

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

**THE IMPORTANCE OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN REDUCING STUDENT PREJUDICE**

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**ABSTRACT**

The Importance of Reducing Students' Presuppositions in Multicultural Education. Multicultural education is education that respects diversity and includes perspectives from various cultural groups regularly. An important goal of multicultural education is equal opportunities for all students with the hope of closing the academic achievement gap between students from the majority culture and students from minority groups (Bennet in Santrock, 2019). In this research, the library study research method was used. Sukardi (in Handika, 2020) explains that library study is a required activity in research, especially academic research which has the main aim of developing theoretical aspects. The research data collection technique is collecting data from journal articles, and books related to the theory. relevant as well as from several sources on the internet. Multiculturalism provides space to create an understanding of the existence of various cultural differences in society. Education in the family environment tends not to be given much attention, considering that children's education is the responsibility of the school. This view is wrong because education is an obligation for all parties, especially parents at home. Prejudice is a negative attitude towards a group that is different from one's group based on certain characteristics. Therefore, efforts made to prevent and intervene against prejudice in children or students should involve handling the environment around the child. Multicultural education can foster more positive attitudes towards members of different community groups.

**Keywords:** *Education, Multicultural, Prejudice, Characteristics*

**INTRODUCTION**

Indonesia is the largest multicultural country in the world. According to Nurcahyono (in Haslani, 2020), Indonesia consists of various ethnic groups, and has 13,000 large and small islands. Its population is around 250 million people with various diversity consisting of 300 tribes and 200 languages. In addition, Indonesian people adhere to various religions such as Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, as well as various belief systems. A multicultural society is a society that contains harmonious social dynamics of various groups with cultural backgrounds such as ethnicity, language, social status, economy, and gender (Hanurawan, 2019). This makes it very possible for problems such as socio-cultural issues to arise. An education

expert, Pate (in Hanurawan, 2019) explains that the development of prejudice among school students, as well as in the wider environment, is still a crucial problem in society. Prejudice begins to develop in a person when they are still children (Camica in Sutaryanto, 2017). Children who grow and develop in an environment that tends to be monocultural, accompanied by low cross-cultural understanding from their families and surrounding communities, will increasingly support the process of prejudice emerging within them.

In an effort to successfully implement transformation and develop a society that upholds values that support multicultural living, multicultural education can be utilized as an instrument to develop the social skills and attitudes needed to live in a multicultural society.

Specifically, education plays a crucial role and task in facilitating the process of transforming multicultural values within a multicultural society (Hanurawan, 2019).

The multicultural paradigm in education law is implicitly stated in Law No. 20 of 2003, Chapter III, Article 4, which discusses the principles of education administration. According to Imran (2018), the discussion of this law demonstrates that every citizen has the right to education. Education is not only intended for certain groups, but every citizen can obtain an education by taking into account several values, namely human rights, religion, culture, and diversity. It is clear that education strongly opposes anything related to discriminating or categorizing society. Every ethnicity, religion, and skin color has the right to receive a good education.

Multicultural education is education that values diversity and regularly incorporates perspectives from various cultural groups. An important goal of multicultural education is equal opportunity for all students with the hope of closing the academic achievement gap between students from the majority culture and students from minority groups (Bennet in Santrock, 2019). Because social justice is one of the core values of this field, prejudice reduction and pedagogical equity are core components (Bank in Santrock, 2019). Prejudice reduction refers to teacher activities that can be implemented in the classroom to eliminate negative views and stereotypes. Pedagogical equity refers to modifying the teaching process to incorporate appropriate learning materials and strategies for boys and girls and different ethnic groups. Children and students will benefit from having this type of preparation that includes multicultural education.

Based on the background and theoretical studies mentioned above, the researcher sought to understand the importance of multicultural education in reducing student prejudice. Therefore, it is hoped that this theoretical study will be useful as a solution to the problems posed by the theoretical study, a basis for developing research instruments, determining criteria, and verifying research results.

## METHOD

This research employed a literature study method. Sukardi (in Handika, 2020) explains that literature study is a mandatory activity in research, particularly academic research, whose primary goal is to develop theoretical aspects.

The data collection technique for this research is to collect data from journal articles, books related to multicultural education and relevant theories as well as from several sources on the internet.

The data analysis techniques used are literature review, writing and summarizing all articles related to multicultural education, studying books and articles that are relevant to other data sources.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Multicultural education is a long process that a person undergoes throughout their life, from childhood to adulthood. This education is not simply a matter of "doing" or simply experiencing, but rather a process of experiencing, understanding, then implementing, and finally internalizing it in everyday life. Multicultural education creates a space for understanding among individuals regarding the various ethnic, religious, and cultural differences within society. One of the first stages of education a person goes through is the family environment. Family education tends to be under-recognized because it is considered the responsibility of the school to educate children. This view is certainly incorrect, as education is the responsibility of all parties, especially parents at home. Similarly, with multicultural education, all aspects and implementation are left to the school. The role of the family is seemingly replaced by the school, even though the first educational institution a child receives is the family environment. Parents, fathers and mothers, play a significant role in instilling the principles and values of multicultural education in children. The family has a significant impact on shaping children's behavior. Through the family, children acquire their language, values, and tendencies. The family contributes directly to the development of human civilization and the associative relationships between people. It teaches

children the principles of sociology as well as the rules of ethics and morality.

Sleeter and Grant (in Hanurawan, 2019) define multicultural education as an educational system that implements educational policies and educational practices that recognize, accept and affirm differences between humans and similarities between humans related to gender, ethnicity and social class.

According to Bank (in Handika, 2020) wrote: "Multicultural education is an idea, an educational reform movement, and a process whose major goal is to change the structure of educational institutions so that male and female students, exceptional students, and students who are members of diverse racial, ethnic, language, and cultural groups will have an equal chance to achieve academically in school"

Multicultural education is an idea, a movement for educational change, and a process whose primary goal is to transform the structure of educational institutions so that boys and girls, students with special needs, and students from diverse ethnicities, cultures, languages, and cultural groups have equal opportunities for academic success. Although the educational institutions referred to in this context are schools, families are also subject to criticism. Schools and families have traditionally been structures that do not facilitate the diversity of children or students.

The key word in the definition above is multicultural education, an idea or concept from education experts who reject school structures such as culture, teachers, and curriculum that tend to discriminate against diverse students. This idea gained momentum during the Civil Rights Movement in America, which demanded equal rights in various aspects of life, especially in education. Patricia et al. (in Handika, 2020) stated: "The authors define multicultural education as process-oriented learning experiences that foster educational equity, awareness of and respect for the diversity of our society and the world, and a commitment to creating a more just and equitable society for all people. Multicultural education, therefore, is relevant to all children and their families; all teaching, curricular, and administrative

decisions; and every aspect of local and national educational policy."

The two experts above state that multicultural education is a process-oriented learning experience that promotes equality in education, awareness of, and respect for diversity in global society, and a commitment to creating equitable communities for all. Therefore, multicultural education is highly relevant for all children, their families, teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers, as well as for every aspect of local and national education.

The concept of multicultural education is not yet fully understood by the public, and its application in the teaching and learning process is also not yet recognized. As explained by Utami and Cahyono (in Haslami, 2020), multicultural education is intended to build a bridge between the curriculum and teacher character, classroom climate, pedagogical skills, and school culture, to realize the school's vision and mission that upholds equality. Based on this, education clearly plays a significant role in serving as a role model for multicultural education in the learning process and in attitudes.

According to Utami and Cahyono (in Haslami, 2020) multicultural education has five dimensions, namely:

1. *Content Integration*; this relates to the way teachers combine content to provide examples from various cultures and various groups with the aim of generalizing a concept according to the field of study;
2. *Knowledge Construction*; this is related to how educators are involved in helping to investigate and determine the implicit assumptions of a culture so that students are able to construct knowledge within it;
3. *An Equity Pedagogy*; In this section, the educator's teaching style is essential. An educator is said to provide equality to students if he or she is able to change their teaching methods to focus on facilitating academic achievement for all students from various racial, cultural, and social classes.
4. *Prejudice Reduction*; this point focuses on students' racial attitudes which can be changed or directed through teaching methods or models;

5. An Empowering School Culture; school culture should be able to empower students from various groups, races, ethnicities, and cultures.

According to Utami and Cahyono (in Haslami, 2020), there are several expected results after implementing multicultural education, namely as follows:

1. Students are expected to think critically in studying the material presented and be able to respond to it critically;
2. Students are expected to be aware of the suspicious attitudes held by other parties and be able to examine why and where these suspicions arise so that they are able to eliminate these suspicious attitudes;
3. Students are expected to realize that knowledge is like a double-edged sword that has a good side and a bad side, both of which are very dependent on who has the knowledge so that students are able to act wisely in studying a knowledge;
4. Students are expected to have the skills to utilize and implement the knowledge they have mastered;
5. Students as learning persons, means always learning throughout life;
6. Students are expected to have goals that are achieved by working hard;
7. Students understand what they are learning and what the nation needs.

According to Gollnich (in Hanurawan, 2019) the goals of multicultural education are as follows:

1. Enhancing the strength and value of cultural diversity in society.
2. Improving human rights and respecting people who are different from us.
3. Increasing opportunities for people to have alternative choices in life.
4. Promote social justice and equal opportunities for all.

5. Increasing equity regarding the distribution of power among different groups.

In an effort to achieve these goals, a multicultural education curriculum must contain accurate knowledge about the socio-cultural conditions of society so that efforts to reduce prejudice in students can be carried out. According to Katz (in Hanurawan, 2019), a multicultural education curriculum must provide accurate information and simultaneously correct misinformation about different groups. In addition, a multicultural education curriculum must be able to help students develop feelings of human empathy and feel comfortable with the presence of people from different cultural backgrounds.

In the context of healthy child psychological development, understanding the development of prejudice in children is crucial. This importance can be seen in several studies on racism, discrimination, bullying, culture shock, and other behaviors containing ethnic and cultural biases that can significantly disrupt student achievement. Pang et al. (in Hanurawan, 2019) explain that prejudice can hinder the normal development of children's social skills because this phenomenon creates a barrier to their development. In such circumstances, the role of education in reducing children's prejudice is crucial so that children can have a positive attitude towards multicultural society.

In the context of social psychology, Hanurawan (2019) defines prejudice as a negative attitude directed towards someone from a particular group. Therefore, when related to student prejudice, it can be defined as a negative attitude towards other members of friends from other groups who have different cultural backgrounds. Regarding multicultural education, these attitudes can be directed at gender, social class, ethnicity, and geography. Through multicultural education, positive attitudes and positive behaviors can be increased towards members of groups different from the student's group. This is in accordance with one of the important goals of multicultural education, namely reducing prejudice in students. According to Slavin (in Hanurawan, 2019), reducing prejudice in students from different

cultural backgrounds and developing more democratic and tolerant attitudes towards others from different cultures.

Multicultural education expert James Bank (in Santrock, 2019) describes what should be the characteristics of a multicultural school, namely:

1. The attitudes, beliefs, and actions of school staff. School staff have high expectations for all students and are passionate about helping them learn.
2. Curriculum. Study programs have been reformed, so that students are exposed to events, concepts, and issues from the perspectives of different ethnic and socioeconomic groups.
3. Instructional materials. Textbooks and learning materials represent the backgrounds and experiences of diverse ethnicities and cultures, and are free from biases that marginalize the experiences of people of color, second-language minorities, women, and low-income individuals.
4. School culture and the hidden curriculum. School culture reflects the positive aspects of diversity and is supported by a hidden curriculum, a curriculum that is not explicitly taught but is nonetheless present and learned by students. A school's attitude toward diversity can be expressed in subtle ways, such as the type of photos on the school bulletin board, the ethnic composition of the school staff, and the fairness with which students from diverse backgrounds are disciplined or punished.
5. Counseling program. School counselors challenge students from diverse backgrounds to dream and develop strategies to achieve those dreams. They guide students toward effective career choices and help them select the right courses that will enable them to pursue their chosen careers.

According to Hanurawan (2019), there are three types of theoretical approaches to reducing student prejudice, namely:

### *Contact Hypothesis Theory*

Based on social psychology research, there are several factors in reducing prejudice, namely;

- a. Intensive contact with members of groups different from one's own group membership.
- b. The development of an individual's social group identity without developing hostile attitudes towards members of other groups (Oset, in Hanurawan, 2019). This means that the development of social identity so far demonstrates the specific characteristics of the group while also respecting the existence of the characteristics of other groups' social identities.

One learning method relevant to the contact hypothesis theory is cooperative learning. This learning method emphasizes group work dynamics and can accelerate cooperative interdependence among different group members in an effort to achieve a common goal. Through the implementation of cooperative learning, students from various cultural backgrounds can improve patterns of friendship between races and genders. In addition, it can increase feelings of stronger self-esteem, a more positive attitude towards school and a more internal locus of control. Cooperative learning teaching models include Jigsaw, Teams Games Tournaments, Academic Division, and Group Investigation.

### *Social Category Theory*

According to Myers (in Hanurawan, 2019), strategies for restructuring the cognitive representations of individuals from different groups can be used to reduce prejudice. These strategies include recategorization and decategorization.

- a. The recategorization method proposes the development of a common identity (us) rather than specific categorizations of in-group and out-group identities that can create conflict between us as representatives of the out-group. The existence of the social psychological phenomenon of shared identity among members of different groups will reduce the salience of differences that often arise between



the two groups. Shared identity will create a communality (commonality) that helps members of the two different groups share. Emphasis on the common aspect will reduce negative attitudes or prejudices that exist between the two groups. In this context, multicultural education can provide information about the history and cultural customs of various cultural groups that contribute to the cultural development of a multicultural society.

- b. The decategorization method attempts to restructure individual or student perceptions regarding the "us versus them" categorization. This perceptual restructuring process will lead a person to perceive more in the context of individual characteristics and less in terms of group membership. The consequence of applying this method in multicultural education is that students, as individuals, will perceive others as unique individuals without the stereotypes conventionally associated with group characteristics such as gender, social status, and ethnicity. Individual perceptions of others as unique individuals in a multicultural society will reduce prejudice to a minimum.

### *Social Learning Theory*

The most relevant practical application of this theory in multicultural teaching in schools is directed at teacher behavior related to multicultural education. Students will learn non-prejudicial behavior and respond to the results of that learning by observing the behavior of others as models. In the context of school teaching, the most significant model is the teacher. Students develop a tendency to imitate what they see and receive rewards for demonstrating the behavior that results from that imitation. Observational learning and modeling are mechanisms that can lead students to accept the non-prejudicial values demonstrated by teachers.

Teachers who have positive beliefs and positive attitudes towards multicultural teaching will have a sense of responsibility to develop positive attitudes in students towards members of groups and cultural groups that are different from themselves.

One of the main challenges in multicultural education is social polarization, which deepens the gap between cultural groups in society. This division can limit understanding and appreciation of Indonesia's cultural diversity. To address this, an educational approach focused on equality, inclusion, and intercultural understanding is needed.

1. Knowledge and Skills of an Educator. First, it's important to involve educators in this effort. Teachers must be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to teach in a multicultural environment. They must understand the values of different cultures and be able to create a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students. In doing so, they can help reduce prejudice and stereotypes among students.
2. A Curriculum That Reflects Indonesia's Cultural Diversity. Furthermore, school curricula must be revised to reflect Indonesia's cultural diversity. Multicultural education should not be confined to history or language lessons, but should be implemented across all learning areas. For example, in science subjects, students can learn about local traditional knowledge about herbal medicine or sustainable agricultural techniques. This will enable students to understand and appreciate the cultural knowledge around them.
3. Disseminating Cultural Diversity Information through Mass Media. Furthermore, mass media also plays a crucial role in reviving multicultural education. Mass media can influence public perceptions of diverse cultures, both positively and negatively. Therefore, it is crucial for mass media to prioritize news that respects cultural diversity and avoids discrimination or negative stereotypes. Furthermore, mass media can serve as a platform for disseminating information about Indonesian cultures and promoting intercultural dialogue.
4. Extracurricular Activities. In addition to formal education in schools, multicultural education can also be strengthened through

extracurricular activities. For example, schools can hold cultural festivals where students can share and introduce their unique cultures to others. Events like these can broaden students' understanding and appreciation of Indonesia's cultural diversity.

5. Collaboration between the Government and Non-Governmental Organizations. The government also has a crucial role to play in reviving multicultural education. They need to promote policies that support multicultural education at all levels, from the national to the local level. Furthermore, adequate budget allocation is needed to strengthen multicultural education curricula and training. The government can also support research and development in this area to gain deeper insights into multicultural education in Indonesia. Furthermore, collaboration with non-governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations can enrich efforts to revive multicultural education. They can provide additional training for educators, provide relevant educational resources, and organize social activities that promote intercultural dialogue.

The success of multicultural education in Indonesia requires collective awareness that cultural diversity is a wealth that must be maintained and appreciated by all parties, including educators, students, parents, and society as a whole. They need to work together to create an environment that supports multicultural education.

## CONCLUSION

The development of prejudice in students remains a significant problem in our society. Prejudice is a negative attitude toward members of a group that differs from one's own based on certain characteristics. Prejudicial behavior toward members of other groups is a phenomenon that can disrupt harmonious intercultural relations in a multicultural society. This prejudice can be directed at members of a cultural group, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and language. Parents, teachers, peers, the community, and the

mass media play a crucial role in the causes of prejudice in children. Therefore, efforts to prevent and intervene in prejudice in children or students should address the child's environment. Multicultural education can foster more positive attitudes toward members of different community groups.

## SUGGESTION

Multicultural education is not solely the responsibility of teachers in schools; parents' crucial role in implementing multicultural education at home is also crucial. Therefore, multicultural education requires synergy between parents, teachers, and the surrounding community to foster positive attitudes and a better understanding of multicultural education practices, thereby reducing prejudice in children or students.

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