



Innovative Approaches in Multicultural Education-Based Learning in the Social Development of Early Childhood at Raudhatul Athfal Nurul Islam Kindergarten, Singkawang City

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Abstract

Multicultural learning is one of the strategic approaches in supporting early childhood social development, especially in an environment rich in cultural diversity such as in RA Nurul Islam Singkawang. The need to integrate multicultural values in learning in early childhood education institutions is relevant because of the importance of building empathy, tolerance, and social skills from an early age. However, in-depth studies related to the application of innovative approaches based on multicultural education to the development of social attitudes and behavior of early childhood are still limited. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach, involving teachers and principals as the main data sources, to identify the effect of the multicultural approach at RA Nurul Islam Singkawang. The results showed that this approach improved children's empathy and tolerance, encouraged more inclusive social interactions, and increased confidence in cross-cultural interactions. In addition, children also showed initiative in conflict resolution and mastery of social skills, such as understanding different perspectives and establishing harmonious relationships. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of integrating multicultural values in the early childhood education curriculum to support better character building and social skills.

Keywords: *Innovative Approach, Multicultural Education, Social Development Early Childhood*



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INTRODUCTION

Diversity is a characteristic of society in the era of globalization, and this is seen in early childhood education (Nugroho, 2016) . According to the multicultural education approach, diversity is an important source to be included in the child's learning process. According to research conducted by Banks (Banks, 1997) multicultural education helps children's social and cognitive development. The learning process at an early age will affect subsequent development. During the development of babies until they enter elementary school age, learning remains a strong foundation for the growth of children's social and emotional abilities, ready to face complex developmental stages later on from becoming healthier (Nazia, 2022). Scientifically based multicultural education in the PAUD environment implies egalitarian coexistence of different cultures, based on a curriculum and pedagogy that

are culturally appropriate and promote inclusive values. As a result, culturally appropriate pedagogical arrangements have been selected and clarified. The concept of cultural diversity has many aspects and includes subjective and objective factors of the child's cultural background. Cultural diversity stems from the cultural identity of each person participating in the PAUD environment. (Višnjić-Jevtić et al., 2021)

If a child cannot interact socially well and cannot manage their emotions, then it will be difficult for them to adapt to their social environment. In addition, this ability can encourage children to achieve their roles and identities in life. However, the current fact is that children tend to play electronic devices rather than interact with people around them. According to a survey conducted by BPS in 2020, it was found that within three months there were 29% of early childhood children in Indonesia who used cell phones. A total of 47.7% of preschool children aged 5-6 years, 25.9% of toddlers aged 1-4 years, and 3.5% for babies under one year. (Imtihan et al., 2022)

Incorporating multicultural activities into early childhood programs and environments can help parents maintain traditional cultural connections and build important relationships with local communities. (Binasis et al., 2022) Interacting with cultural facts that demonstrate diverse ethnic identities can help young children become more empathetic and open. By implementing a multicultural learning approach, children can improve their self-efficacy and develop a greater sense of multiculturalism (Velarde, 2023) . This will help them understand and deal with discrimination, alienation, and inequality that exist in the child's learning environment. The ethnic contact hypothesis can help create positive relationships between preschool teachers and young children and peers. This hypothesis is a culturally responsive teaching model. (Chen et al., 2023)

Kindergarten is the center of child development. Innovative kindergarten education is essential to create an engaging learning environment. According to Piaget (Piaget, 1932) , young children learn in a variety of ways. Therefore, using creative approaches is essential to make learning fun and meaningful. School-based social emotional learning (SEL) programs have recently emerged in North America and typically do not focus on the learning process that is embodied in students' lives. Social-emotional skills are intrinsically embodied in cultural responses or in students' real-life experiences. (Hayashi et al., 2022) .

The critical multiculturalism perspective, multicultural education aims not only to meet the needs and desires of different students, but also to create a socially just space that fosters cultural gratitude. According to May (Guo, 2015) requires a shift from the perspective that education should only provide children with ideal lessons. Instead, it needs to reconstruct education as a social agent that challenges the social structures that cause inequality.

Khulsilnnilyah and Farhatiln Masruroh (Khadijah et al., 2023) , early childhood social development is very important. The social environment will have positive and negative impacts on aspects of children's social development, especially those related to interactions between children and their peers. This interaction is very dangerous because it can cause many feelings, experiences, and social and emotional lessons, which prevent children from understanding their level of social development. Children face various social problems in international and local contexts. According to al-Attas (Al-Attas, 1996) , Islamic religious education can be a foundation for

understanding and overcoming these problems. Multicultural education and religious education can shape children's strong character to face social change.

There are several components that show the importance of early childhood social development (Annisa Rahmidini, S.ST., 2020) . One, increasingly complex life problems, including advances in science and technology, put pressure on children and have an impact on their social development. Children will tend to prefer playing games at home alone rather than playing outside with their friends. Two, namely instilling awareness that children are future investments and practitioners and must be well prepared in terms of social skills and emotional development. Three, because children are limited in having an important age range. Therefore, in order to ensure that no phase is missed, the process must be facilitated as optimally as possible. Fourth, considering that for child development, intellectual intelligence (IQ) and emotional intelligence (EQ) must be balanced. Fifth, all parents now realize the importance of equipping their children with social skills. (Martinus & Jamilah, 2010)

The research study area related to the pattern of transmission of tolerance values is Singkawang City. This is because this is a city that represents plurality in Indonesia. This city has demographic facts that show that there are at least 17 ethnic groups in Singkawang. This can be seen from the Singkawang City government which officially recognizes the existence of 17 ethnic groups and is also a government partner in transmitting, maintaining, and building tolerance values between the people in it (Rachmawati et al., 2022) . (Rachmawati et al., 2022) Singkawang City has won the title of the Most Tolerant City in Indonesia for the third time in 2022. This is based on the assessment of the SETARA Institute in the 2022 IKT (Tolerant City Index). The achievement of the third title is dedicated to all the people of Singkawang City who have been able to maintain and preserve the values of brotherhood, therefore they can be an example for the lives of fellow citizens in the big house of Singkawang City and are able to prove themselves as a tolerant city. (AS, 2023)

Raudhatul Athfal Nurul Islam Singkawang is under the guidance of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Singkawang City in its learning process integrating the curriculum of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the RA Curriculum, the Ministry of Religion and the Curriculum of the characteristics of RA. Nurul Islam Singkawang City, RA. Nurul Islam has 5 classes (study groups) consisting of 1 group A and 4 groups B. and 1 library room, 1 office room, 1 UKS room with ceramic floors and equipped with fans and lighting and clean water. The superior program owned by Raudhatul Athfal Nurul Islam Singkawang is that students are able to be independent, able to socialize well with friends and with their environment.

Raudhatul Athfal Nurul Islam Singkawang can understand the benefits of a creative approach in multicultural education to ensure that cultural diversity is well accommodated in the curriculum and learning environment. Each educational institution has a unique context. Integrating the concept of multicultural education with the values and policies of Raudhatul Athfal Nurul Islam Singkawang is a crucial step in implementing multicultural education.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research is field research (Ruane, 2013) . According to Bogdan, the use of qualitative research is intended to understand and reveal something behind a phenomenon that is not yet known at all or at all in the field. The location of this research is at TK Raudhatul Athfal Nurul Islam Singkawang which is located on Jalan

Alianyang No. 26, (Singkawang City Grand Mosque Complex) 79123 which was founded by the Nurul Islam Foundation. This data collection technique uses observation, interviews and documentation. The sources of data include; primary data is Raudhatul Athfal Nurul Islam Singkawang and the Head of Raudhatul Athfal Nurul Islam Singkawang. In addition, secondary (supporting) data is written literature sources, books: education, sociology or anthropology, journals, scientific works, or books that are relevant to what is being studied. Research data was taken through *snowball sampling*, which is a key informant in this case appointing a certain person who knows more about the research problem in order to support the completeness of the information and the person appointed and appointing another person if the information obtained is inadequate (Mantja, 2003). Data analysis through the process of reducing and presenting data and concluding /verifying. Meanwhile, *members check*, *Triangulation*, (Moleong, 2005) and extension of participation, are used as techniques for checking the validity of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Innovative Approach to Learning Based on Multicultural Education for Social Development at Raudhatul Athfal Nurul Islam Singkawang

Vygotsky's Social Constructivism which emphasizes that effective learning occurs through social interaction. When students interact with peers from different cultural backgrounds, they develop a deeper understanding of multicultural values. (Vygotsky, 1978) Banks' Cultural Appreciation Theory which encourages recognition of diverse cultural contributions to create inclusive learning. (Banks, 2008) Kohlberg's Moral Development Theory which suggests that exposure to diverse values can help students reach higher levels of moral development. (Kohlberg, 1981) Based on the results of interviews in the field with Mrs. Siti Aprianti (Aprianti, 2024) stated that "RA Nurul Islam, one of the ways we teach cultural diversity is by incorporating elements of tradition and culture into daily learning. For example, when we teach the theme of family, we also introduce traditional clothing from various regions in Indonesia. In addition, every week, we often tell stories about fairy tales or folk tales that come from different cultures. Children are very enthusiastic to hear it, especially if accompanied by pictures or props. We believe that in this way, children not only get to know their own culture, but also begin to appreciate the culture of others.

In addition, based on information from the principal of RA Nurul Islam Singkawang Nurhayati (Nurhayati, 2024); In addition, we also often teach regional songs as part of music lessons. For example, children are taught the song 'Ampar-Ampar Pisang' from South Kalimantan, or regional songs from Java. Through this activity, they begin to recognize that each region has its own characteristics. So, from an early age, we instill that cultural differences are wealth, not a barrier for us to unite.

The application of innovative approaches in multicultural education-based learning is very important for the social development of early childhood. Multicultural education not only functions to introduce cultural diversity, but also to build a character of tolerance and mutual respect among children. (Amirin, 2013) In this context, a contextual and local wisdom-based approach becomes very relevant. (Ningsih et al., 2022) For example, research shows that the implementation of multicultural education in Indonesia must emphasize respect for one's own culture

and the culture of others, which is in line with the principles of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika and Pancasila. (Hasanah, 2018)

Multicultural education at the early childhood level has an important role in shaping children's awareness of the diversity around them. Multicultural values can be instilled early on through various means, such as integrating diversity themes into the curriculum and through daily activities at school. (Wahidah & Maristyawati, 2023) This approach supports the view that good multicultural education must be designed with materials and methods that are able to teach the importance of tolerance (Kasmiati, 2023) and mutual respect. Thus, children not only learn about cultural diversity, but also learn how to build good relationships with others from different backgrounds. (Suri & Chandra, 2021)

Furthermore, research shows that multicultural education can help prevent social conflicts that may arise due to cultural and religious differences. Through inclusive education, children are taught to appreciate differences and build harmonious relationships with others. (Lestari & Sa'adah, 2021) This is important to create a peaceful and respectful society. (Supriatin & Nasution, 2017) Therefore, the development of a curriculum based on multicultural values and strong character among early childhood should be a priority in the education system. (Iman, 2019) In its implementation, teachers have a key role in implementing multicultural education. (Budi Utama & Rohmadi, 2022) They need to be equipped with adequate competencies to manage diverse classes and create an inclusive learning environment. Thus, training and professional development for teachers is an important step to ensure that multicultural education can be implemented effectively in schools.

Based on the results of the interview with Mrs. Herlina (Herlina, 2024) it was stated that: "Children show great enthusiasm and interest in activities, especially if they involve different cultural aspects. They seem happy, especially when introduced to traditional clothes, dances, or songs from certain regions. For example, when we celebrate cultural day, children are very enthusiastic about wearing traditional clothes and asking where they come from. They also enjoy playing with traditional musical instruments such as drums or angklung. This response shows that children have a great curiosity about something new, especially culture.

In addition, children's responses to social norms involving different cultural elements is an increasingly important topic. Research shows that children not only respond to existing social norms but also try to find and internalize these norms in a particular cultural context. In Schmidt's research (Schmidt et al., 2011) reported that children "form cognitive labels and acquire social attitudes entirely from their life experiences" and that "in a surprising way, children even form achievements with conventional social norms without the same formal training". The results of this study indicate that children can respond to norms about different cultural elements and that these factors can be important in the ways in which they can interact with different cultures.

The relevance and responsibility of cultural aspects in education have been clearly emphasized in a study conducted by Shih (Shih, 2022) , which shows that a curriculum related to local cultural identity can enhance children's development of their understanding of less advanced cultures and other cultures. Thus, "constructivist education" not only makes children's learning experiences more diverse but also strengthens their identity when adapting and dealing with multicultural values.

In other words, children's responses to activities that contain different cultural aspects are greatly influenced by the interaction between each other in the family environment, parental socialization practices, and culturally responsive educational approaches. In general, research shows that children who are given sufficient intake and are taught to appreciate cultural and racial elements are signs that children will have a greater opportunity to develop the ability to achieve a level of adaptation to any group culture. The application of an innovative approach to learning based on multicultural education in the social development of Early Childhood at Raudhatul Athfal Nurul Islam Singkawang based on several interviews conducted, several teachers of RA Nurul Islam gave statements including: According to Teacher Rusmini (Rusmini, 2024), she also said regarding the innovative approach to learning based on multicultural education at RA Nurul Islam Singkawang: "The use of media such as story books, videos, and cultural props is very effective in introducing other cultures to children. Story books with interesting illustrations can arouse children's imaginations, so that they can more easily understand cultural concepts, such as dancing or singing. Interactive videos featuring stories from various regions or countries provide a more realistic picture of cultural diversity. In addition, she also emphasized that cultural props, such as traditional clothing or replicas of musical instruments, help children learn through direct experience, so that they are more motivated and involved in learning.

Based on the results of research by Setyawan (Setyawan et al., 2023) developed a picture story book that aims to introduce Javanese culture to children aged 6-9 years. This study shows that storybook media can help children understand and internalize different cultures in a fun way. In addition to storybooks, the use of cultural props also plays an important role in education. Rahmadani showed that introducing local culture through media such as videos, books, and props can increase children's understanding of their own culture and other cultures. (Rahmadani et al., 2023) This study shows that the variety of media used in teaching can enrich children's learning experiences and help them understand the broader cultural context.

The development of children's social skills in the context of multicultural education is very important to form good character and social interaction skills. Social skills include the ability to communicate, collaborate, and adapt to various individuals from different cultural backgrounds. (Rachman & Cahyani, 2019) Research shows that early childhood social skills need to be identified and developed early on to prevent negative behavior and promote positive interactions in diverse environments. (Rudi Hartono et al., 2023)

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the implementation of a multicultural learning approach at RA Nurul Islam Singkawang significantly affects the social development of early childhood, especially in terms of empathy, tolerance, and other social skills. Children involved in culture-based learning showed an increase in more inclusive social interactions and showed initiative in resolving conflicts. In addition, this approach also helps children to be more confident in interacting with their friends who come from various cultural backgrounds. Thus, multicultural education has proven effective in supporting the formation of children's social character from an early age, as well as enriching their experiences with the values of diversity. These findings provide a

significant contribution to the development of more relevant and contextual learning models in early childhood education environments.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

With respect, the researcher would like to express his deepest gratitude to all parties at RA Nurul Islam Singkawang, especially to the principal, teachers, and all staff who have provided support, time, and opportunity to conduct this research. Without the cooperation and active participation of the school, this research would not have been able to be carried out properly. Thank you for your dedication, commitment, and enthusiasm in developing multicultural-based education that has a positive impact on children's development. The contribution of RA Nurul Islam Singkawang is very meaningful and provides inspiration for the development of early childhood education in Indonesia.

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