students may come from families or communities with highly conservative religious views, which can sometimes conflict with the values taught at school. This creates challenges for the principal and teachers in managing the classroom and maintaining diversity. Research by (Lubis & Ritonga, 2023) also revealed that challenges related to conservative views often arise in attempts to teach tolerance in schools.

A lack of teacher training is also a barrier to maintaining multicultural education. Although the principal has provided training on multiculturalism, not all teachers have received in-depth training on how to effectively handle diversity issues in the classroom. Without adequate training, it may be difficult for teachers to manage a multicultural classroom and address the challenges that arise due to cultural and religious differences among students. This aligns with the research conducted by (Ramli, 2015), which found that continuous teacher training is essential for overcoming challenges related to diversity in schools.

Additionally, prejudices and stereotypes that persist among some students also present a major challenge in implementing multicultural education. Some students may carry preconceived notions or negative views about other religions or cultures, leading to misunderstandings that can escalate into conflicts. If not handled properly, these prejudices can worsen relationships among students and disrupt the multicultural education process. Therefore, it is essential for the principal and teachers to continually educate students about the importance of respecting differences and avoiding stereotypes that can harm interpersonal relationships. Research by (Lubis, 2024) indicates that unchecked prejudice can escalate conflicts among students and undermine an inclusive school atmosphere.

Limited facilities and funding also pose challenges to implementing multicultural education. Some activities designed to support multicultural education, such as social programs or extracurricular activities involving students from various backgrounds, require financial resources and adequate facilities. However, limited funding or facilities sometimes make it difficult to carry out these activities consistently. Therefore, the principal must be creative in finding solutions and alternatives to continue running multicultural programs despite the limitations. Research by (Afifah et al., 2021) suggests that limited facilities and funding can be significant obstacles to implementing multicultural education programs at schools.

External influences, such as the values taught in the home environment or on social media, also present a challenge in maintaining multicultural education. Values from the home environment or social media may sometimes conflict with the multicultural values taught at school. This creates confusion for students in applying multicultural principles in their daily lives. Therefore, the principal must collaborate with parents and the community to raise broader awareness about the importance of multicultural education. Research by (Avila et al., 2023) indicates that external influences, such as social media and family views, can exacerbate the challenges of implementing multicultural education at school.

Overall, the principal's role in maintaining multicultural education at SMA Yayasan Perguruan Sultan Iskandar Muda is highly strategic. By overcoming the challenges and leveraging the supporting factors available, the principal can ensure that multicultural education continues to thrive. This is crucial in fostering tolerance among students and preparing them to become citizens who can live harmoniously in a multicultural society. With strong commitment from the principal, the foundation, teachers, parents, and the community, multicultural education at SMA YPSIM can continue to be a foundation for creating a harmonious and tolerant society.

CONCLUSION

The principal at SMA Yayasan Perguruan Sultan Iskandar Muda (YPSIM) plays a vital role in ensuring the continuity and effectiveness of multicultural education. The principal serves as a role model, policy developer, environment builder, facilitator for teachers, mediator in conflicts, and collaborator with parents and the community. Each of these roles aims to create an inclusive and safe school environment where students can learn to appreciate cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity. Supporting factors such as the foundation's backing, the diversity of students and staff, an inclusive curriculum, teacher

commitment, and parental involvement provide a strong foundation for fostering tolerance and cross-cultural understanding among students. However, challenges such as conservative religious backgrounds, limited teacher training, lingering prejudices, limited facilities, and external environmental influences pose obstacles. These challenges require the principal and the foundation to continuously innovate to preserve the multicultural values taught at the school. Overall, the principal's strategic role, supported by these enabling factors and strategies to address barriers, ensures that multicultural education at SMA YPSIM can consistently thrive, strengthen tolerance, and cultivate an inclusive character in students towards diversity.

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