IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION VALUES IN MERDEKA CURRICULUM AT SMAN 7 BEKASI CITY

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia is a large country and has diversity in terms of ethnicity, religion, race, ethnicity, culture, language and so on. The pluralism of Indonesian society is a big challenge in maintaining unity and integrity. The world of education is one of the institutions that plays an important role in maintaining the integrity and unity of society through implementing the values of multicultural education in schools. multicultural education as a perspective that recognizes the political, social, and economic realities experienced by each individual in complex and culturally diverse human encounters and reflects the importance of culture, race, sexuality and gender, ethnicity, religion, social status, economics, and exceptions in the educational process. This research aims to get an in-depth picture of how multicultural education values are implemented in the independent curriculum at SMA Negeri 7 Bekasi City. The approach used in this research is a qualitative research approach with the method used is a case study. In the qualitative approach, researchers used interview data collection techniques, observation and documentation studies at SMAN 7 Bekasi City schools, selecting informants using purposive sampling techniques. The results of the research is the school community's understanding of the concept of multicultural education is very good because the school community already understands the essence of the concept of multicultural education, namely education about the values of diversity that exist in society, including diversity of ethnicity, religion, language, race, culture, gender and including differences in socio-economic background.

Keywords: *Diversity Indonesia, multicultural education, merdeka curriculum*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as the largest archipelago in the world with a total of 13,000 islands, a condition that brings the impact of very rich social and cultural diversity. According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics, Indonesia has around 300 ethnic groups, 1,340 languages, and has six religions embraced by the community

(Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Konghuchu) and various sects of belief (Izzah, 2020).

The diversity of Indonesian society must be maintained as a gift from God Almighty to build a peaceful and harmonious community life. The diversity of Indonesian society can be used as a force to increase productivity, creative problem solving, development of cognitive and moral reasoning, forming a vision of the problem from several perspectives, improving social relations, and general cultivation of interaction and the ability to cooperate with colleagues from different ethnic backgrounds or cultural environments (Lukešová & Martincová, 2015). To achieve such goals, Indonesia has Pancasila as a national ideology that unites the diversity of Indonesian society. Indonesia is grateful for having Pancasila as the nation's ideology with the motto "bhinneka tunggal ika" which means that although different, they are still one, it will support the integration and unity of Indonesia's diverse communities (Saraswati et al., 2015; Saraswati et al., 2022).

Indonesia has a dark history of humanitarian conflicts due to diversity issues. The initial factor in the conflict is the emergence of *stereotypes* about differences in ethnicity, religion, race, ethnicity, culture or differences between groups of people (Supriatin & Nasution, 2017). Not a few people died or became victims in the dark tragedy of the bloody conflict. Some cases that have occurred such as: first, sentiment or violence against ethnic Chinese in Jakarta in May 1998 in conjunction with the reformation event where many ethnic Chinese women became victims of sexual violence and looting (Hikmawati, 2017). Secondly, *the* conflict or war between religions in North Maluku in 1999 between Muslims and Christians which caused not a few people to die and became one of the darkest histories of interfaith conflict in Indonesia (Irfan, 2022).

Thirdly, the conflict in East Timor that led to East Timor being separated from Indonesia. Although this was more of a political issue at the time, the factor of inter-religious conflict such as the harassment of the Catholic religion and violence against the Pastor of the Catholic leader that occurred at that time (Irfan, 2022). Fourth, there was the case of conflict between Dayak and Madura tribes in Poso in 2001, which caused approximately 2,000 lives to be lost and made the people of the Madura tribe have to leave Kalimantan at that time, for fear of a bigger conflict. Before the peak of the conflict in 2001, the conflict had started in 1997 and there was no serious effort to end the conflict (Sholeh et al., 2022). These are some examples of the dark history of inter-SARA conflicts that occurred in Indonesia in the past.

Education is one of the important elements in securing the values of diversity and unity in Indonesia (Rustanto, 2015). Various problems regarding diversity issues such as intolerance, and discrimination can be eliminated through education, but in reality, the world of education is also not free from these problems. The phenomenon of the problem of diversity issues in the world of education can be seen from vertical and horizontal differences (Sopiansyah, 2021). The problem of horizontal differences includes issues of ethnicity, race, religion and intergroup,

specifically the problem of differences including differences in culture, customs or habits, language, clothing and diverse ethnic symbols. Vertical problems involve differences in the upper and lower layers in the social, economic, political and educational fields.

Some examples of problems in the world of education related to diversity issues are the problem of children who are victims of bullying at SD Pekayon Pasar Rebo, Jakarta. JS admitted that he was often treated harshly and received verbal violence because he was considered not of indigenous ethnicity (Putera, 2017). The victim was often labelled with the term "china ahok" where Ahok at that time was the governor of DKI Jakarta who came from ethnic Chinese and was involved in a blasphemy case. Another example of cases that occur today is *cyber bullying* or SARA-based verbal violence on social media, this phenomenon continues to increase in Indonesia (Nurhadiyanto, 2019). As stated by the Minister of Human Development and Culture (PMK) who explained that one of the surveys conducted in 2020 stated that children aged 12-17 years, 45 per cent experienced *bullying* cases. Most cases of *bullying* found are *cyber bullying* which is also related to the problem of differences in ethnic or cultural backgrounds (Utami, 2022).

Cases of religious intolerance have also occurred in several schools in Indonesia, such as at SMK N 2 Padang in 2021 where one of the female students who had a non-Muslim religion was forced to wear a headscarf. This certainly raises cons in society and has become a problem that is widely discussed in the world of education, especially in Indonesia (Rosmayanti et al., 2023). Another example of a case that occurs in educational institutions is the problem of students mocking their friends because of different language accents. This can cause conflict and disturb the mental health of students. When it continues to happen, it will cause children to lose their original identity and feel inferior to their regional characteristics. These problems cannot be considered "trivial" or "easy", they can trigger more and bigger problems if left unchecked. *Bullying* on the basis of racial differences at school will have a negative impact on the mental health of the victim (Amalia, 2023). Further negative impacts are excessive anxiety, depression, and dropping out of school due to the *bullying* action (Faizah & Zaujatul, 2017).

In addition, there are several examples of vertical conflict cases in schools such as bullying or bullying of students who have poor economic backgrounds, as well as differences in parental backgrounds in educational and political strata. It is not uncommon for students to feel uncomfortable in school because of vertical conflicts that often arise in schools, and it is not uncommon for vertical conflict problems to spread outside the school or community.

Here the role of the teacher is very important in helping to create inclusive education for all learners, as stated by Minsih et al. (2021) said in their research teachers must be able to create an inclusive educational environment by accepting all the differences that exist in students. However, the reality faced in the field in this case is that teachers also still experience some problems in terms of literacy or understanding of sociocultural diversity issues.

Hufron et al. (2022) in their research on teachers' perceptions of multicultural education explained that the literacy skills of teachers regarding multicultural education are still only limited to the education of various kinds of customs, tribes, cultures and languages that exist in Indonesia. In line with that according to Usman et al. (2022) teachers miss providing a deeper understanding of how important the differences that exist in society. The development of multicultural education both in schools and in society continues to experience the dynamics and challenges of rapid change. Multicultural education aims to eliminate discrimination against minority or marginalised communities to gain recognition of equal rights as citizens (Starkey, 2021).

The government through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology has launched the independent curriculum as the new curriculum to replace the 2013 curriculum (K13). According to the Minister of Education and Culture, Nadhim Anwar Makarim, the independent curriculum is expected to eliminate the three big sins of education in Indonesia today, namely intolerance, violence, and bullying. However, the implementation of the independent curriculum faces many challenges and problems, such as the process of compiling the Education Unit Curriculum (KTSP), implementing the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), assessment, and other adaptations (Armadani et al., 2023). In line with that, research conducted by Ihsan (2022) explained that teachers have more challenges in terms of preparing learning and all independent curriculum tools to adapt to the challenges of the 21st century, but are still struggling and in the adaptation stage. Several other problems related to the implementation of the independent curriculum are not yet optimal in implementing the new curriculum, but each school is trying to improve the existing shortcomings, so that in the future the objectives of implementing the independent curriculum can be achieved (Hutabarat et al., 2022).

From the phenomenon of the above problems, it certainly confirms that understanding and tolerance of plurality in the world of education has an important role and must be given special attention. Do not let problems related to issues that arise from sociocultural diversity such as SARA discrimination, *bullying*, cases of intolerance and so on still occur in schools and cause more problems and threaten national integration (Ibrahim, 2013). One of the approaches to solving problems related to diversity issues in society is through the implementation of multicultural education values based on responsive pedagogy and well implemented in an independent curriculum (Purwasih et al., 2023). From the above explanation, the author is interested in conducting research with the title Implementation of multicultural education values in the independent curriculum at SMAN 7 Bekasi City.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative research approach, the selection of a qualitative approach in this study aims to describe and analyze phenomena, events, educational social activities, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, thoughts of people individually or in groups about how the implementation of multicultural education values in the independent curriculum (Sukmadinata, 2020). The method used is the case study method, the selection of the case study method aims to reveal the characteristics of a problem, but how and why the characteristics of the case are formed and have uniqueness and are studied intensively (Assyakurrohim et al., 2023). The case study studied in this research is the implementation of multicultural education values in the independent curriculum at SMAN 7 Bekasi City. The author chose this school because it has a variety of diverse students from various religions, ethnicities, cultures, and so on, this is because SMAN 7 Bekasi City because of its location in the city and directly borders several big city areas, such as Jakarta, Bogor, and Depok. From the author's initial observations before choosing this school because of conducting initial observations first to several schools in Bekasi City, and the results SMAN 7 Bekasi City has a high complexity of diversity. This school has religious diversity which is illustrated by the data details of the number of students who are Muslim approximately 950 students, Christian approximately 111 students, and Hindu Buddhist as many as 6 students, there are also those who adhere to the religion of belief totaling 1 student. The ethnic background of the school community at SMA N 7 Bekasi City is also very diverse, some come from Sundanese, Javanese, Batak, Palembang, Ambon, NTT, Aceh, and so on. In addition, this school implements the independent curriculum, which makes it relevant for this study. This study has several key informants who were selected based on purposive sampling, which is a sample selection technique where the sample is selected based on certain considerations. The key informants in this study are the Principal, Vice Principal for Curriculum, Sociology subject teacher, Pancasila Education teacher, and History teacher, the subject teacher was chosen because the implementation of multicultural education values is integrated into the content of the subject matter. In addition, other key informants are education staff, and students in grades X, XI who use the independent curriculum, for class XII is not sampled because class XII is still using the 2013 curriculum. Additional informants are parents or guardians of students. The data collection techniques used in this research are observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Data analysis techniques in this study include data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The discussion in this study consists of three sub-discussions, namely: understanding of the school community of SMAN 7 Bekasi City about the values of multicultural education, obstacles to the implementation of multicultural education values and solutions to overcome obstacles to the implementation of multicultural education in the independent curriculum at SMAN 7 Bekasi City.

School Members of SMAN 7 Bekasi City's Understanding of Multicultural Education Values

SMAN 7 Bekasi City is one of the schools that has a very high complexity of diversity, both diversity of ethnicity, religion, race, ethnicity, culture, language, socio-economic strata of parents, gender, and so on. On the one hand, this phenomenon is an asset and on the other hand, it is a challenge that can cause conflicts both vertically and horizontally. Knowledge and understanding of the whole school community at SMAN 7 Bekasi City about the concept of multicultural education is needed to avoid things that could potentially disrupt the activities at school.

Based on the interviews with the informants, namely the school community of SMAN 7 Bekasi City such as the principal, vice principal for curriculum, teachers, education staff, students and parents of students, the majority already have an understanding of the nature and urgency of multicultural education. The school community has understood that multicultural education is education for the values of diversity that exist in society including diversity of ethnicity, religion, language, race, culture, gender and including differences in socio-economic background. School members understand how to understand the values of multicultural education such as the values of tolerance, humanity, pluralism, democracy and unity as an important effort in creating equality and inclusive schools.

The understanding of the nature of multicultural education must also be supported by the implementation of universal values of multicultural education in schools. The universal values of multicultural education understood by the school community include the first value of tolerance, based on the results of the researcher's analysis, the values of tolerance at SMAN 7 Bekasi City are highly maintained and respected, especially the value of tolerance between religious communities in the school. This is obtained from the results of the researchers' analysis of school programs such as the morning faith and devotion (IMTAQ) development activities that facilitate all religions without exception, so that no one feels that they are not facilitated in worship activities and the cultivation of character character. The impact of this morning IMTAQ faith and devotion coaching activity for students will feel accustomed to differences and respect for fellow religious people to worship according to their beliefs (Jayadi et al., 2022). This is also in line with one of the dimensions of multicultural education described by James Banks, namely an empowering school culture or building a multicultural culture in schools, which organizes schools so that students from various groups get equality without discrimination (Ulmi et al., 2022).

Second, the value of equality is prioritized in the entire process of activities in the school to support character building and student achievement. The entire school community highly supports the value of equality, especially teachers who play a role in realizing the values of equality, such as in the process of socialization with students both in the teaching process in the classroom and outside the classroom never distinguish one another, let alone discriminate to support the achievements

of all students (Hanum, 2023). In line with what James Banks said, one of the dimensions of multicultural education is the pedagogy of equality, namely teachers must change the way they teach to facilitate the academic achievement of diverse students from various groups. This also includes a consistent teaching style by looking at differences in different ethnic or cultural backgrounds (Ningtyas et al., 2023). Teachers are agents of unity and cultural transformation for students therefore education is an important means to uphold the ideals of national unity and integrity (Seman et al., 2011).

Third is the value of democracy, the existence of democratic ideology in education shows recognition of the leadership of all students and provides opportunities for the development of students (Pradana, 2017). From the results of the researcher's analysis, the value of democracy at SMA N 7 Bekasi City is highly upheld, for example illustrated by the election of the student council chairman who gives equal rights to all students without distinguishing ethnicity, religion, race, culture, gender and socio-economic status. Fourth, the value of pluralism has understood how the values of pluralism must be maintained amid the complexity of the diversity of the school community. This pluralism value is not an idea that assumes that all religions are the same, but it is an idea to respect religious differences and facilitate all school members in carrying out worship in accordance with their religion and beliefs. Because diversity in society often leads to negative actions against people of other religions, pluralism will give people the view that everyone has the same rights, including the right to choose and practice their own religion (Lestari, 2020). Understanding the value of pluralism is one of the supporters in the dimensions of multicultural education, namely the decrease in cases of violence that occur in the world of education, both physical and verbal violence related to racial and gender issues (Primasari et al., 2021). Fifth is the value of respect for cultural roots, school community members, especially students, really appreciate the culture of the people in Indonesia. This is integrated into several school programs such as the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) which has the theme of diversity by displaying various cultures throughout Indonesia. The implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) provides space and opportunities for students to foster character in line with Pancasila values (Natalia et al., 2023).

In addition, the Intra-School Student Organization (OSIS) also has an Abang Mpok agenda work program which is carried out as a festival celebration of various cultures from Indonesia to be displayed at school. There are several factors that support the understanding of multicultural education in the school community of SMAN 7 Bekasi City, both internal and external factors. Internal factors that support include the following: School policies, teacher training, and organizational culture have a significant impact on the school community's understanding of multicultural education. Some school policies that support the internalization of multicultural education values can run well at SMAN 7 Bekasi City are: First is the implementation program of the project to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students (P5), the

school runs a project on the theme of diversity to support the character of students who are anti-discrimination, anti-bullying and respect the differences that exist in society.

SMAN 7 Bekasi City also has a superior program that is not available in all schools in Bekasi City, namely the faith and piety character building program in the morning which starts at 06.30 WIB. All religious communities in SMAN 7 Bekasi City are required to participate in this activity, because the school has provided and facilitated all religions. Muslims perform tadarus and occasional dhuha prayers, Christians are provided with a separate place for morning prayers or services, and Hindus and Buddhists are also provided with a room and allowed to perform morning prayers. Schools that have clear policies and provide regular training related to multiculturalism tend to have a better level of understanding. This is in line with research conducted by Hidayah (2018) that training on the implementation of multicultural values in schools is needed to support teachers' competencies to create an inclusive educational environment.

Table 1.
Implementation of Understanding Multicultural Education Values
at SMAN 7 Bekasi City

Understanding the Values of Multicultural Education	Findings
Understanding the nature of multicultural education among school community of SMAN 7 Bekasi City	Overall, the school community at SMAN 7 Bekasi City, including the principal, vice principal, teachers, students, and education personnel, have understood the nature of multicultural education as a process of appreciating the values of diversity, including appreciation of differences in ethnicity, religion, race, ethnicity, culture, as well as differences in socioeconomic background.
Understanding and Internalising Universal Values of Multicultural Education	Overall, knowledge and understanding of the universal values of multicultural education which include the value of equality, the value of tolerance, the value of democracy, the value of pluralism and the value of respect for cultural roots have been internalised in intracurricular and extracurricular activities at school
Internal and external factors that support the understanding of multicultural education values of the school community of SMAN 7 Bekasi City	1. There are several internal factors that support the school community's understanding of multicultural education at SMA N 7 Bekasi City, including the following: School policies, teacher training, and organisational culture have a significant impact on the school community's understanding of multicultural education. 2. External factors that support the understanding of multicultural education at SMA N 7 Bekasi can work well, namely support from interested

Understanding the Values of Multicultural Education	Findings
	parties, families and the social environment also play an important role in shaping the understanding of school members. Active collaboration between the school and the community can increase understanding and support for multicultural education

Source: Researcher (2024)

Barriers to the Implementation of Multicultural Education Values in the Merdeka Curriculum at SMAN 7 Bekasi City

The process of implementing the concept of multicultural education values in the independent curriculum is not an easy thing, there are obstacles faced. Based on the results of the researcher's analysis, there are several factors that hinder the implementation of multicultural education values in the independent curriculum at SMAN 7 Bekasi City, including the following: First, there is a lack of understanding and good implementation of multicultural education values among students. There are still obstacles in the implementation of multicultural education at SMAN 7 Bekasi City, one of which is joking among friends but offending or bringing ethnic, religious, racial, and ethnic backgrounds, for example calling their friends as "China Ahok", "Jawa Ireng / Black Java" "Ambon", etc. This is feared to be able to increase the number of students in the school. It is feared that this could lead to bullying or further conflict. Joking with friends but bringing up ethnic, religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds makes those who are minorities uncomfortable in interacting and socializing at school. This is certainly understandable because as learners and normal humans in general do not understand how the condition of their hearts and minds when their friends invite jokes but allude to different ethnic, religious, racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Second, is the challenge of collaborative multicultural education and the new independent curriculum. The point is how the collaborative implementation process is still groping for how it can run according to the expected goals. Schools are still in the process of adapting and finding the best formula, because the independent curriculum as a new curriculum was implemented first in the 2022/2023 school year and second in the 2023/2024 school year. This certainly requires more time for teachers and students to adapt well to the new curriculum. Third, there is still a lack of teaching staff for Hindu Buddhist religious education teachers in schools. This also has an impact on students who are Hindus and Buddhists to be able to maximize learning and carry out religious activities at school.

Solutions to Overcoming Barriers to the Implementation of Multicultural Education Values at SMAN 7 Bekasi City

Based on the results of interviews conducted by researchers, there are several solutions that have been explored to overcome obstacles in the implementation of multicultural education in the independent curriculum at SMAN 7 Bekasi City: First,

is to maximize the project of strengthening the Pancasila student profile (P5) on the theme of diversity in the independent curriculum, the implementation of the P5 theme of diversity aims to provide good knowledge and understanding of the diversity of multicultural Indonesian society. Learners are expected to appreciate the reality of pluralism in ethnicity, religion, ethnicity, race, socio-economic strata and gender, in the end, they will be able to accept diverse groups of society as a whole. Second, is raising awareness of the importance of multicultural education in schools through school programs. Raising awareness of the importance of multicultural education in schools can be done with several steps, such as integrating programs in schools that instill the values of multicultural education in schools. SMAN 7 Bekasi City has several excellent programs that provide equality to all school members, such as character and faith building activities in the morning, both for those who are Muslim, Christian and Hindu Buddhist. Third, is creating an inclusive school environment. Diversity at SMAN 7 Bekasi City is both an asset and a challenge. The school tries to create an inclusive environment, where all school members without exception get equal opportunities and rights without any discrimination due to ethnic background, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic strata and so on.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of multicultural education values in schools has an urgency to foster students to become cultured human beings, human beings who appreciate the diversity of each different, be it the diversity of ethnicity, religion, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, socio-economic conditions and so on to build Indonesia into an advanced nation in the midst of the challenges of information flow and the rapid development of the times. SMAN 7 Bekasi City is one of the schools that has a very high sociocultural diversity but is able to maintain and implement the values of multicultural education well in the educational environment. This can be concluded from the good understanding of multicultural education values of the school community and being able to implement multicultural education values such as the value of tolerance, pluralism, democracy, equality and cultural respect through activities and programs at school, both intracurricular and extracurricular activities.

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