

Potential Issues in the Implementation of Multicultural Education at University

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Abstract— The multicultural education model for higher education has not found the right formula. The main objective of this research is to describe the problems and strategies in the implementation of multicultural education. Research with a qualitative approach, as research subjects are students of Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (UNY), and research subjects are lecturers of UNY. Data were collected through FGDs and interviews and then analyzed qualitatively. The results showed that problems in multicultural education can be categorized into internal problems involving lecturers, students, and institutions, as well as external problems related to the socio-cultural context. Problems can also be mapped based on their source, namely structural problems, cultural problems, personal problems, and institutional problems. Strategies that can be carried out with a holistic approach that is integrated into the learning process. With multicultural education, students will get a global perspective in facing various problems in the era of industrial revolution 4.0 which require the ability to communicate, collaborate, think creatively and think critically based on the values of equality and justice.

Keywords— *problems; multicultural education; university*

I. INTRODUCTION

Multicultural education at the university level is necessary to implement in order to make young generation prepared in dealing with the social dynamics in this disruptive era. Higher education has several roles in preparing students to be able to live and adapt in a global society which could be pursued through educational transformation that embodies multicultural education as an integrated part of curriculum and courses [1]. In addition, higher education aims to empower students to reach their maximum potential as learners.

University students need to be more acknowledged to the society either in local, national or international level.

Multicultural education promotes transformation in society to reduce injustice, prejudice, and conflicts. An important aspect in the development of multicultural education at the university level is the knowledge of the lecturers about multicultural education itself [2]. If the differences are not well understood, there might be potential conflicts in educational institutions as well as in the community [3].

Higher education plays an important role in the application of multicultural education. Having adequate knowledge about multicultural education would make the students become more ready in facing the challenges of 4.0 industrial era which demands multi-literature. Multicultural education is a progressive approach to transforming education as a whole in exposing the shortcomings and failures of discriminatory practices in the education. Multicultural education requires people to transform their mindset [4]. In fact, the implementation of multicultural education in university has been meeting several obstacles because it requires changes in the way of thinking and perspective of a person in viewing social reality.

Through a multicultural perspective, students would be more effective in shaping their global skills. Multicultural education is an option to prevent social conflicts. To create harmonious multicultural society, an integrated and sustainable effort is important to be carried out [5]. Multicultural education is no longer a discourse. It has been required in social practices and learning interactions. Furthermore, multicultural education needs to be more optimized in the university environment through creative and innovative strategies.

In the implementation, multicultural education process could be designed in more applicable ways in order to support the development of personal competencies, social competencies, and professional competencies of Yogyakarta State University (UNY) students. Multicultural education is not

merely understood as a subject, but it needs to become a perspective in understanding social reality.

According to Hanum, et al [6] cultural competences for the students at UNY was required in constructing their knowledge about multicultural education. It had been directly and indirectly integrated in learning process, but the results had not been specifically reviewed [7]. Therefore, it is needed to conduct a study on the obstacles and issues in the implementation of multicultural education at the university level. This study aims to identify the potential issues faced in the implementation of multicultural education at UNY.

Multicultural education cannot be separated from the study of culture. As stated by Raymond William [8], culture has multiple meanings, namely: 1) culture as an intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic process of an individual; 2) culture as a way of life; 3) culture as a result of intellectual works and practices; and 4) culture as a system that is reproduced, lived, and developed by individuals and society. This formulation is required in understanding the cultural identity of a nation.

Multicultural education is needed to present a global perspective [9]. It is a movement designed to empower all students to become active and resourceful citizens in this polarized countries and worlds. In addition, multicultural education has an emphasis on equality. Knowledge about multicultural education can be integrated with various approaches [10].

Multicultural education is an idea as well as an educational renewal movement with the main objective of changing the structure of educational institutions. Therefore the students with special needs and those who are members of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups have the same opportunity to be successful [11].

The broad definition of multicultural education includes experiences that shape general perceptions of age, gender, religions, socio-economic status, types of cultural identities, languages, races, and special needs. Yaqin [12] also explains that multicultural education is a process of cultivating respects and tolerance of cultural diversity in a plural society.

Cultural competences consist of four main aspects, namely: 1) cultural awareness, 2) perspectives of own and others' culture, 3) cultural competences, and 4) cultural encounters [13]. The cultural awareness aspect is related to the beliefs and hopes that all people have the same rights and obligations despite having different religious, ethnic, linguistic and cultural differences. The aspect of understanding of own and others' cultures is related to the understanding and feeling that differences are not the barrier in social interaction [14]. Meanwhile, the aspect of cultural competence is related to the ability to be a part of a multicultural life. The cultural encounter aspect shows respect in diversity.

Potential issues that arise in a multicultural community include: prejudice, stereotyping, ethnocentrism, racism, discrimination, and scape goating.

II. METHODS

This research is a qualitative study exploring data about potential problems in the implementation of multicultural education at UNY. The research subjects in this study were lecturers of general courses or MKU (Pancasila, Citizenship Education, Religious Education, Socio-Cultural Education) and basic education courses or MDK (Sociology & Anthropology of Education, Education Science) at UNY. The MKU and MDK courses are universal in nature and delivered at all faculties at UNY. Furthermore, the data were collected through focused-group discussions and interviews. The data were analysed qualitatively by conducting the following steps: data categorization, data reduction, and data interpretation,

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Referring to cultural competences suggested by Zamroni (2015) which consist of: a) cultural awareness, b) auditing of own and others' cultures, c) cultural competences, and d) cultural encounters and the results of FGDs and interviews with MKU and MDK lecturers, the potential issues in the implementation of multicultural education were related to:

1) *Cultural Awareness*

- a) There was no common perception on multicultural education
- b) There was lack of lecturer involvement in student activities.
- c) The focus was still on the materials rather than the application in various subject.
- d) The students were less sensitive to the environment.

Based on these problems, the expected solutions are as follows:

- a) Continuously campaigning multicultural education to campus elements
- b) Focusing on the social relations of lecturers and students in the application of multicultural education.
- c) Creating campus environment that is more open in accepting differences

2) *Understanding of Own and Others' Cultures*

- a) There was a narrow understanding and assumption that own cultures are better.
- b) There was still a negative stigma against certain tribes.
- c) There was still an intolerant attitude in differences of opinion.
- d) There still an exclusive (narrow) understanding among lecturers and students.
- e) The multicultural values had not been applied yet in daily campus activities

Based on these problems, the expected solutions are as follows:

- a) Comprehensive socialization through courses and multicultural activities outside the classroom.

- b) Providing equal opportunities to the students and instilling that the cultural characteristics they possess are wealth.
- c) Instilling the value of unity (the third principle of Pancasila) to the students so that conflicts and divisions does not occur.
- d) Conducting a joint meeting to discuss multicultural education

3) *Cultural Competence*

- a) Majority of the students were from Java, so other languages and cultures were not well accommodated.
- b) Fanatical minority groups were likely hard to accept differences.
- c) The main obstacle was a cultural constraint namely the behavior of the campus community which is sometimes less tolerant of multicultural and structural constraints.

Based on these problems, the expected solutions are as follows:

- a) Performing various actions to deepen the understanding of multicultural education.
- b) Minimizing cultural and structural constraints

4) *Cultural Encounter*

- a) There were different perspectives.
- b) It was important to increase commitment at the institutional level.

Based on these problems, the expected solutions are as follows:

- a) Resolving the problems through dialogues.
- b) Moving along from the root to create the policy

UNY could be a pioneer in the implementation of multicultural education because it keeps a long history of preparing educators/teachers. Therefore, psychologically students who enroll at UNY have a rationale for being actively involved in the struggle for the improvement of the national education.

The data show that multicultural education needs to be presented at UNY, but not in the form of a stand-alone course. It could be integrated into relevant subjects in General Courses, such as (1) Pancasila, (2) Religion, (3) PKN, Socio-Cultural Education; and Basic Education Courses such as: Educational Science and Sociology-Educational Anthropology.

UNY is a formal educational institution where lecturers and students carry out teaching and learning. Based on the results of research on potential issues in multicultural education and its solutions, it can be concluded that the issues can be categorized into internal issues either the issues of the lecturers, the students, or the institution as well as the external issues related to the socio-cultural context. The issues can also be mapped as the sources based on the structural issues and cultural issues.

As for the substance, the issues in the implementation of multicultural education were found in all aspects [13], namely:

- a) cultural awareness related to the belief that the owned religion, ethnicity, language, or culture are better than others,
- b) understanding and feeling that made differences sometimes become a barrier in social interaction,
- c) cultural competences related to the ability to be a part of a multicultural life, and
- d) cultural encounters related to respect in diversity.

To overcome various obstacles in multicultural education, the most appropriate strategy can be selected. Several strategies can be applied in multicultural education [1], including: 1) Content integration, which is concerned with how teachers use examples and various cultural contents to describe concepts, principles, generalizations, and main theories used in their subjects or fields of study; 2) Process of knowledge building, which is related to how teachers help students understand, observe, and learn implied cultural values, perspectives, and prejudices, 4) Elimination of prejudices, which focuses on the characteristics of students' racial attitudes and how these attitudes can be reshaped using a certain teaching method and material, 5) Pedagogy of equality, which is present when teachers transform their way of teaching to promote the academic achievement of students coming from various ethnicities, cultures, and social classes.

Lecturers can choose the right strategy according to the subject being taught. However, many research results conclude that success in multicultural education is necessary to think through theory and practice in a comprehensive manner. In managing multicultural education, it is also necessary to consider values and norms that are relevant to the culture. Indonesian students who are in a multicultural society need a holistic approach because the existence of cultural diversity requires an approach that can appreciate existing cultures. Holistic is a comprehensive caring model based on the idea of holism which emphasizes that for humans the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and Holistic thoughts are described as behaviors that recognize a person as a whole and are interdependent between biological, social, psychological and spiritual aspects. Holistic includes a variety of approaches, including medicine, education, communication [15].

Multicultural education can be built by developing synergistic knowledge which is considered to be able to build new perceptions in the face of knowledge development. With the synergistic visualization of knowledge by computers, it can be used as a bridge between the humanities and science, and between traditional images of culture and the latest achievements [14]. This principle is an important aspect to serve as a new perspective that can be considered by lecturers who teach in various disciplines.

IV. CONCLUSION

The potential issues in the implementation of multicultural education can be categorized into internal issues, which involve the lecturers, the students, and the institution, and external issues which is related to the socio-cultural context. The issues can also be mapped by the sources, based on the structural and cultural issues. UNY is suggested to continuously campaign multicultural education and the importance of applying multicultural values in campus life as well as enriching multicultural artifacts to foster multicultural spirit on campus.

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