

Implementation of Multicultural Education through Differentiated Learning: A Case Study at Play Ground

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the implementation of Multicultural Education through Differentiated Learning in KB Dabin Cahaya, Bojong District, Tegal Regency. This qualitative research analyses the teachers' and managers' understanding of the two concepts, the supporting and inhibiting factors for their implementation, and the impact on students' learning achievement. The results show that teachers and managers have a good understanding of both concepts, but there are still obstacles such as lack of training and resources. Differentiated learning is proven effective in improving students' learning motivation, concept understanding, social skills, self-confidence and critical thinking. This study concludes that the implementation of differentiated learning in the context of multicultural education has great potential in shaping students' characters that are tolerant, respect differences and have good learning achievements.

Keywords: *Differentiated, Education, Multicultural*

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INTRODUCTION

As a country that has a diversity of cultures, tribes, customs, religions and languages. Indonesia has the motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, which means different but still one. The motto is used by the Indonesian people as a place to accommodate various kinds of differences including differences in culture, ethnicity, religion, customs, and other differences that exist in the society of this nation and country. The diversity of ethnicity, culture, religion, customs and other differences that exist in Indonesia is something that is difficult to find in other parts of the world. There are approximately 17,504 islands included in the sovereign territory of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Indonesia has different ethnicities, cultures, religions, traditions, beliefs, customs, as well as economic levels and social arrangements. In addition, Indonesia also adheres to various religions and beliefs such as Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and various other beliefs. This diversity will give birth to different cultures so that this nation is one of the largest multicultural countries in the world (Kosim: 2009: 219).

On the one hand, the diversity and cultural differences above can actually be a gift and become the wealth of the Indonesian nation which is very high in value, making people's lives dynamic, colourful, not boring, and making one another complement and need each other. In other words, plurality enriches life and becomes the essence of community life. But on the other hand, it is also vulnerable to social conflicts that will threaten national integration, characterized by hostility and conflict between religions, hatred of other cultures, and war. Various cases and events that smelled of SARA or ethnicity, religion, race,

and intergroup often occur in this country, including cases of fights between Madurese and Dayak tribes in West Kalimantan, fights between Makasar tribes and Timorese natives which then developed into friction between Catholicism and Islam, conflicts between Chinese and indigenous ethnicities, and so on. The conflicts that occur because of the lack of understanding of each individual or group towards the existing cultural diversity. The conflicts that occur indicate that the Indonesian population does not yet have broad insight into the cultural plurality that exists in this country. Therefore, it is necessary to have a deep understanding of mutual respect between various tribes, races, groups, customs and religions. From the reality mentioned above, multicultural education is an alternative solution that cannot be avoided.

Multicultural education is an education that provides equal opportunities for all children of the nation without differentiating treatment due to differences in ethnic, cultural and religious differences and requires the highest human respect and appreciation for human dignity regardless of cultural background. In the context of Indonesia, which is full of pluralism, this education has a very strategic role to be able to manage this plurality creatively. The focus of multicultural education, Tilaar (2022) revealed that in multicultural education programs, the focus is no longer directed solely to mainstream social, religious, and cultural groups. Multicultural education is actually an attitude of care and understanding or recognition of others who are different. In that context, multicultural education looks at society more broadly. Based on the basic view that indifference and non-recognition are not only rooted in racial structural inequality, the multicultural education paradigm includes subjects regarding injustice, poverty, oppression, and underdevelopment of minority groups in various fields, be it social, economic, cultural, educational, and so on. In a descriptive context, multicultural education should contain themes of tolerance, ethno-cultural and religious differences, the dangers of discrimination, conflict resolution and mediation, human rights, democratization, plurality, universal humanity, and other relevant subjects (Tilaar, 2022:15).

The implementation of multicultural education does not have to change the curriculum. Multicultural education lessons can be integrated in other subjects. It is just that guidelines are needed for teachers to implement it, the main thing is that students need to be taught about tolerance, togetherness, human rights, democratization, and mutual respect. This is very valuable for their future life and is very important for the establishment of human values. Schools play an important role in instilling multicultural values in students from an early age. If from the beginning they have had the values of togetherness, tolerance, love of peace, and respect for differences, then these values will be reflected in their daily behaviour because they are formed in their personality. If these are successfully possessed by our young generation, then future life can be predicted to be relatively peaceful and full of respect between others can be realized. Therefore, school administrators, in this case teachers, are not only required to professionally implement multicultural values in various opportunities in schools and every subject, but they are also required to be able to instil the values of diversity to students.

Multicultural education and differentiated learning are two complementary approaches to creating an inclusive and equitable educational environment. Multicultural education aims to recognize, appreciate and celebrate cultural diversity in society, while differentiated learning focuses on meeting the individual learning needs of each learner. The implementation of multicultural education can be influenced and strengthened by the implementation of differentiated learning.

The application of differentiated learning in the Merdeka curriculum, playing and learning is not without reason (Asri, 2017: 192), but because the Ministry of Education and Culture wants all educational institutions in Indonesia to have a happy learning atmosphere, where happy is meant to be happy for educators, happy for children, and happy for guardians or parents. Because early childhood learning should not be limited to the

interaction between teachers and students in the classroom. Relationships between parents, teachers and children can also occur anywhere.

In learning, there is a need for learning resources with all kinds of materials that can be used to provide information and various understandings to students and teachers (Eka, et al, 2020: 143). Therefore, teachers should use real media and fun learning for students. This agrees with Fadillah (2022: 120) who reveals that teaching and learning activities are a routine task of a teacher to develop children's talents and abilities. Therefore, teachers must always learn how to manage the class professionally so that the talents and abilities of students can develop optimally.

The Independent Curriculum is an educational approach used in Early Childhood Education (ECED) in Indonesia. This independent curriculum aims to provide freedom and creativity in learning, so that students can learn according to their own potential and needs. In 2021, the independent curriculum changed to a diverse curriculum with the aim that learners have enough time to learn concepts and strengthen their skills. On the other hand, teachers have the freedom to choose teaching tools so that learning can be tailored to the learning needs and interests of students (Baharuddin, 2021:195).

Dabin Cahaya is one of the areas under the guidance of PAUD supervisors in the Office of Education and Culture, Bojong District Coordinator, Tegal Regency, which consists of several playgroup/KB education units or often referred to as institutions. Dabin Cahaya has several functions, including: (1) carry out guidance and development of the quality of education in the institutions/KB members, (2) organize activities that are educational and creative for students and teachers, (3) facilitate communication and cooperation between institutions/KB members and (4) represent its members in educational forums at the sub-district level. Dabin Cahaya is expected to play an active role in improving the quality of education in the Bojong sub-district area.

Dabin Cahaya has implemented various programs aimed at improving the quality of education, particularly in teacher development, curriculum enhancement, and facility management. Teacher coaching and development efforts include training and workshops designed to enhance pedagogical and professional competencies, as well as mentoring and supervision activities such as monitoring, mentoring, and assessment to ensure high-quality learning. Additionally, outstanding teachers are recognized for their contributions. In terms of curriculum development, Dabin Cahaya has focused on designing an Education Unit Curriculum (KSP) that aligns with regional needs and characteristics, creating innovative and creative teaching materials, and conducting continuous assessments to measure student learning progress. However, challenges remain in terms of infrastructure, as most institutions in Bojong Sub-district, Tegal Regency, have their own buildings, but classroom conditions are inadequate, and there is a shortage of educational resources such as textbooks, which are not evenly distributed across all institutions. Moreover, the majority of students come from families where parents work as farmers, farm laborers, or entrepreneurs, with an average education level of junior high school.

Despite these efforts, several challenges have been identified in implementing Multicultural Education through Differentiated Learning at KB Dabin Cahaya. Observations from the first quarter of 2024 (January to March) indicate that a major issue is the lack of an in-depth understanding among teachers and school administrators regarding Differentiated Learning and its integration into classroom instruction. Additionally, there is insufficient comprehension of Multicultural Education, making it difficult for educators to effectively apply inclusive and culturally responsive teaching strategies. This highlights the need for further professional development programs focused on equipping teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to successfully implement Differentiated Learning and foster a multicultural learning environment (Ariesta, 2022).

In addition, teachers have difficulty in developing differentiated learning that is learner-centered. This is due to limited resources, teaching materials, infrastructure that suits the needs of learners and limited funds for learning development, teacher training, and

purchasing books or other infrastructure. In addition to these factors, the lack of training and mentoring for teachers and the lack of collaboration between institutions are also barriers to the implementation of differentiated learning.

The implementation of learning before using the differentiated approach in KB Dabin Cahaya often refers to the traditional approach where teaching methods and learning materials tend to be uniform and pay little attention to individual differences among learners. The main characteristic of pre-differentiated learning is that all learners receive the same materials regardless of differences in abilities, interests and learning styles, with teachers giving the same instructions to all learners without adjusting teaching methods based on learners' individual needs. The traditional uniform and undifferentiated approach to learning has many limitations in meeting learners' learning needs, the diversity of learners in terms of abilities, interests and learning styles does not receive adequate attention so that it can hamper their potential and development. The implementation of differentiated learning is here to overcome these limitations by adjusting teaching strategies to be more responsive to learners' individual differences.

The main purpose of the research with the title "Implementation of Multicultural Education through Differentiated Learning in KB Dabin Cahaya, Bojong Subdistrict, Tegal Regency" is to find out the understanding of teachers and managers about multicultural education and differentiated learning, analyze the factors that support and hinder the implementation of differentiated learning and the impact of differentiated learning on multicultural education in Dabin Cahaya, Bojong Subdistrict, Tegal Regency.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach, aiming to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of Multicultural Education through Differentiated Learning in Playgroups within Dabin Cahaya, Bojong District, Tegal Regency. Qualitative research generates descriptive data in the form of spoken or written words from individuals and observed behaviors. According to Sugiyono (2011), qualitative research is a method used to comprehend various social phenomena in a thorough and detailed manner. Descriptive qualitative research is applied to develop theories based on data collected directly from the field or research setting.

Regarding data sources, this study falls under field research, where data collection occurs directly in real-world settings, including communities, social institutions, organizations, and both formal and non-formal educational institutions (Sudaryono, 2012: 71). Furthermore, Narbuko and Ahmadi (2005: 46) state that research is conducted to intensively examine the background, current circumstances, and environmental interactions of specific social units, such as individuals, groups, institutions, or societies.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' and administrators' understanding of the concept of multicultural education and differentiated learning in the context of the theme of love for my homeland.

In an effort to instil the values of patriotism from an early age, the application of the concepts of multicultural education and differentiated learning is very relevant. This study aims to reveal how teachers and managers in KB Dabin Cahaya Bojong Sub-district Tegal Regency understand and integrate the two concepts in learning with the theme of love for my homeland. The results of this study indicate that teachers and managers in KB Dabin Cahaya Bojong Sub-district Tegal Regency have great potential to implement multicultural education and differentiated learning in daily learning activities. With the right support, it is expected that these efforts can contribute to forming a young generation that has a strong, tolerant character and love for the country.

Respondents also realized the importance of differentiated learning in the context of multicultural education. They understand that each child has different learning styles,

interests and abilities. Therefore, learning must be tailored to individual needs so that all children can learn optimally and reach their full potential.

According to Peduk Rintayati (2022), differentiated learning is learning that adjusts the characteristics and needs of each learner. This learning design accommodates all the differences that exist as a form of appreciating them and trying to organize learning that suits the personalities of students so that teachers can use a variety of methods in one lesson. The heterogeneity of learners in one class is a necessity, they have different abilities in terms of intelligence, emotions, family environment, social, and other abilities.

Differentiated learning encourages teachers to adjust students, where before learning is carried out the teacher gets data on the characteristics of his students through diagnostic assessment. The implementation of learning by adjusting the character of students is an effort to build fun and meaningful learning so that students' learning outcomes are maximized (Annemieke E. Smale-Jacob et al., 2019: 1-23), through this learning students can flexibly learn with different peers.

The respondents were able to connect the concepts of multicultural education and differentiated learning with the theme of love for the country. They realized that by understanding and appreciating cultural diversity in Indonesia, children will have a deeper love for their homeland.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that teachers and KB managers in Bojong Sub-district, Tegal Regency, have great potential to implement multicultural education and differentiated learning in daily learning activities. With the right support, it is expected that these efforts can contribute to forming a young generation that has a strong, tolerant character and love for the country.

Factors that support and hinder the implementation of differentiated learning on the theme "Love My Homeland" in KB Dabin Cahaya Kec. Bojong Kab. Tegal.

Differentiated learning has been shown to be effective in improving learning motivation and student achievement. However, the implementation of this approach at the early childhood education level, especially in KBs, still requires more attention. This study aims to identify the factors that support and hinder the implementation of differentiated learning on the theme "Love My Homeland" in KB Dabin Cahaya, Bojong Sub-district, Tegal Regency. By understanding these factors, it is hoped that more specific recommendations can be obtained to improve the quality of learning and foster a sense of love for the country in children from an early age.

In accordance with Sarie's research (2022: 210) that the supporting factor for the success of differentiated learning is the support of several parties such as the principal, between teachers, students, and student guardians. The driving factor for the implementation of differentiated learning is the leadership of the principal who always motivates teachers and organizes various assistance for teachers through various seminars, in house training and workshop activities. (Martanti, et al, 2022: 415).

The successful implementation of differentiated learning in KB is supported by several key factors. One of them is the availability of natural resources around the school, which can be utilized as engaging learning media relevant to thematic learning, such as "Love My Country." Additionally, parental support plays a crucial role, as active involvement in the child's learning process at home enhances the effectiveness of differentiated learning. A conducive learning environment also contributes significantly, as a comfortable and enjoyable atmosphere encourages children to actively participate in learning. Furthermore, students' enthusiasm for diverse learning activities serves as a driving force for teachers to continuously develop and refine differentiated learning strategies.

However, several factors hinder the implementation of differentiated learning. One major challenge is the lack of time, as teachers need extensive preparation to tailor learning materials to students' characteristics. Research by Widyawati & Rachmadyanti (2023: 210) highlights that differentiated learning demands additional time for diagnostic assessments and observations before instruction. Similarly, Ramadhan et al. (2023: 210) identified obstacles such as time constraints, limited resources, insufficient personnel, inadequate classroom facilities, and lack of parental support. Other significant challenges include the lack of educator training on differentiated learning, limited resources and infrastructure, high costs associated with preparing engaging learning media, and insufficient teacher understanding of differentiated learning concepts, which makes implementation difficult in practice.

The Impact of Differentiated Learning on Student Achievement in the Context of Multicultural Education at KB Dabin Cahaya, Bojong District, Tegal Regency.

In the era of globalization, cultural diversity is a necessity. Multicultural education is the key to preparing the younger generation to coexist with differences. Differentiated learning, as one of the innovative learning approaches, offers great potential in improving the quality of learning in a diverse environment. This study aims to examine the impact of differentiated learning on student learning achievement in KB Dabin Cahaya, Bojong Sub-district, Tegal Regency.

Based on the data that has been collected and analyzed, it shows that differentiated learning has a positive effect on improving student learning outcomes. This is reinforced by research conducted by Bilantua A et.al (2024) on the Effect of Differentiated Learning on Student Learning Outcomes in Integrated Social Studies Subjects at Smp Negeri 1 Tomilito North Gorontalo. Differentiated learning has benefits including 1) Can help the teaching and learning process 2) Can increase the motivation and learning outcomes of students 3) Make the classroom atmosphere comfortable so that learning becomes fun 4) Make students become independent 5) Can make teachers excited in delivering material 6) Students can determine their own way of learning and structured idamayanti (2022).

Learning that is tailored to each student's interests and learning style is proven to increase learning motivation. When students find the subject matter relevant and interesting, they will be more motivated to actively learn. With the adjustment of learning materials and methods, students can more easily understand the concepts taught. This has an impact on improving overall learning achievement.

Diantika Pebriyanti (2023: 92) asserts that the effectiveness of the application of differentiated learning can be seen from several previous studies, both those that appear from increased learning outcomes and the motivation and ability of students to think critically in the learning process. Differentiated learning encourages students to interact with peers who have different backgrounds. This interaction helps improve communication and collaboration skills. Through differentiated learning, students are taught to appreciate individual differences. This forms a more open and tolerant attitude towards cultural diversity. When students successfully complete tasks that match their abilities, their confidence will increase. Differentiated learning encourages students to think critically and find solutions to problems.

CONCLUSIONS

Teachers and managers at KB Dabin Cahaya, Bojong Sub-district, Tegal Regency, have a strong understanding of multicultural education and differentiated learning, recognizing their significance in shaping children's character and instilling patriotic values from an early age. The potential for integrating these concepts into daily learning activities is high, provided there is adequate support, including intensive training, sufficient resources, and a conducive learning environment. The implementation of multicultural education and differentiated learning brings various positive impacts, such as fostering tolerance, respect

for diversity, and national pride, enhancing learning quality by tailoring instruction to students' individual needs, and enriching students' understanding of Indonesia's cultural diversity. However, several challenges hinder its effectiveness, including the lack of specialized training, time constraints, limited resources, high costs, and insufficient teacher understanding. Despite these obstacles, the implementation of differentiated learning significantly improves student learning achievement, particularly within a multicultural education framework. Key benefits include increased motivation, improved concept comprehension, enhanced social skills, boosted self-confidence, and the development of critical thinking abilities, all of which contribute to a more effective and inclusive learning experience.

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