

The Promotion of Multicultural Education in Schools: A study of Teaching Multidisciplinary Courses in Indonesian Schools

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In the era of globalisation expansion, the world is now focussing on multicultural discourse. The current study is conducted in Indonesia and aims to explore the benefits of multicultural education in schools. The present study uses quantitative research to gather the data. A structured questionnaire was prepared to obtain data from in the field. The total number of 400 respondents were selected through purposive random sampling techniques. The researcher visited three central regions in East Java to collect the data. The findings show that multicultural education is implementing a cultural education, religious harmony, and promoting tolerance in the subject. The study also shows that student pluralism is an excellent strategy to promote understanding and harmony among students in schools.

Keywords: *East java, Multicultural education, Schools, Tolerance.*

Introduction

The article aims to address the discourse of multiculturalism and the promotion of tolerance and harmony in Indonesian society. Due to several ethnic and religious associations, in Indonesia it is necessary to have a multicultural discourse and education in schools. Hence, there are many religious schools and universities that are expanding cultural education, such as *'Pancasila.'* The main objective of the *'Pancasila'* is to integrate the Indonesian community or people to become one nation.

'Pancasila' is an essential foundation of Indonesian society, where it is derived from two 'Sanskrit' words: "*panca*", which means five, and "*sila*", which means principle or norms.



The five pillars of ‘Pancasila’ are designed to create a healthy society. They are belief in God, humanity, harmony, democracy, and social justice.

The meaning of multicultural education is based on two terms, education and multicultural. Therefore, the definition of education is to train through teaching, while multicultural means cultural diversity and a variety of politeness. Multiculturalism is a term used to describe a view of or respect for diversities in life or a cultural policy that stresses the acceptance of the diversities in the cultures and ethnicities which exist in a society. Multiculturalism also encompasses ideas, perspectives, policies, attitudes, and acts of a plural country’s societies concerning ethnicity, culture, and religion, among other things, with an aspiration to foster a shared national spirit and pride to preserve such plurality. Multiple studies have evidenced that tolerance holds a critical role in the interactions between cultures, races, genders, and religions (Stolle, Soroka, & Johnson, 2008, pp.57–75; Anderson, 2011).

Multiculturalism must be accompanied by tolerance, through which values of multiculturalism can be better understood. A sociological study a few decades ago, had yet to present any influential and consistent findings to define tolerance (Ferrar, 1976, pp.63–81). Tolerance is discerned as a paradox of the rejection of other groups and the willingness to accept the presence of a different group. It involves feelings, is conditional, and needs compromises (Vogt, 1997).

The practices of multicultural education in Indonesia had actually been built long before the country was established. These practices can be traced to the various missions initiated by social movements springing and developing in the Dutch colonial era. One such social movement was carried out back in 1908, by Boedi Oetomo, an organisation of youths throughout Indonesia. The Youth Pledge (*Deklarasi Sumpah Pemuda*) of 1928 also signified youths’ commitment and determination to defend the unity of Indonesia at that time, in spite of tribal, religious, language, and cultural differences.

This invaluable historical legacy of the nation’s founding fathers seems to have faded from the memories of the Indonesian people of today. It is as if the multiculturalism-inspired byword, “*Bhineka Tunggal Ika*” (Unity in Diversity), is no more than empty words adorning the roll in the grip of the *Garuda*, a symbol of the Republic of Indonesia. The empirical reality relating to weak multiculturalism values (*kebhinekaan*) can be traced back to the extremely centralistic governmental system in Soeharto’s New Order period (1966–1989). The educational system, then, was managed in a centralistic fashion with undue regard to the wealth of Indonesia’s cultural diversity. Even horizontal and vertical conflicts embarking from that period prevail in the lives of the Indonesian people today.

Although Indonesia has been adopting a decentralised governmental system post the New Order era, Tilaar (2003) argued that it is not enough to provide a room for multicultural education to bloom. It is as indicated by the lack of multiculturalism contents in the curricula of all educational levels. The school-based managerial systems are yet to accommodate the participation of local people who come from a range of social, economic, and cultural backgrounds.

Multicultural education is critical to society, especially with sharp polarisation levels and vast differentiations, like in Indonesia. Tilaar (2003) posited that multiculturalism is instrumental to the identity development of the community groups in a nation. In this case, educational systems and processes serve as a pivotal medium for supporting the nation's civilisation. It is through educational institutions that young generations are enabled to understand the significance of the presence of varying cultures within an educational praxis to build a democratic nation and country.

Similar findings were also obtained by Samsuri and Marzuki through their study (2016). Another study on group equality (Khirkam, 2016) shares the view of education's role in teaching an acknowledgment and acceptance of different cultures and identities. The concept of multicultural education, at the very least, must be present in the core values and objectives of education itself, and becomes the spirit of the educational systems and processes. As for the objectives and contents, multicultural education at least must aim to expand the historical (ethno-historical) perspectives that vary between community groups, heighten the awareness of culture and its variety that lives within society, enhance the intellectual competencies of the cultures living in society, eliminate racism and prejudices, and increase the consciousness of the importance of preserving lives and the environment.

This paper starts by outlining the results of a preliminary study on students' understanding of multiculturalism values, students' degree of tolerance of difference and diversity, and multicultural education practices at school. Keeping in view of the objectives, evaluation is conducted on the educational models applied in Indonesia, particularly in relation to multiculturalism teaching at school.

Material and Methods

The current study was conducted in the schools situated within three regions of East Java, Indonesia. The purpose of the study is to use a quantitative research method to explore tolerance and harmony while teaching multicultural education among students. The universe of the study is Surabaya, Bangil-Pasuruan, and Kediri — which are representatives of significant characters of East Javanese culture. The respondents of the study were secondary high school students. The data was collected through cluster random sampling techniques

where the researchers visited general schools, vocational schools, and faith-based schools they were both government and private-owned. The data is presented in tabulation, graph and pictures, where the data was coded and analysed through the SPSS software.

Result and Analysis

Table 1: Variable Data Collected

<i>No.</i>	<i>Variable</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>
A	Age bracket		
1	< 16 years	46	11.5%
2	16–17 years old	310	77.5%
3	> 17 years	44	11.0%
B	Level of schooling of the respondents		
1	General schools	148	37.0
2	Vocational schools	223	55.8
3	Faith-based schools	29	7.3
C	The religion of the respondents		
1.	Islam	349	87.3
2.	Protestants	30	7.5
3.	Catholic	18	4.5
4.	Hindu	2	0.5
5.	Confucianism	1	0.3
D	Ethnic and tribe		
1.	Jawa	330	82.5
2.	Madura	30	7.5
3.	Sunda	3	0.8
4.	Batak	3	0.8
5.	Minang	2	0.5
6.	Betawi	3	0.8
7.	Others	29	7.3
E	Monthly income		
1.	Zero	1	0.3
2.	<Rp. 1,000,000	52	13.0
3.	Rp. 1,000,000–3,000,000	126	31.5
4.	Rp. 3,000,001–5,000,000	153	38.3
5.	Rp. 5,000,001–7,000,000	47	11.8
6.	>Rp. 7,000,000	21	5.3
	Total	400	100.0

Table 1 discussed the socio-demographic variables of the respondents. Age is considered the primary indicator in social sciences research (Westerhof & Barrett, 2005, pp.S129–S136). As the majority (77.5 per cent) of the respondents belonged to the age group of 16–17 years old, more students (55.8 per cent) are studying in the vocational schools in these three regions. The vocational schools provide technical education to the students, and usually, the level of these schools is considered in short-term diplomas and courses.

As the present study addressed the multicultural education learning system, the research adds the variable of religion. Therefore, a majority of 87.3 per cent of the respondents are Muslims, while the second majority is Christians (4.5 per cent Catholic, and 7.5 per cent Protestants). The religious teachings have a diverse impact on the multicultural environment. In fact, religious education supports to create religious harmony in society (Banks & Banks, 2019). Additionally, these respondents have a majority in the ethnic tribe, “Javanese”, as the current study was conducted in Jawa and its surroundings. However, this study was also conducted with respondents of other ethnicities, which included Madura, Sunda, Batak, Minang, and Betawi, among others. In short, the socio-demographic variables also discussed the monthly income of the respondents. Thus, the average income range was “Rupiah 3,000,001–5,000,000”, at 38.3 per cent. It indicates that the respondents are healthy and living prosperous lives. A study conducted by Wang, Xing and Wu (2013) found that students’ lifestyles have impacts on the socio-demographic variables (Wang, Xing & Wu, 2013).

Table 2: To what extent does Social Media prompt the multicultural environment in society?

No.	Variable	Yes	No
1	Have you ever known the term pluralism?	132 (33.0%)	268 (67%)
2	Have you ever known the term of multiculturalism?	164 (41%)	236 (59.0%)
3	Are you an active user of social media or online media?	389 (97.3%)	11 (2.8%)
4	Instagram	323 (80.8%)	77 (19.3%)
5	Facebook	223 (55.8%)	177 (44.3%)
6	Twitter	83 (20.8%)	317 (79.3%)
7	Line	225 (63.8%)	145 (36.3%)
8	YouTube	311 (77.8%)	89 (22.3%)
9	WhatsApp	350 (87.5%)	50 (12.5%)
10	Telegram	30 (7.5%)	370 (92.5%)
11	Television	331 (82.8%)	69 (17.3%)
12	Radio	120 (30.0%)	280 (70.0%)
	Total	400	100

Table 2 has thoroughly discussed the variables that construct pluralism, multiculturalism, and online media. Scholars (Dreher, 2009, pp.445–458; Plaut, Thomas & Goren, 2009, pp.444–446) found that online social media platforms have provided many opportunities for human beings to live without borders and have no differences without creed, caste or religion. The researcher obtained the following response from the respondents regarding the “*Have you ever known the term of pluralism,*”, with a majority (67 per cent) being unfamiliar with the term. There are various studies on pluralism and multiculturalism that indicate the impacts of globalisation on the society, where it transits and transforms the multiculturalism (Kirmayer, 2019). Also, the variables show, “*Have you ever known the term of multiculturalism*”, that it is rare for students to know about it. Furthermore, only 41 per cent said they are familiar with the term.

Additionally, their activities may measure their use of ‘social media’. Thus, “*Are you active users of social media or online media*” returned a result of 97.3 per cent of respondents show active participation on social media accounts. There are several social media accounts which perform and explicit the activities regarding multiculturalism and harmony. The social media apps are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Line, YouTube, Telegram, and other devices, such as radio and television.

Each social media platform had a diverse response from the respondents, such as ‘Instagram’, which is quite famous and a more usable (80.8 per cent) social media application among, Facebook, Twitter, and others. These social media apps enhance the capacity and improve the knowledge of multiculturalism, pluralism, and homogeneity among society. Scholars found that social media have dynamic impacts on education and multiculturalism which transform the hygienic society (Koc-Damgaci & Aydin, 2017, pp.797–810). On the other hand, television and radio have exceeded the transformation process and provide facilities to watch, see, and analyse the multicultural programs that promote pluralism and multiculturalism.

Table 3: If you already knew about pluralism and multiculturalism values, from which sources do you most often get information?

No.	Variable	F	%
1	Social Media	149	37.3
2	Television	86	21.5
3	Radio	31	7.8
4	Newspaper	45	11.3
5	Schools/Islamic boarding	68	17.0
6	Parents	13	3.3
7	Others	8	2.0
	Total	400	100

Table 3 explains the respondents' perception and the sources of pluralism and multiculturalism values, as the diversity of sources of pluralism and multiculturalism values are based on media and society (Budirahayu, Wijayanti & Baskoro, 2018, pp.427–439). However, the current results in a Table 3 show that electronic media, such as television and radio; print media, including newspapers; and social media, such as Facebook, may lead to providing the sources to learn and increase awareness about pluralism and multiculturalism. Whereas, family or parents, and others, explained the value of sources too, as the students who participated spent most of their time in schools. Thus, 17 per cent of the population learns from their schools, which shows their multiculturalism practices and learning from a diverse culture.

Table 4: How often do you get any information related to multiculturalism values?

No.	Variables	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	Mutual respect of differences in traditions	6 (1.5%)	27 (6.8%)	91 (22.8%)	180 (45.0%)	96 (24.0%)
2	Have positive views of diversity	5 (1.3%)	40 (10.0%)	71 (17.8%)	186 (46.5%)	98 (24.5%)
3	Recognise the diversity of groups and cultures	7 (1.8%)	25 (6.3%)	82 (20.5%)	169 (42.3%)	117 (29.3%)
4	Recognise the rights and identities of minority groups	15 (3.8%)	40 (10%)	108 (27%)	153 (38.3%)	84 (21.0%)
5	Recognise intercultural equality, ethnicity, religion, and language	10 (2.5%)	27 (6.8%)	97 (24.3%)	161 (40.3%)	105 (26.3%)
6	Accept the various sub-cultures and preserve diversity	8 (2.0%)	30 (7.5%)	84 (21.0%)	169 (42.3%)	109 (27.3%)
7	Develop the spirit of nationalism on the basis of diversity	6 (1.5%)	25 (6.3%)	91 (22.8%)	162 (40.5%)	116 (29.0%)
8	Respect for cultural differences	6 (1.5%)	36 (9.0%)	91 (22.8%)	166 (41.5%)	101 (25.3%)
9	Have positive views of religions, ethnicities, cultures, and languages diversities	4 (1.0%)	34 (8.5%)	93 (23.3%)	175 (43.8%)	94 (23.5%)
10	Recognise the existence of other groups or cultures	9 (2.3%)	32 (8.0%)	96 (24.0%)	168 (42.0%)	95 (23.8%)

Table 4 shows the variables of multiculturalism, which indicate the frequencies of multicultural activities, which we usually perform in our life. The results on “the mutual respect of differences traditions” shows that the majority (180) of people often meet and greet with people from different tribes, such as Javanese and Sudanese, and only (6) 1.5 per cent of the population never meet, with possibly no chance to greet or interact with each other.

Those who are familiar with the concept and spirit of multiculturalism, are likely to meet and greet people from another side of their social circle. However, a greater value of 46.5 per cent of the respondents have a positive view of diversity. They might be interested in using multiculturalism as the key to promote harmony in society (Ho, 2009, pp.285–293). Whereas, respondents are likely to recognise the diversity of groups and cultures. Therefore, 42.3 per cent are often performing such kinds of activities during their studies or professional life.

Hitherto, the multicultural model applied in Indonesia, is incorporated into civic education through a competence-based curriculum. The relevant competences in Indonesia's educational system are always related to the criteria that is developed and based on certain standards. In multicultural education, for example, one of the relevant criteria is to create a model of democratic participation learning in the classroom, using multiple learning practice combinations (Semiawan et al., 2004, pp.36–46). However, in practice, at various educational levels, the civic education learning models applied apparently underappreciate and underexplore the multiculturalism values which develop in society (Zuriah, 2011, pp.75–86). Meanwhile, in the subject of religious education, there have been no indications of the efforts to teach multiculturalism values.

While taking into consideration human rights, the respondents have recognised the rights and identities of minority groups. They support and raise their voices against the minority discriminations, with 38.3 per cent being sensitive to concerns about minority rights. However, only 40.3 per cent of the population have recognised intercultural equality, ethnicity, religion, and language as the main indicators of the multicultural society. Usually, in general society, people are concerned about cultural assimilation. However, multicultural discourses adjust societies to accept the various sub-cultures and to keep preserving diversity. Similar research by Affif et al. (2017) showed that the subject of religious education, taught in a great many schools in Indonesia, is facing a barrier to multicultural learning material incorporation due to the belief that multicultural education has no root in religious teachings. Despite that, new discourses of multicultural education development through Islamic religious education in Indonesia has emerged, like those initiated by Indrianto (2011), and Murtadho (2016, pp.1–17).

By developing the spirit of nationalism on the basis of diversity, this is how multicultural education provides the platform for the world to gather and enrich the spirit of nationalism and patriotism. The results show that the respondents, at 40.5 per cent, often do such kinds of practices and that enrich their unity and strengthen to perform the national duty. Additionally, it generates respect of other cultures (41.5 per cent), as well as builds nationalism and unity for the country by having a positive view of religions, ethnicities, cultures, and languages diversities (43.8 per cent). In short, multicultural education facilities and enriches the people's capacity to recognise the existence of other groups or cultures to remain in society.

Table 5: The table discussed the Generalised Linear Models between Religion and Culture

Parameter	B	Std. Error	95% Wald Confidence Interval		Hypothesis Test		
			Lower	Upper	Wald Chi-Square	Df	Sig.
(Intercept)	1.177	0.0268	1.125	1.230	1924.300	1	0.000
(Scale) a	0.983	0.0695	0.855	1.129			

Dependent Variable: Respondent Religion [Culture]

Model: (Intercept)

a. Maximum likelihood estimate.

Table 5 shows the linear model between religion and culture that enhances the capacity of multiculturalism in society. The linear regression model shows a high significant ($B=0.983$, 0.000) relationship between culture and education. As the multicultural education provided the opportunity to gather data on how the religion and culture can be correlated with each other, the existence results in the previous analysis also support that multicultural education is the main discourse to train the peoples' capacity and make the world more liveable.

Conclusion

Multicultural education and cultural unity are to support and build the capacity of people to live in a healthy society. The current study deploys the concept of multicultural discourse in Indonesia, especially in high schools in East Java, which appeared to be insufficient in improving students' understanding of multiculturalism. The results of the study showed that the respondents' knowledge and understanding of multiculturalism were relatively high to their degree of tolerance of diversity and difference.

The study also showed that multicultural education was taught separately in three different subjects: Pancasila, civic, and religious education. Although, every subject taught multiculturalism that integrates and creates harmony among citizens. These kinds of learning materials support and build a sense of human beings in society. The study also suggests that multicultural education is the need of the society to promote harmony and integrate the world.



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Appendix

No	Variables discussed
1.	Have you ever known the term of pluralism?
2.	Have you ever known the term of multiculturalism?
3.	Mutual respect of differences traditions
4.	Have positive views of religions, ethnicities, cultures, and languages diversities
5.	Avoid disputes because of differences in ethnicities, religions, cultures, and languages
6.	Giving place to people of different religions, ethnicities, cultures, and languages
7.	Accept the presence of people of different religions, ethnicities, cultures and language
8.	Recognise the diversity of groups, languages, and cultures
9.	Recognise the rights and identities of minority groups
10.	Recognise intercultural equality, ethnicity, religion, and language
11.	Accept the various sub-cultures and preserve diversity
12.	Develop the spirit of nationalism on the basis of diversity
13.	If you already knew about pluralism and multiculturalism values, from which sources do you most often get information?
14.	Mutual respect of differences traditions
15.	Have positive views of religions, ethnicities, cultures, and languages diversities
16.	Avoid disputes because of differences in ethnicities, religions, cultures, and languages
17.	Giving place to people of different religions, ethnicities, cultures, and languages
18.	Accept the presence of people of different religions, ethnicities, cultures, and language
19.	Recognise the diversity of groups, languages, and cultures
20.	Recognise the rights and identities of minority groups
21.	Recognise intercultural equality, ethnicity, religion, and language
22.	Accept the various sub-cultures and preserve diversity
23.	Develop the spirit of nationalism on the basis of diversity