

# Implementation of Multicultural Education to Strengthen Religious Tolerance Character

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Accepted: Marc 8 <sup>th</sup> 2023	Reviewed: Apr 13 <sup>th</sup> 2023	Published: May 30 <sup>th</sup> 2023
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**Abstract:** The implementation of multicultural education is a well-planned learning process that embraces the diversity of cultural backgrounds and societal norms. The character of Religious Tolerance Cooperation is an attitude of respecting differences in beliefs without considering others' backgrounds, all for a common goal. The objectives of this research are: 1) to understand the implementation of Multicultural Education in strengthening the character of Religious Tolerance at SMAN 1 Waru, Sidoarjo; 2) to comprehend and analyze the strengthening of the character of Religious Tolerance at SMAN 1 Waru, Sidoarjo; 3) to understand and analyze the supporting and inhibiting factors of the implementation of Multicultural Education in strengthening the character of Religious Tolerance at SMAN 1 Waru, Sidoarjo. This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach, and the data collection methods include observation, interviews, and documentation. The data analysis technique is inductive and involves data reduction, data display, verification, and conclusion. The results of the implementation of Multicultural Education in strengthening the character of Religious Tolerance at SMAN 1 Waru, Sidoarjo are as follows: The school adopts the 2013 curriculum, and the methods used for multicultural education are contribution and enrichment. The implementation of Multicultural Education at SMAN 1 Waru, Sidoarjo includes having four religions represented at the school, namely Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, and Hinduism. The school provides teachers for each religion practiced by the students. The school follows the 5 S approach and engages in various activities such as extracurricular programs, OSIS (Student Council), and School Company. The results of strengthening the character of Religious Tolerance Cooperation are as follows: Teachers provide advice on multicultural education, instill values of mutual respect, appreciation, and acceptance of learning realities, support each other's religious celebrations despite different beliefs, and allow freedom to pray according to each individual's beliefs.

**Keywords:** implementation, multicultural education, character, religious tolerance.

## Introduction

When societies and civilizations around the world move towards modernity, there is a shift in attitudes and behaviors from hunting and gathering societies to the following

stages<sup>1</sup>: pastoralist societies, horticultural societies, agriculturalist societies, industrial societies, and information societies.

Indonesia is one of the countries rich in diversity. This truth can be seen from its socio-cultural and geographical conditions, which are extremely diverse and vast. Currently, there are about 13 thousand large and small islands in the territory of the Republic of Indonesia, with a population of over 200 million people, consisting of 300 ethnic groups speaking nearly 200 different languages<sup>2</sup>. They also adhere to various religions and beliefs such as Islam, Catholicism, Protestant Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and various other beliefs<sup>3</sup>.

This diversity is further reflected in the five principles of the state known as Pancasila, with the first principle emphasizing the belief in one supreme God. This ensures that the state guarantees the right of every Indonesian citizen to embrace their religion or belief. Therefore, the first principle of Pancasila does not favor any specific religious or belief system.

While Indonesia should take pride in having such a motto, in reality, this motto has become merely a phrase often repeated without being practiced. The values embodied in the motto have been eroding since long ago. This multicultural condition of Indonesia cannot be denied to be susceptible to nepotism, corruption, violence, and even bloody conflicts, eroding the sense of humanity.

One concrete and tragic event for the nation was the "Islamic-Christian War" in North Maluku from 1999-2003. This conflict not only claimed a significant number of lives but also destroyed thousands of properties belonging to the people, including 400 churches and 30 mosques. The ethnic conflict between the Dayak and Madurese lasted from 1931 to 2000 and resulted in the loss of about 2,000 lives<sup>4</sup>.

Although these conflicts seem to have stopped and been resolved, there may still be lingering disappointment and sorrow among the affected groups or descendants of the victims. If such conflicts are left unaddressed, they will undermine the values of diversity and unity of the nation, as promoted by the spirit of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). To prevent or at least minimize such occurrences, efforts are needed to address the imbalance in multiculturalism<sup>5</sup>.

The most suitable program to tackle this issue is "multicultural education." Multiculturalism should be integrated into the education system, especially in fostering unity

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<sup>1</sup> John C Caldwell, *Demographic Transition Theory* (Springer, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Dinar Fatmawati, "Islam and Local Wisdom in Indonesia," *Journal of Social Science* 2, no. 1 (2021): 20–28.

<sup>3</sup> Gavin W Jones, "Religion and Education in Indonesia," *Indonesia*, no. 22 (1976): 19–56.

<sup>4</sup> Niels Spierings, "How Islam Influences Women's Paid Non-Farm Employment: Evidence from 26 Indonesian and 37 Nigerian Provinces," *Review of Religious Research* 56 (2014): 399–431.

<sup>5</sup> Taylor Cox Jr, "The Multicultural Organization," *Academy of Management Perspectives* 5, no. 2 (1991): 34–47.

and national spirit, in line with the spirit of Indonesia's independence in 1945, which marks the foundation of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI)<sup>6</sup>.

The term "multiculturalism" was first introduced by Charles Hobart, stating that "cultural differences in a society are human rights"<sup>7</sup>. According to Andersen and Cushner<sup>8</sup> multicultural education can be understood as education about cultural diversity. James Banks<sup>9</sup> defines multicultural education as education for people of color. This means that multicultural education aims to explore differences as a given fact (a divine gift/nature) and promote tolerance and egalitarianism.

In Indonesia, multiculturalism has existed since the establishment of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia in the mid-1940s, as reflected in the motto "Bhineka Tunggal Ika" (Unity in Diversity). However, its role in the education system must be more convincing for society. Indonesia has diverse population comprises individuals of different religions, ethnicities, languages, cultures, and backgrounds<sup>10</sup>.

Given the nation's multicultural nature and the existing social tensions that have led to conflicts, one alternative is to promote multicultural awareness to change the mindset of society, encouraging openness and respect for diversity.

According to etymology, character comes from the Greek word "carving patterns" and "implementing goodness values in actions in accordance with moral norms, resulting in individuals with noble character"<sup>11</sup>. The character represents an individual's way of thinking, implementing goodness values in actions or behaviors, which become distinctive traits of each individual. Individuals with good character can make decisions and take responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

"Tolerance" comes from the Latin word "tolerantia," which means leniency, gentleness of heart, accommodation, and patience. In general, tolerance refers to an open, broad-minded, willing, and gentle attitude<sup>12</sup>. Tolerance aims to (1) maintain the existence of religion, as human beings, in all aspects of life, are interconnected with others, leading people to consider others and prioritize justice, (2) maintain national unity and national spirit, which strengthens the bond of solidarity among communities, facilitating people of different religions to realize and maintain harmony, and (3) create a religious society, reflected in harmonious cooperation among various religious groups.

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<sup>6</sup> Ali Miftakhu Rosyad, "The Integration of Islamic Education and Multicultural Education in Indonesia," *Al-Afkar, Journal For Islamic Studies* (2020): 164–181.

<sup>7</sup> Charles W Hobart, "Eskimo Education in the Canadian Arctic," *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue canadienne de sociologie* 7, no. 1 (1970): 49–69.

<sup>8</sup> Muhammad Sahal, Akhmad Arif Musadad, and Muhammad Akhyar, "Tolerance in Multicultural Education: A Theoretical Concept," *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding* 5, no. 4 (2018): 115, <http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v5i4.212>.

<sup>9</sup> James A Banks, *An Introduction to Multicultural Education*. (ERIC, 1994).

<sup>10</sup> Chang-Yau Hoon, "Putting Religion into Multiculturalism: Conceptualising Religious Multiculturalism in Indonesia," *Asian Studies Review* 41, no. 3 (2017): 476–493, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2017.1334761>.

<sup>11</sup> Aren M Wilson-Wright, "The Helpful God: A Reevaluation of the Etymology and Character of (ʔ)el Šadday," *Vetus Testamentum* 69, no. 1 (2019): 149–166.

<sup>12</sup> a S Hornby, "Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary," *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*, 2005.

In the district of Sidoarjo, there are several formal educational institutions, including senior high schools, with diverse backgrounds of students. One such school is SMA Negeri 1 Waru - Sidoarjo, a school with an excellent reputation that has students from various ethnic, religious, racial, and social backgrounds.

Based on the data obtained during observation and interviews with Mr. Asmali, S.Kom, as the vice-principal of curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Waru - Sidoarjo, the students at the school come from four religions, with the majority being Muslims, followed by Christians, Catholics, and Hindus. Six recognized religions in Indonesia, namely Buddhism and Confucianism, do not have followers in this school. Additionally, most of the teachers are Muslims, with four Islamic Religious Education teachers and three non-Muslim teachers, including one each for Catholic, Protestant, and Hindu Religious Education. The diversity also extends to other aspects such as ethnicity, race, social backgrounds, and so on.

SMA Negeri 1 Waru - Sidoarjo offers extracurricular activities and has an active Student Council (OSIS). Besides, there is a "School Company" activity, which focuses on entrepreneurship, where students work together in their own business endeavors. The school won first place in Student Company (The Most Innovative) competition.

The purpose of this research is to understand (1) the implementation of multicultural education at SMA Negeri 1 Waru - Sidoarjo, (2) to comprehend and analyze the strengthening of religious tolerance character in the school, and (3) to understand and analyze the supporting and inhibiting factors of multicultural education in strengthening religious tolerance character at SMA Negeri 1 Waru - Sidoarjo.

Based on the above discussion, the researcher is interested in conducting a study with the title "Implementation of Multicultural Education in Strengthening Religious Tolerance Character at SMA Negeri 1 Waru - Sidoarjo."

## **Method**

This research is a qualitative descriptive study conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Waru - Sidoarjo. Data collection techniques involve observation, interviews, and documentation. The data analysis technique used is inductive, including data reduction, data display, verification, and conclusions.

## **Result and Discussion**

### ***Multicultural education***

Multicultural education is a concept or idea that recognizes and values the importance of cultural and ethnic diversity in shaping the lifestyle, social experiences, personal identity, and educational opportunities of individuals, groups, or nations<sup>13</sup>.

Multicultural education is an educational strategy applied to all subjects by utilizing the cultural differences present among students, such as ethnic backgrounds, religions, languages, genders, social classes, races, abilities, and ages. Its purpose is to make the learning

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<sup>13</sup> Banks, *An Introduction to Multicultural Education*.

process effective and easy while simultaneously developing students' character to be democratic, humanistic, and pluralistic in their environment<sup>14</sup>.

Multicultural education is a response to the development of diversity in school populations, as demanded by the principle of equal rights for every group. James Banks explains that multicultural education has several dimensions that are closely related to each other:

1. Content Integration: Integrating various cultures and groups to illustrate fundamental concepts, generalizations, and theories in subjects or disciplines.
2. Knowledge Construction Process: Helping students understand the cultural implications within a subject or discipline.
3. Equity Pedagogy: Adapting teaching methods to match students' learning styles to facilitate academic achievement for diverse students in terms of race, culture, and social background.
4. Prejudice Reduction: Identifying students' racial characteristics and determining teaching methods, promoting participation in sports and interaction with staff and students of different ethnic and racial backgrounds to create a tolerant and inclusive academic culture. (Yaya Suryana and Rusdiana, 2019:54)

According to Prof. H.A.R Tilaar, multicultural education emerged with the development of the idea and awareness of "interculturalism" after World War II. This concept and awareness were related to international political developments concerning human rights, independence from colonialism, and racial discrimination and the increasing pluralism in Western countries due to migration and the emergence of newly independent states in America and Europe<sup>15</sup>.

In the context of multicultural education, Tilaar explains that the focus is no longer solely on racial, religious, and cultural groups in the domain or mainstream. Multicultural education is actually about caring and understanding differences, or the politics of recognition towards people from minority groups. The term "multicultural education" can be used descriptively and normatively to describe educational issues and problems related to multicultural societies<sup>16</sup>.

Furthermore, it also includes considerations of educational policies and strategies in multicultural societies. In the descriptive context, the curriculum of multicultural education must include subjects such as tolerance, themes related to ethnocultural and religious differences, the dangers of discrimination, conflict resolution, and mediation, human rights, democracy and pluralism, multiculturalism, universal humanity, and other relevant subjects.

Multicultural education honors humanity by recognizing all people as equal, capable of working together, and respecting each other's cultural backgrounds, races, ethnicities, religions, genders, and perspectives. If implemented effectively, this education offers high

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<sup>14</sup> Dharlinda Suri and Dharnita Chandra, "Teacher's Strategy for Implementing Multiculturalism Education Based on Local Cultural Values and Character Building for Early Childhood Education," *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies* 8, no. 4 (2021): 271–285.

<sup>15</sup> H A R Tilaar, *Perubahan Sosial Dan Pendidikan: Pengantar Pedagogik Transformatif Untuk Indonesia* (Penerbit PT. Gramedia Widiasarana Indonesia bekerja sama dengan Center for Education and Community Development Studies, 2002).

<sup>16</sup> Thor-André Skrefsrud, "Enhancing Social Sustainability through Education: Revisiting the Concept of Multicultural Education," in *Ecoteology-Sustainability and Religions of the World* (IntechOpen, 2022).

hopes for improving student achievement while fostering individuals who appreciate differences and can collaborate. It makes them open, friendly, tolerant citizens of Indonesia who respect diversity and take responsibility as citizens.

### **The Objectives of Multicultural Education**

The primary goal of multicultural education is to shift teaching and learning approaches towards providing equal opportunities for every child<sup>17</sup>. Students' identities must be acknowledged in multicultural education, including those from ethnic and racial minorities, diverse religious groups, genders, economic backgrounds, regions/origins, physical and mental disabilities, age groups, and others.

In essence, the aim of multicultural education is to create an inclusive school environment where all students receive their rights without regard to their differences, ensuring they have equal learning opportunities and the chance to achieve success. This requires the collaboration of all school stakeholders to work together towards this shared goal.

### **Multiculturalism in the Qur'an and Hadith**

The Qur'an, as the source of Islamic teachings, was revealed by Allah to humanity through Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to guide attaining happiness and salvation in this world and the hereafter. It serves as a book of guidance, aiming to lead people from darkness towards the bright light of God's path. As stated in the following verse:

*"Alif, Lam, Ra. [This is] a Book which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], that you might bring mankind out of darknesses into the light by permission of their Lord—to the path of the Exalted in Might, the Praiseworthy."* (Surah Ibrahim, 14:1)

The Qur'an, being a universal book of guidance, contains verses with guidelines and core regulations needed for people to organize their lives, including matters related to faith and behavioral conduct in both personal and communal settings. Among the numerous guidelines in the Qur'an, some messages should serve as guidance for maintaining harmony and peace in a multicultural society. Some of these messages are as follows:

1. There is no compulsion in religion. People are free to choose their faith, and those who follow Islam will not be deprived of Allah's mercy. (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:256)
2. Allah has made humanity into different nations and tribes to know one another, not to despise each other. The noblest in the sight of Allah are those who are most righteous. (Surah Al-Hujurat, 49:13)
3. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) stated that all humans are brothers, emphasizing the importance of avoiding suspicion, envy, hatred, and animosity towards one another. Muslims are encouraged to live as brothers and sisters in harmony. (Hadith: Bukhari and Muslim, 6724)

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<sup>17</sup> Earl Bradford Smith, "Approaches to Multicultural Education in Preservice Teacher Education: Philosophical Frameworks and Models for Teaching," *Multicultural Education* 16, no. 3 (2009): 45–50.

From the above Quranic verses and Hadith, it can be understood that multiculturalism is not contradictory to Islamic teachings. Diversity is not a problem; it is a wealth that can complement each other in building a civilized society.

In essence, Islam promotes tolerance, understanding, and respect for diversity. It encourages Muslims to live harmoniously with people of different cultures, beliefs, and backgrounds, fostering an environment of mutual understanding and cooperation. Multiculturalism is, therefore, a concept that aligns with the principles of Islam and should be embraced to create a cohesive and inclusive society.

### **Implementing multicultural education**

requires concrete efforts to apply the values of multiculturalism in schools and society. Some steps that can be taken to implement multicultural education are as follows:

1. **Integration:** Teachers play a crucial role in integrating various cultures and groups in learning. The curriculum should reflect cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity. Multicultural education should teach an understanding of multicultural realities so that students can develop an attitude of appreciation for diversity.
2. **Knowledge Construction:** The multicultural education curriculum should be designed with a multicultural basis. Introducing the history and civilizations of various ethnic or tribal groups can be part of the curriculum. Multicultural education should also teach the values of humanity, democracy, and universalism that exist in religious teachings.
3. **Prejudice Reduction:** Identifying the racial and ethnic characteristics of students and fostering positive interactions between various ethnic and cultural groups in the school environment can help reduce prejudice and create a tolerant academic atmosphere.
4. **Equal Education:** Multicultural education acknowledges equal rights and opportunities for all students. Each student receives fair treatment regardless of their differences.
5. **Character Strengthening:** Character education is essential in developing religious, nationalistic, independent, cooperative, and integrity-oriented attitudes in students. Character building begins with socialization and education from an early age.
6. **Cooperation:** Enhancing cooperation among students in achieving common goals and involving fair task allocation.
7. **Tolerance:** Teaching tolerance to students, which means respecting differences and the views of others.

All these efforts must be consistent and sustainable, involving all stakeholders in the school and community. Effective multicultural education can create an inclusive environment that appreciates diversity and molds a generation capable of harmonious living in a multicultural society.

### ***Implementation of Multicultural Education in Strengthening Cooperation and Religious Tolerance at SMAN 1 Waru Sidoarjo***

#### **Multicultural Education Curriculum**

The school's curriculum is based on the 2013 Curriculum, an improved version of the previous Curriculum KTSP (Kucorikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan). It balances the development of students' spiritual and social attitudes, knowledge, and skills, allowing them

to apply these in various situations within the school and the community. The Curriculum 2013 is an evolution from the previous ones (KBK 2004 and KTSP 2006), aiming to prepare a generation capable of competing with advanced nations like the United States, China, Finland, and Singapore.

#### **Methods of Multicultural Education:**

1) The school uses the Contribution and Enrichment methods in multicultural education. The Contribution method involves students in selecting reading materials together, engaging in shared activities, and appreciating religious and cultural events in the community. The Enrichment method encourages students to evaluate and appreciate different perspectives without changing their own beliefs. The school provides teachers from various religions to support students' diverse backgrounds without imposing changes to their beliefs.

#### **Implementation of Multicultural Education:**

Multicultural education at SMAN 1 Waru Sidoarjo is based on valuing diversity, including religious, linguistic, and ethnic differences. Students from various backgrounds coexist harmoniously, and the school promotes respect, sympathy, empathy, and mutual appreciation.

#### **Strengthening Cooperation and Religious Tolerance:**

To foster cooperation and religious tolerance, the school follows several practices:

1. Teachers provide advice on religious tolerance.
2. Students are encouraged to respect, appreciate, and accept differences.
3. The school supports celebrations of various religious events, with students from different faiths participating in organizing these events.
4. Students are given the freedom to pray according to their beliefs.
5. The 5 S's (Salam, Smile, Greet, Polite, and Respectful) are instilled in the school culture to promote positive interactions.

#### **Conclusion**

Implementing multicultural education in strengthening religious tolerance at SMAN 1 Waru Sidoarjo includes various aspects. Firstly, the school adopts the Curriculum 2013, making it a model school for its application in Indonesia. The curriculum encourages teachers to be creative in teaching methods, focusing on students' observation, questioning, reasoning, experimenting, and networking rather than burdening teachers with content delivery. The approach emphasizes balancing affective and psychomotor aspects alongside cognitive development. Secondly, the school utilizes the Contribution and Enrichment methods in multicultural education. Additionally, to promote religious tolerance, the school provides four Religious Education teachers, implements the 5 S's (Salam, Smile, Greet, Polite, and Respectful) to nurture respectful interactions, and supports various activities such as extracurriculars, OSIS, and School Company. Finally, in strengthening cooperation and



religious tolerance, teachers advise on multicultural education, instill values of respect and acceptance of differences, encourage support for religious celebrations regardless of beliefs, and grant freedom for individual prayer practices.

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