

Implementation of Multicultural Education in History Learning Loaded with Controversial History Materials at SMA Negeri 5 Semarang

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is (1) to describe the content of multicultural education on controversial historical material. 2) to explain the implementation of multicultural education on controversial history content material by teachers of history subjects, (3) to describe response toward the implementation of multicultural education on history subjects with controversial issues. This research uses a qualitative method with a phenomenology approach at SMA Negeri 5 Semarang. Informants in this study were teachers, the waka curriculum, and students from the school. In this research, the data collection technique is observation, interview, and documentation. The analysis and presentation of data used are structured and specific analysis—the technique of examination of data validity using triangulation technique and source. The results showed that the learning planning made by the history teacher in SMA Negeri 5 Semarang has included multicultural education, although the curriculum has not been written explicitly. Most Students and teachers already understand the importance of multicultural education and its relation to the subject of contested historical material controversy.

Keywords: *Multicultural Education, Controversial Issues, History Learning*

Introduction

Indonesia is the largest archipelagic country in the world, consisting of 17,504 islands, with a population of more than 263,846,946 people, and is enriched by around 300 ethnic groups (Wikipedia, 2017). It is a massive number for a country, causing Indonesia to face several serious problems. As many as approximately 300 ethnic groups, of course, contribute more than 200 different languages and traditions. Indonesia also recognizes five religions not included in different types of worship (Gianawati, 2013; Damanik et al., 2010; Suparmi, 2012; Amirin, 2012). Indonesia is one of the largest multicultural countries in the world; this can be seen from Indonesia's sociocultural and geographical conditions, which are so complex, diverse, and vast. "Indonesia consists of a large number of ethnic, cultural, religious, and other groups, each of which is plural and at the same time heterogeneous "diversity" (Kusumohamidjojo, 2000, p. 45, Hakiemah, 2007; Ibrahim, 2008).

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As a plural and heterogeneous country, Indonesia has the potential for multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious wealth, all of which it has the potential to build a large multicultural "multicultural nation-state." *Etymologically, multiculturalism is derived from the words 'multicultural' and 'ism'. The word 'multicultural' means multiple or many cultures. Meanwhile, the suffix 'ism' means ideology, concept, or tenet* (Wasino, 2013). James Banks defines multicultural education as education for people of color. Multicultural education wants to explore differences as an inevitability (grace of God/sunatullah). Then, how can we respond to these differences with complete tolerance and an egalitarian spirit (Mahfud, 2016)? Through multicultural education, the role of individuals becomes a significant influence; *thus, in multicultural societies, individuals and collectives construct multiple identities, positionality, and agency by constantly negotiating their roles in time and space* (Davis, 2012). Multicultural education is one of the means to respond to demographic and cultural changes in society.

The diversity of multicultural society as the nation's wealth, on the other hand, is very prone to triggering conflicts and divisions. As stated by Nasikun (2007, p. 33), the plurality of Indonesian society can be seen at least from its two unique characteristics; first, horizontally, it is characterized by the fact that there is a social unity based on differences in ethnicity, religion, customs, and regional differences, and second, vertically characterized by the existence of vertical differences between the upper and lower layers that are pretty sharp. The plurality and heterogeneity reflected in Indonesian society are tied to the principle of national unity, which we know with the motto "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika," which means that even though Indonesia is diverse, it is integrated into unity. Effective and efficient methods are certainly needed to overcome the problem of multiculturalism. One way to improve the problem of multiculturalism in Indonesia is through the implementation of history education, both as part of social studies and as a subject with great potential in developing character education.

Successes and failures have been written in many histories; it is just a matter of how we can learn from the process that has happened to be able to become a great and independent nation (Amin, p. 2011; Hidayah, 2014). Although the history program is one part of the character education orchestra, history education materials that are distinctive and full of value have the strong potential to introduce students to the nation and its aspirations in the past (Hasan, 2012, pp. 81-95; Raharja, 2010; Mania, 2010). With such a material nature, in developing character education, history education materials carry out the function of history education as *a "bank of examples for solving present problems and chartering future action"* (Wineburg, 2001) eroded

by the nation's inner atmosphere and the limitations of educational policies that place knowledge above all else.

The discussion of controversial issues in history will try to eliminate the dimension of absolute truth without being balanced with historical proof (Elly, 2008 in Sumardiansyah, 2015). The controversial nature of history has an influence on history learning in the classroom. Controversy is a condition where the material has several contradictory points of view, but these views have an equally strong argument basis. The existence of a history of controversy is a necessity. This is because the material that becomes material in learning is raised from controversial historical events. Discussing controversial issues in the classroom will create a democratic society atmosphere that can build understanding and openness of discussion and foster tolerance and equality. Thus, controversial issues can comprehensively understand the problem and encourage the willingness to participate politically (Hess, 2005).

SMA Negeri 5 Semarang is one of the public high schools in the city of Semarang. High schools on this protocol road have students who tend to be homogeneous. Even so, it turns out that there are still several problems regarding multiculturalism and tolerance in this high school. The dominance of the Javanese Muslim ethnicity does not make public high schools independent of the problem of tolerance.

The learning carried out by history teachers certainly greatly influences the student's perspective. However, quality history learning is one of the expectations and targets always pursued by teachers, students, and schools as educational institutions in addition to the quality of learning in other fields of study (Utomo, 2010). However, we still ask our students basic questions such as what, who, when, where, and farthest (the process occurs). Seeing the fact that in schools, their ethnic existence has been conditioned, it is pretty interesting that it turns out that there is still a problem of multiculturalism that must be addressed.

According to Stephen Hill, multicultural education is successful if the process involves all elements of society (Mahfud, 2016; Musthofa, 2015; Indrapangastuti, 2014). However, so far, the core goal of the subject of multicultural education is to achieve empowerment for minority groups, even though a strong majority group somewhere must undoubtedly be given a unique understanding of the perspective of multiculturalism because later after becoming a graduate of a state high school, students must blend in with the broader community. Meanwhile, problems in society today are still very related to homogeneity and heterogeneity.

This study aims to describe the content of multicultural education in controversial history materials, explain the implementation of multicultural education in controversial historical

materials by history teachers, and describe the response of SMA Negeri 5 Semarang students to the implementation of multicultural education in controversial history subjects.

Method

This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach (Rahmandani, 2007) at SMA Negeri 5 Semarang. The informants in this study are teachers, curriculum waka, and students from the school. In this study, data collection techniques were carried out by observation, interviews, and documentation (Sujarweni, 2014). The analysis and presentation of the data used are structured and specific. The technique of checking the validity of the data uses triangulation techniques and sources of results and discussion. The implementation of multicultural education in history learning at SMA Negeri 5 Semarang, particularly when dealing with controversial historical materials, begins with a thorough curriculum review and needs assessment. Firstly, the curriculum is scrutinized to identify sensitive topics, ensuring they are presented with cultural sensitivity and inclusivity. Teachers undergo comprehensive professional development to equip them with the necessary pedagogical strategies and cultural competency to facilitate open, respectful discussions in the classroom. Diverse historical perspectives and primary sources are integrated into the curriculum, promoting critical thinking and empathy among students towards various cultural viewpoints. Continuous evaluation and community involvement ensure that the implementation remains responsive to student needs and fosters an inclusive learning environment where all perspectives are valued and understood.

Results and Discussion

I refer to 11 school programs as a social system written by James A. Banks (1) *School policy and politics*. It can be found in the vision of SMA N 5 Semarang, namely "Excelling in achievements, having noble morals by applying image and the values of the nation's character with a global perspective." Meanwhile, some of its missions are to develop the nation's character values and cultural foreign language skills to support global insights.

SMA N 5 Semarang also has a goal, namely "Laying the foundation of intelligence, knowledge, personality, and noble character to students so that they can continue their education to a higher level and equip them with life skills so that they can live independently and be able to apply information and communication technology in life" Judging from the vision, mission, and goals of the institution, SMA N 5 Semarang consistently includes the development of the nation's character and the mastery of global insight by students. The development of the nation's

character can be realized through history learning with a multicultural education approach. Students with multicultural awareness will certainly deepen their perspective and appreciation for the development of the nation's character. Because, in general, multicultural education can be used to instill an attitude of unity and unity towards societal differences.

Likewise, with mastery of global insight. In addition, through interviews with teachers, it can be seen that schools play a significant role in holding interfaith programs. For example, on every religious holiday, all students get an invitation to attend the event; (2) *School staff: attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, and actions*. Although the majority of SMA Negeri 5 Semarang residents are homogeneous, based on observations at the school, it can be seen that there is harmony between all school residents without making a distinction. Only occasionally, jokes that lead to ethnic discrimination are seen in observations on April 30, 2018. Regarding the joke, it has been confirmed to the students concerned and the classroom teacher that there is no ethnic or racial sentiment in the classroom and outside the classroom; (3) Teaching styles and strategies, learning methods and strategies; Some history teachers to this day, are hesitant to reveal the history of controversy as they have learned. The government's official version is still considered the mecca of historical truth. Based on the opinion of teachers regarding the delivery of only one source – namely government sources – in the learning of controversial history, it has been explained in the book *Controversial History in Indonesia from an educational perspective*, including the *Exclusive partiality* approach or teachers introducing and defending only one version. Historians have found many versions that should have been conveyed to students.

This approach can be implemented in a variety of ways. The first way the teacher can express a version that he or she believes to be discussed is by adding to the lecture method, which history teachers often use in class. Second, teachers can present all versions without expressing their personal opinions; in SMA Negeri 5 Semarang itself, there are already teachers who carry out this step. Usually, students are directed to browse the internet about the version and then enter the discussion stage. Third, teachers can concentrate all learning on students and only act as mediators – this can be done in the debate method – so that students are free to explore their knowledge.

Through the approach and several strategies listed, it can be seen that history teachers who are representative of accepting differences are certainly needed. Thus, it becomes interrelated between multicultural education and specific history learning that contains controversial historical material. It is corroborated by the opinion of several experts in the book *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives* that multicultural education can be called using other terms

such as critical pedagogy, counterhegemonic pedagogy, or emancipatory pedagogy (Erickson in Banks and Banks, 2010). Meanwhile, Nuryanto explained that the purpose of Critical Pedagogy is to empower the oppressed and transform social injustice that occurs in society through educational media.

Meanwhile, according to the teacher's opinion, the correct version of government is one of the initial stages of the formation of cultural hegemony. The dominant opinion will be a reference to limit the appearance of minority opinion. Cultural Hegemony refers to the established view of things – a commonsense view of what is and why things happen that serves the interest of those people already privileged in a society (Erickson in Banks and Banks, 2010, p. 46).

Multicultural education has opportunities and challenges to counter-hegemony in existing social groups. Without new views through multicultural education about history loaded with controversial material, what will happen is

“when issues such as racism, class privilege, and sexism are left silent in the classroom, the implicit message for students of color appears to be that the teacher and the school do not acknowledge that experiences of oppression exist.” (Erickson dalam Banks and Banks, 2010, p. 46)

In other words, schools will be seen as suppressing students' thinking power towards things outside the habits of their society. Gustein's opinion gives a middle ground to Erickson's previously stated thoughts. Gustein argues that regarding teaching for social justice, educators often discover a tension between functional literacy and critical literacy. Distinguishing critical and functional education is also a new problem in multicultural education learning. The two approaches should run in balance to produce good outputs in education. Both functional and critical literacy must be applied simultaneously in multicultural education.

Learning *functional literacy* without criticizing it will undoubtedly make social injustice forgotten. Meanwhile, focusing only on critical literacy will make students lose the strength to enter the social, economic, and government systems later to overcome social injustice. As Seghal argues, *training in multicultural competence has focused on increasing competence in knowledge, awareness, and skills specific to diverse populations* (Adames et al., 2013). Forming an educated society without forgetting social reality cannot be done using only one educational point of view. Many things need to be improved to achieve those goals: (4) *Formalized curriculum and course of study*; The application of multiculturalism education in school learning, although it has not been stated in the curriculum, its implementation has been understood by most of the school community. The statement explains that the goals of

multicultural education are not written directly in the curriculum, but teachers themselves must include them in the learning objectives. Even so, the Vice Principal for Curriculum explained that the inclusion of the goal of multiculturalism in the 2013 curriculum has been well implied. Although we have not used the word multicultural, the goal to be achieved is the same. The 2013 curriculum includes the purpose of collaboration as a substitute for multiculturalism (interview May 15, 2018). Both have similar meanings because multiculturalism and collaboration will produce students who can work together in a team without identifying their colleagues' ethnicity, race, or religion.

The 2013 curriculum includes how children interact but does not mention multicultural education. So, teachers and other educators must map the needs of children for what material content is related to multiculturalism. In addition, the existence of controversial historical material is seen by teachers as one of the interesting topics for students to learn about values in multiculturalism, such as the value of tolerance and democracy. (5) *Instructional materials* At SMA N 5 Semarang, students have two handbooks for Indonesian History subjects. Both books are loans from school libraries and are books published by the Ministry of Culture and Education. At first glance, the two books look like the same book. However, based on the research results, the difference between the two books lies in revising their content. Books published before the 2016 revision contain material up to the Hindu Buddhist period only, while books after the 2016 revision include material up to Islamization and cross-culturalism in Indonesia.

Reviewing this, the percentage of involvement of Indonesian history materials in the approach to multiculturalism education is summarized in the student book after the 2016 revision. Meanwhile, the content of controversial historical material is listed in each learning chapter in the book. For example, in the chapter tracing the early civilization in the Indonesian archipelago, the difference that can be explained through one of the controversial historical materials is the origin of ancient humans. Moreover, it is also influenced by the origin of the ancestors of the Indonesian nation. Questions from students will certainly not be far from the controversy surrounding Darwin's theory of evolution. One of the class X Science 2 students, Adelia, expressed her confusion in the discussion because the theory of ancient humans differs between historical and religious science (interview, April 30, 2016). The role of multiculturalism education here can be carried out approximately 50% to understand the difference in theory.

The discussion of kingdoms in the student book also includes data on the multiculturalism in the archipelago, especially in the acculturation and development of Islamic culture and

archipelago integration. History learning content is competent if it is associated with multicultural education, which can provoke a sense of belonging to the nation's culture in students. According to Avean, if a nation does not know its history with a multicultural understanding, it will become a radical nation and tend to glorify its own culture (interview May 4, 2016).

The content of historical materials associated with multicultural values is also seen in the Indonesian History textbook belonging to grade XI students. The discussion in class XI was more dominated by the history of the VOC period and efforts to defend the independence of the Indonesian nation. Therefore, it is necessary to cultivate an attitude of unity that can be achieved through multicultural education. The content of the Youth Pledge also discusses differences in the nation's body that can be united using the bonds of Indonesia itself. The student handbook also lists the cultivation of love for the homeland, mutual understanding, and respect (tolerance).

In addition to textbooks, teaching materials also use presentations from teachers whose materials are taken from various sources. The internet source that Mr. Wikky often uses comes from the trio. There is also a teacher's resource book, Indonesian National History 1-6. Students can also access other resources if consulted with the teacher; (6) *Assessment and testing procedures*. In the assessment section, the values of multicultural education can only be seen in affective assessments or attitudes. Because in the indicators listed in the lesson plan, tolerance is one of the learning goals to be achieved; (7) *Counselling program*. In the counseling program, multicultural education has not been influenced by the specifics of history learning; (8) *Community participation and Input*. As previously explained, the participation of school residents is outstanding in implementing multicultural education. The majority agree that multicultural education is essential for the Indonesian nation. Participation in activities carried out by schools is a form of tolerance as an influence of multicultural education; (9) *Languages and dialects of the school*. The official language of learning is Indonesian, although SMA Negeri 5 Semarang has exchange students from abroad, the language used is still Indonesian with a small quantity of insertion of regional languages, namely Javanese; (10) *School Learning styles*. Regarding the learning style in schools, most teachers use the style of committing impartiality or explaining and discussing each version of history with students.

However, due to time limitations and many materials, teachers also implement a one-way learning style from teachers to students on some discussion topics. For example, in learning, the purpose is to review the material as the object of observation on April 30 and May 4, 2018;

(11) *School culture and hidden curriculum*. *Hidden Curriculum* is a curriculum that is not part of learning, more definitively described as an aspect of the school outside the curriculum being studied, but can influence changes in students' values, perceptions, and behaviors (Glatthorn, 1987, p. 20 in Rosyada, 2007, p. 28). An example at SMA Negeri 5 Semarang can be seen when the teacher displays pictures related to racial and religious differences to provoke students to ask questions. However, the teacher then explains tolerance during the archipelago Islamic kingdom. (Banks, 2009, p. 24).

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History learning content with controversial history material content is studied in classes X and XI at the high school level. At SMA N 5 Semarang, students have two handbooks on Indonesian History. Both books are loans from school libraries and are books published by the Ministry of Culture and Education. At first glance, the two books look like the same book. However, based on the research results, the difference between the two books lies in revising their content. Books published before the 2016 revision contain material up to the Hindu Buddhist period only, while books after the 2016 revision include material up to Islamization and cross-culturalism in Indonesia.

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History learning activities at SMA N 5 Semarang are based on the RPP (attachment) guidelines teachers have previously made. The lesson plan preparation should ideally be adjusted to the student's character in the classroom. However, this concept has not been implemented at SMA

N 5 Semarang. Reviewing this, the percentage of involvement of Indonesian history materials in the approach to multiculturalism education is summarized in the student book after the 2016 revision. Meanwhile, the content of controversial historical material is listed in each learning chapter in the book. For example, in the chapter tracing the early civilization in the Indonesian archipelago, the difference that can be explained through one of the controversial historical materials is the origin of ancient humans.

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A good understanding of the teacher will then support the implementation of history learning in the classroom to be more open to differences so that students are used to respecting and having an attitude of tolerance for differences. However, some history teachers still hesitate to reveal the history of controversy as they have learned. The government's official version is still considered the mecca of historical truth. Based on the opinion of one of the history teachers of SMA N 5 Semarang regarding the delivery of only one source – namely government sources – in the learning of controversial history, it has been explained in the book *Controversial History in Indonesia from an educational perspective*, including the *Exclusive partiality* approach or the teacher introduces and defends only one version. Historians have found many versions that should have been conveyed to students.

The relationship between multicultural education and history learning that is specific to historical material is controversial, strengthened by the opinion of several experts in the book *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives* that multicultural education can be called using other terms such as *critical pedagogy*, *counterhegemonic pedagogy*, or *emancipatory pedagogy* (Erickson in Banks and Banks, 2010). In *critical pedagogy*, one keyword that covers the entire foundation, implementation, and efforts to achieve its goals is "criticism" (Ahmad, 2012). The criticism here can be interpreted as Nuryanto's explanation that the purpose of *Critical Pedagogy* is to empower the oppressed and transform social injustice that occurs in society through educational media. Meanwhile, according to the teacher's opinion, as I

mentioned earlier, the correct government version is one of the initial stages of the formation of cultural hegemony. The dominant opinion will be a reference to limit minority opinions to appear. *Cultural hegemony refers to the established view of things – a commonsense view of what is and why things happen that serves the interests of those already privileged in society* (Erickson in Banks and Banks, 2010).

Multicultural education occurs as a process towards social justice and equality. Thus, as a general paradigm, it is understood that critical learning is the most suitable approach for multicultural education. Functional education must also be adequately implemented because, according to Jenks, *functional literacy helps students from racially and ethnically marginalized groups gain access to and participate effectively in an open and unrestricted market of competitive society*. Furthermore, Newmann added that *It also equips them with intellectual abilities to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate knowledge and information that can be used as tools for their further investigation of injustices*.

If referring to the views of the experts above, it is clear that *functional and critical literacy* must be applied together in multicultural education. Learning *functional literacy* without criticizing it will undoubtedly make social injustice forgotten. Meanwhile, focusing only on critical literacy will make students lose the strength to enter the social, economic, and government systems later to overcome social injustice. As Seghal argues, *training in multicultural competence has focused on increasing competence in knowledge, awareness, and skills specific to diverse populations* (Adames et al., 2013). Forming an educated society without forgetting social reality cannot be done using only one educational point of view. Many things need to be improved to achieve these goals.

Conclusion

The content of multicultural education in the controversial history material at SMA Negeri 5 Semarang is quite aware of its existence by both teachers and students in the classroom. Some content is discussed continuously in the classroom to support learning and spark students' interest. The implementation of multicultural education on controversial historical materials by history teachers is quite good because teachers are aware and try to improve multicultural knowledge and teaching materials for controversial history. Multicultural education and controversial history have the same way of thinking, namely through a critical thinking approach. The implementation of critical thinking can be seen mainly from the methods used by teachers during learning, and some carry out debate methods that open the door to new knowledge in the students' personalities. In addition to using the debate method, the teacher

also chose to use a little lecture method and discussion method. Usually, teachers will instruct students to browse or search for information first through the internet and then discuss it together in class. Although it has not been officially included in the curriculum, teachers are trying to introduce multiculturalism to students. The response of SMA Negeri 5 Semarang students to the implementation of multicultural education in history subjects containing controversial issues is also quite good. Although some students admitted that they did not understand multiculturalism, all speakers believed that knowledge about culture and differences in Indonesia is essential. Students are also open to responding to controversial issues that cause differing versions in history.

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