

# *The Importance Of Multicultural Education As An Effort Towards Indonesian National Awareness*

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**Abstract**—The main problem in this paper is related to the many national issues faced by the Indonesian people, especially social conflict, due to differences in religion, ethnicity, and race. The purpose of this study is to reveal the importance of multicultural education in increasing national awareness. This research is a library research study. Qualitative research methods are often called naturalistic because the research is done in natural conditions (Natural Setting). The primary sources of this research are books and other literature relating to multicultural education. The research found that multicultural education is needed to increase national awareness.

**Keywords:** *Multicultural Education, National Awareness*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the independence of the Republic of Indonesia, it had agreed to support unity in diversity. The unity in diversity can be seen in the symbol of our country, Garuda bird with a ribbon written "BHINEKA TUNGGAL IKA". The choice of the word Unity in Diversity is not only thought for a moment by the founders of this nation but has gone through a long history of the struggle for independence of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia, which began with the establishment of a group of young intellectuals who formed the Budi Utomo organization, then the initiatives of young people from all over the Indonesian archipelago which jointly pledging the "Sumpah Pemuda" of one land, one nation, and one language, namely Indonesia, until the reading of the text of the proclamation on August 17, 1945, and the culmination at the time of the establishment of the Indonesian Principles on August 18, 1945.

If we look at the long history of this nation, we find that multiculturalism is not an issue by the pioneers of independence and even with all their wisdom they realized that our multiculturalism is an asset or heritage of this nation that can be used as social capital in building this nation. Why can multicultural be used as social capital to build a nation? Sociologically and anthropologically, Indonesian society and culture are the largest in the world. This reality can be seen from the socio-cultural conditions which consist of various ethnicities, languages, and religions and belief systems possessed by Indonesian people [1].

However, this wealth does not have a significant risk, the condition of such communities is very vulnerable to various

causes such as Corruption, Collusion, and Nepotism/KKN, conflicts, and various separatist movements. This problem may occur because it is caused by the socio-cultural conditions of Indonesian people which are so large in distance, for example between ordinary people and officials, gaps between officials, between regions, another problem that we often witness in this country is the failure to enforce the rule of law, the loss of humanity to respect the rights of others, and various other problems that can trigger the problem of national disintegration, as a risk faced by a multicultural society [2].

Facing this problem, we must not be pessimistic about the condition of this multi-member society, many ways can be taken to manage this nation's assets, which I say as social capital. Our country has a Paternalistic culture, meaning that national leaders, community leaders, and religious leaders must be able to become role models for the wider community how to live in a multi-part society, motivate and set an example for the community [3]. Besides, in the national education system, a multicultural education system needs to be formulated for every existing level of education.

The issue of national disintegration has been a scene in this country, a result of the highly centralized New Order government system, and attempts to endure multiculturalism by imposing a system of monoculturalism such as the application of a uniform government system throughout Indonesia, in which case the country has a lot of wisdom local government in carrying out the system according to the customs originating from its ancestors, in the traditional system we do not see any friction in the regions with the same system. Likewise, the education system seeks to ignore local wisdom and heritage that can be used as a basis for developing this country based on local potential.

The condition of uniformity is not getting a backlash from the community, since the fall of the New Order regime, negative reactions such as the emergence of various violence and led to national disintegration, such as socio-cultural and political disintegration. After the fall of the New Order regime, this nation began to change the government system, namely decentralization (regional autonomy) and changes in curriculum structure that had local content. With this government system, is there no longer any symptom of disintegration in this country? One way to overcome the

problem of national disintegration is to launch and implement multicultural education in every level of education in Indonesia because multicultural education is essential to be implemented to minimize and prevent the disintegration of the nation.

Multicultural education is the process of planting a way of life, such as respect, sincere, and tolerant of the diversity of cultures that live in the midst of a plural society. With multicultural education, it is expected that there will be resilience and mental flexibility of the nation in facing social conflicts so that national unity is not easily broken and cracked [4]. In the context of Indonesia, which is well known for its diversity-laden content, multicultural education becomes very strategic that can maintain pluralism creatively, so those conflicts that arise as a result of social transformation and reform can be managed intelligently and become part of the enlightenment of the nation's life going forward (Musa Ash'arie).

Reference [5], argued substantively the "multicultural" worldview is not too new in Indonesia. The principle of Indonesia as a country "unity in diversity" reflects that even though Indonesia is multicultural, it is still integrated with unity. The formation of Indonesia's multicultural society cannot be taken for granted or trial and error. Instead, it must be pursued systematically, programmatically, integrated, and continuously. The most strategic step in this regard is through multicultural education which is held through all educational institutions, both formal and informal, and even informal in the wider community.

Reference [5] further stated that the needs and urgency of multicultural education have long been felt to be quite urgent for other plural nation-states. In some Western countries, such as Canada, Britain, the United States, and others, which since the end of World War II have become increasingly "multicultural" because of the process of migrating outside populations to these countries, multicultural education has found its momentum since the 1970s. Faced with the increasing "multiculturalism" in these countries, the paradigms, concepts, and practices of "multicultural" education are increasingly relevant and timely. On the other hand, the idea of multicultural education is something new in Indonesia. Although lately there have begun to emerge voices that propose multicultural education in the country, not developing a public discourse on this subject. The cultural reality and the latest developments in the social, political and cultural conditions of the nation make multicultural education more and more necessary.

Actually, in this country multicultural education is inherently included in the school curriculum, civic education and Pancasila Education (Higher Education curriculum), citizenship education (elementary to high school curriculum), and scouting activities included in the extra-curricular curriculum. However, in implementing the curriculum, instead of instilling an attitude but the students taught to master as a science. Principally, Pancasila Educational Values and Education and Citizenship Education courses contain multicultural national life and strengthen the national outlook,

so that through this lesson it is hoped that it can evoke a spirit of togetherness in differences in multicultural societies [6].

On the other hand, we see that scouting education and citizenship become antireality because they do not experience actualization of life in the midst of the reality of complex social changes under global cultural pressures that tend to be materialistic and hedonistic. On the other hand, we also feel that religious education provided in our schools, in general, does not turn on good multicultural education, and even tends to be the opposite. As a result, social conflict is often hardened by religious legitimacy taught in religious education in conflict-prone regional schools. This makes the conflict has roots in fundamental religious beliefs so that violent social conflicts are increasingly difficult to overcome because they are understood as part of their religious vocation. The fact shows that religious education is still taught by way of denying the right to life of other religions, as if only the religion itself is right and has the right to life, while other religions are wrong, lost and threatened with living rights, both among the majority and the minority. This narrow spirit of religious education, of course, fundamentally opposes the spirit of multicultural education, and will weaken national unity (Musa Asy'arie).

The great hope of the people of Indonesia at the time of entering the Reformation era was that there was an improvement in the socio-cultural conditions at all levels far better than the New Order era, but the hopes of the community failed in the middle of the road. After a decade of the reform era, with the change of the government system from an autocracy system to democracy, yet that hope was also not achieved, indeed with a democratic system (openness) many open ulcers of national and state life in the new order era such as corruption, collusion and nepotism (KKN), but the change in the system that is happening right now is even more rampant KKN in all lines of government systems. We realize that the reality of corruption has destroyed the joints of national unity, where corruption undermines social, economic and legal justice, so this condition sharpens social inequalities that make socio-cultural situations increasingly difficult to control. This problem occurs because the subjects taught in all levels of education (such as Educational Values, PPKn and Religion) have lost their multicultural actuality, therefore, multicultural education must be developed in all levels of education in order to achieve the expected socio-cultural conditions.

## II. METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research methods are often called naturalistic because the research is done in natural conditions (Natural Setting). It can also be called an ethnographic method because the data collection and analysis are more qualitative [7]. Data collection techniques in this study carried out continuously from the beginning to the end of the study. Analysis of this data is the process of systematically searching and compiling data obtained from interviews, field notes. And documentation was done by organizing the data into categories, describing units, synthesizing, compiling into patterns, choosing what is important and what will be studied, and making conclusions so that it is easily understood by oneself or others who research

and record what is stated by the informant. The data analysis technique used was by analyzing and reducing descriptive data obtained in the field, then categorized for examination and then interpreted. In reference [8] data analysis is the process of systematically searching and compiling data obtained from interviews, field notes, and other materials so that they can be easily understood and their findings can be shared with others.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The tragedy of inter-group violence that occurred in the late 1990s to early 2000 which exploded sporadically in various regions in Indonesia shows how vulnerable the sense of togetherness built in the Nation-State, how thick the prejudice between groups and how low the values of multiculturalism [9]. Multiculturalism as an understanding that emphasizes the equality and equality of local cultures without ignoring the rights of the existence of other cultures is important to understand together in the life of a multicultural society like Indonesia. If not, in our society, likely, conflicts will always occur due to ignorance and understanding of multicultural reality [10].

The tragedy of inter-group violence in the country will not occur if the level of national awareness of each member of the community is high, low national awareness is also much influenced by low multicultural awareness [11]. As stated earlier that multicultural awareness in this country had existed before independence, namely the birth of the Budi Utomo organization, it was precisely this national awareness that was able to realize the establishment of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia. Gigih Nusantara stated that "multicultural awareness has emerged since the Republic of Indonesia was formed. During the New Order era, this awareness was buried in the name of unity and unity. Monoculturalism was then emphasized. As a result up to now, the Indonesian multiculturalism insight is still low".

One way to overcome the low level of multiculturalism is to revitalize multiculturalism by reviving the insight of the archipelago, and building national awareness. To build national awareness so as not to recur the events that once destroyed this nation that is growing in every nation's child a sense/attitude of nationalism. Nationalism is one of the concepts that create and maintain the sovereignty of a country by realizing the concept of shared identity for a group of people. For the Indonesian people, their shared identity is Pancasila. Pancasila which was born from the culture of this nation has reflected a pattern of unity and harmony among fellow children of the nation, but lately, especially in the era of reform, it seems that people are afraid to call Pancasila so as not to be regarded as New Order minions. Pancasila in the life of the nation and state in principle there is nothing wrong, it's just that in the practice of the New Order government, Pancasila was used as a tool of legitimacy to perpetuate power.

Facing this problem and the chaos of this nation, Azyumardi Azra expressed the need for a movement which he called the "Rejuvenation of the Pancasila". According to Azra,

the rejuvenation of Pancasila can be started by making Pancasila back as a public discourse (public discourse). By becoming a public discourse, at the same time reassessment can be carried out (reassessment) of the meaning of Pancasila so far, to then produce new thoughts and meanings. This issue was raised by Azra to question whether an "ideology" such as Pancasila is still relevant in the era of globalization and democratization that is almost unlimited today?

According to reference [5], there are three factors that make Pancasila increasingly difficult and marginal in all developments: first: Pancasila is already polluted by the Suharto regime's policies that make Pancasila a political means to maintain the status quo of his power. Second: Political liberalization with the abolition of provisions by President B.J. Habibie about Pancasila as the only principle of every organization. Pancasila tends to no longer be a common platform in political life. Third: Decentralization and autonomy more or less encourage the strengthening of regional sentiments, which if not anticipated to open can not foster local-nationalism sentiments that can overlap with ethnonationalism. In this process, Pancasila both intentionally and by implication is increasingly losing its central position. Responding to these three problems, Azra viewed that Pancasila remains an integrating force that is still relatively intact as a common platform for the nation of Indonesia because there is nothing wrong with Pancasila.

Based on the understanding put forward by Azra, questions arise; why today the Pancasila, which is believed to be the basis of the State, views the nation's life as if it has been forgotten or has been ignored by all the nation's young generations? The answer to that question has several things being the concept of the answer; first, the nation's leaders as role models can not set an example for community members in implementing a clean government system in accordance with the ideals contained in Pancasila, secondly, the current democratization does not seem to run in the corridor of the meaning of democracy itself, third, understanding of multiculturalism which is still very low of the nation's generations, which in fact in Pancasila has reflected the life of multiculturalism.

In order to commemorate National Education Day in 2011, let us make the momentum of National Education Day this year to make multicultural education central in rebuilding national awareness in Indonesia, so that in the future we will not be trapped in wrong political practices, which only concerned with the group or live in sectarianism and ethnocentrism. Multicultural education will bring this nation towards a more comprehensive understanding and can anticipate social, cultural and political problems in the era of globalization, which will bring the world community towards monoculture.

The multicultural education paradigm is very useful for building cohesiveness, solidarity, and intimacy among ethnic diversity, race, religion, culture, and needs. Through instilling a spirit of multiculturalism in schools and even in higher education, it will become a medium of training and awareness

for young people to accept cultural, religious, racial, ethnic and needs differences among others and want to live together peacefully. For this hope to work, multicultural education should be carried out in educational institutions and established as an educational curriculum in all levels of education, institutionalized by the government and the private sector. The multicultural education paradigm implicitly becomes one of article 4 of Law no. 20 of 2003, concerning the national education system, in which it was explained that education was carried out democratically, not discriminatory, by upholding human rights, religious values, cultural values, and national pluralism.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Finally, the multicultural education that we are discussing to build Indonesia's national awareness, can be implemented through formal education, and can also be implemented through non-formal education. Informal education, multicultural education does not need to be specifically designed in a separate subject but rather integrated into the existing curriculum through teaching materials or learning models. In multicultural education colleges integrated into general subjects (MKU), such as Citizenship education, Pancasila education, Religion, and Language. At elementary to high school/equivalent level, multicultural education can be integrated into religious teaching materials, Civics, Sociology, and Anthropology, as well as extra-curricular activities such as scouting. In non-formal education, multicultural education can be socialized through training with multicultural responsive learning models with prioritizing respect for differences, both race, ethnicity and religion between members of society.

If this multicultural education can be carried out, then national awareness and nationalism in this country can be resurrected as the initial struggles of the nation's pioneers ranging from Budi Utomo to the struggle for independence and maintaining independence. We, the current generation in filling independence, are only required to be very tolerant and respect each other's differences and study hard to build a better nation towards freedom, corruption, collusion, and nepotism.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Special thanks to Dean of Social Science Faculty Manado State University.

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