Fostering Unity in Diversity: Ki Hadjar Dewantara's Vision for Multicultural Education

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Abstrak

Keanekaragaman budaya Indonesia yang kaya menghadirkan peluang sekaligus tantangan signifikan dalam membangun persatuan. Untuk mengatasi masalah kompleks ini membutuhkan sistem pendidikan yang mengedepankan persatuan dengan toleransi dan menghormati perbedaan budaya. Artikel ini mengeksplorasi visi Ki Hadiar Dewantara dalam pendidikan multikultural sebagai upaya untuk mewujudkan semboyan "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" dalam konteks pendidikan Indonesia. Ki Hadjar Dewantara, sebagai pelopor pendidikan nasional, menekankan pentingnya pendidikan yang inklusif, berakar pada nilai-nilai budaya lokal, dan menghargai keberagaman. Artikel ini menganalisis gagasan beliau melalui pendekatan historis dan konseptual, dengan menyoroti prinsip-prinsip pendidikan seperti Tri-N (Niteni, Nirokke, dan Nambahi) dan pemahaman terhadap lingkungan sosial-budaya peserta didik. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan multikultural berbasis pemikiran Ki Hadjar Dewantara relevan untuk membangun kesadaran akan keberagaman, menanamkan nilai toleransi, serta memperkuat karakter kebangsaan pada generasi muda. Dalam era globalisasi, visi ini menjadi landasan strategis untuk memperkuat persatuan di tengah perbedaan, menciptakan masyarakat yang harmonis, dan mempersiapkan siswa menghadapi tantangan global tanpa kehilangan jati diri sebagai bangsa Indonesia.

Ki Hadjar Dewantara, Pendidikan Multikultural, Among System, Tri-Pusat Kata Kunci: Pendidikan, Pancadarma

Abstract

Significant in building unity. To overcome this complex problem requires an education system that prioritizes unity with tolerance and respects cultural differences. This article explores Ki Hadjar Dewantara's vision in multicultural education as an effort to realize the motto "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" in the context of Indonesian education. Ki Hadjar Dewantara, as a pioneer of national education, emphasized the importance of inclusive education, rooted in local cultural values, and respecting diversity. This article analyzes his ideas through a historical and conceptual approach, highlighting educational principles such as Tri-N (Niteni, Nirokke, and Nambahi) and an understanding of the socio-cultural environment of students. The results of the study show that multicultural education based on Ki Hadjar Dewantara's thoughts is relevant to building awareness of diversity, instilling values of tolerance, and strengthening national character in the younger generation. In the era of globalization, this vision is a strategic foundation for strengthening unity amidst differences, creating a harmonious society, and preparing students to face global challenges without losing their identity as the Indonesian nation.

Keyword: Ki Hadjar Dewantara, Multicultural Education, Among System, Tri-Pusat Pendidikan, Pancadarma

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a vast country that has more than 17,000 islands and is located in South East Asian region, between the continents of Asia and Australia, and between the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean(Rachmawati et al., 2014). It has more than 300 ethnic groups (Wales, 2022), more than 200 languages (Nugraha et al., 2020), and six official religions (Rachmawati et al., 2014; Shabatini et al., 2023). Moreover, Rachmawati et al. (2014) state that Indonesia is one of the most diverse countries in the world.

There are opportunities and challenges when we talking about differences in society, like a two side of a coin (Bahrudin & Anjana, 2023). On one hand, these differences are an opportunity for Indonesian since it will give the Indonesian the cultural wealth that can be built as a national identity. Alternatively, as Wasino et al. (2019) stated these differences also pose a big challenge for Indonesian like what Indonesia's founding father had predicted since those differences are prone to spark conflicts, cultural misunderstandings, or even unequal access to opportunities such as education or economic. It means this diversity need to be handling wisely, or else.

There are many conflict instances in Indonesia that stem from difference in ethnicities, religions, social-economic situations, or even political views (Khairuddin, 2018; Nugraha et al., 2020; Panuntun & Aziz, 2023) such as Sampit tragedy between Dayak ethnic and Madura, 1998 tragedy because monetary crisis, Ambon, Poso tragedy that can be seen in Wales (2022). Other lesser conflict can be seen also in Shabatini et al. (2023) such as conflict between the Balinese community in Balinuraga Village and the Lampung community in Agom Village in Lampung. These conflicts in the diverse Indonesia indicated how important it is to have an educational system that promotes respects of different cultures or there might be some chances of disintegrated.

One view that is recognizing and encouraging respects of different cultures is multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is a concept that acknowledges difference within society, whether it is culture, religion, values, gender, social economic, and many other differences (As, 2016; Khairuddin, 2018; Khilmi et al., 2024; Wales, 2022). Lawrence Blum (in Rosyada, 2014) state that multiculturalism is a view that recognizing and respecting not only your own culture but also other people cultures. Similarly, Taylor (in Rosyada, 2014) stated that the idea of multiculturalism is an idea to manage differences within society and recognizing the differences itself. It means within the pluralistic society the diversity is recognized and respected.

In Indonesia, the idea of recognizing and respecting differences within culture is tightly related to our nation's Slogan, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, Unity in Diversity (Bahrudin & Anjana, 2023; A. W. Dewantara, 2019; Khairuddin, 2018; Wales, 2022). It highlights how people with different ethnic groups, languages, and religions can live together and still there is a unity within those diversity. Hopefully, with this slogan Indonesia as a country with vary and wide differences can live peacefully without anymore instances of conflict like mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Indonesian government as a nation has an important job to prepare the students in school to be prepared to live in this pluralistic society. It means the educational system in Indonesia should be incorporating the multiculturalism principle within it walls. One of the founding fathers and the father of education in Indonesia Ki Hadjar Dewantara (1889-1959) has a very big influence in Indonesian educational system, moreover the newest curriculum, Kurikulum Merdeka, that is based on his view of Merdeka(Witasari, 2021). Previously known as Raden mas Soewardi Soerjaningrat, Ki Hadjar Dewantara choose to leave his aristocracy's name and opt for the more approachable name because he valued modesty and also showed his commitment in giving everyone in Indonesia the same opportunities to education (Muthoifin, 2015; Novianti, 2012; Wiryopranoto et al., 2017)

Ki Hadjar Dewantara believed that the natural development of students can only occur when ther are nurtured in accordance to their environment, based on the natural talents and abilities, and in alignment with their natural conditions (K. H. Dewantara, 1977; Wiryopranoto et al., 2017). Thus, there are three points Dewantara's ideas that will be highlighted in this article based on this view. First and foremost, it is the Among System where teachers guide and support students that study on their own (K. H. Dewantara, 1977; Muthoifin, 2015; Wiryopranoto et al., 2017). The second point is Tri-Pusat Pendidikan, or the Three Centers of Education. This idea

brings together family, school, and community into the educational system since these three are important for not only a child's learning but also growth. The last but not least is Pancadarma, that is five way of life—character (budi pekerti), humanity (kemanusiaan), freedom (kemerdekaan), cultural preservation (kebudayaan bangsa), and unity (kebersamaan)— that reflect a comprehensive vision for education that harmonizes individual growth and the society.

Dewantara believed that education should nurture not only cognitive/intelligent part of a child but also moral and cultural values in child's thought. Dewantara's philosophy, which highlights inclusivity, humanity, and cultural preservation, remains a vital framework for addressing problems that may arise in the complex Indonesia's pluralistic society (Muthoifin, 2015; Wiryopranoto et al., 2017). This view of Ki Hadjar Dewantara is in line with the goals of multicultural education. Thus, his vision of cultural preservation, character building, and inclusivity offers practical solutions for contemporary issues of tolerance and equity in education (Muthoifin, 2015; Wiryopranoto et al., 2017). This study will explore the relevance of Dewantara's educational philosophy to the modern multicultural education especially in Indonesia.

METHODS

The method of this study is literature review, where the analysis of the data would be a descriptive review of all sources, whether it is the primary sources or the secondary. The primary sources would be Ki Hadjar Dewantara's collected thought in Pemikiran, Konsepsi, Keteladanan, Sikap Merdeka Part I (Pendidikan). The secondary sources would be related articles to not only Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational view but also the multicultural education. Thematic analysis was utilized to identify the relation between Dewantara's educational philosophy—such as the Among System, Tri-Pusat Pendidikan, and Pancadarma-and the goals of multicultural education, including inclusivity, tolerance, and cultural preservation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Key Ideas of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's Philosophy

Muthoifin (2015) stated that there are six philosophies of Education based Ki Hadjar Dewantara, that is Education for freedom (merdeka), Humanistic education (humanisme), Spiritual education (kodrat alam), Moral education (budi pekerti), Social education (kekeluargaan), and Leadership education (Tut Wuri Handayani). However, in this part of the articles later on will be elaborated the three main principles—The Among System, Tri-Pusat Pendidikan, and Pancadarma to answer the pluralistic problems that should be tackled using the multicultural education.

The Among System: Student-Centered and Community-Oriented Learning

Ki Hadjar Dewantara believed that in education, natural development of students would likely to occur when students are nurtured in these three situations (K. H. Dewantara, 1977; Wiryopranoto et al., 2017): (a) relevant to their material environment, (b) based on individual's natural talents and abilities, and (c) in line with students' natural condition. Additionally, one of students, especially children the center of the education is their parents that views that family is the center of the natural education system of a child (Wiryopranoto et al., 2017). Thus, to mimic this natural situation, teachers have a role as parents that nurture or in javanese called 'ngemong' or 'among'.

As a parent for children, teacher have to support the students to be able to lean independently. It can be said that the Among concept, teacher is as a guide but in the background just like the phrase "Tut Wuri Handayani" ("Leading from Behind") (Wiryopranoto et al., 2017). In a sense, it can be seen that teacher is not in the foreground as the sole sources of learning but in the background, but as facilitator that support students learning. It can be said that the center of teaching and learning process in this concept is students, or in another word it is a studentcentered learning (Muthoifin, 2015). Furthermore, Dewantara believe that education should focus on the child's natural growth, thus teacher should adapt his teaching to cater the students need in the classroom (K. H. Dewantara, 1977; Muthoifin, 2015; Wiryopranoto et al., 2017).

The second situation of natural development for students especially children based on Dewantara's views is that children need to be nurtured based on their natural talents and abilities

that would be vary for every child. In regards to students' difference, the among principle ask teacher to prioritizing students' unique cultural and social background so that the students feel valued and understood. More so, that it can also foster the sense of belonging (K. H. Dewantara, 1977; Muthoifin, 2015; Wiryopranoto et al., 2017). This concept is tied to nationalism that need to be taught to students because their material environment is a pluralistic society. It is an important concept, especially in diverse classroom where there are a lot of difference may occur and it can be seeds of conflicts. Thus, the among system should cultivates the environment of mutual respect and collaboration so that children also learn about how to respect culturally different people(K. H. Dewantara, 1977; Muthoifin, 2015). For example, cultural exchange projects or local history studies can allow students to appreciate the rich diversity of Indonesia's heritage

Tri-Pusat Pendidikan: Integration of Family, School, and Community

Dewantara's Tri-Pusat Pendidikan highlight the importance of three educational pillars: family, school, and community (K. H. Dewantara, 1977; Muthoifin, 2015; Wiryopranoto et al., 2017). He argued that the upbringing of children is a shared responsibility that extends beyond the wall of the schools (K. H. Dewantara, 1977). Thus, the integration of not just family and school but also community is important to ensure students receive consistent moral and cultural guidance in all aspects of their lives. It similar to a saying "it takes a village to raise a child". K. H. Dewantara (1977) views that family is where the main morals and manners are nurtured, while school is where students are looking for the knowledge and intellectual values, while the communities is responsible in building the character and social values. Many may argue and think that the school should do all the works. However, as Dewantara said all three are responsible for students' upbringing.

In context of multicultural education, this three center of education have a chance to addresses the challenge in multicultural society. Kartika (in Shabatini et al., 2023) stated that the preserves of local traditions is started in the family and developed in the society. It means that family as one of education center has a big impact to students' value of multiculturalism. As for school, students have the opportunities to be exposed to diverse cultures and also learning about diversity. For example, schools could collaborate with local communities to incorporated events into their curricula so that students can learn about the different cultures and be respectful of it (Shabatini et al., 2023). This interconnected approach ensures that multicultural education is in every aspect of children's live, not just in school as a place they seek knowledge but also in the family and society.

Pancadarma Principles: Character, Humanity, Freedom, and National Culture

The Pancadarma principles are the ethical cornerstone of Dewantara's philosophy. These five principles—character (budi pekerti), humanity (kemanusiaan), freedom (kemerdekaan), cultural preservation (kebudayaan bangsa), and unity (kebersamaan)-offer a well-rounded vision of education. They aim to balance personal development with the collective progress of society, ensuring that individuals grow not just intellectually but also morally and culturally, in harmony with their communities. (K. H. Dewantara, 1977; Muthoifin, 2015).

- a. Character Building (Budi Pekerti): Ki Hadjar Dewantara believed that education should focus on shaping good character. For him, moral values like integrity, empathy, and civic responsibility were essential. In a multicultural setting, this means teaching students not just to understand diversity but to respect and embrace it, fostering an inclusive and compassionate attitude toward others.
- b. Humanity (Kemanusiaan): Dewantara's emphasis on humanity connects deeply with the goals of multicultural education. He believed education should nurture mutual respect and break down prejudices between individuals from different backgrounds.
- c. Freedom (Kemerdekaan): For Dewantara, education was about empowerment—giving individuals the freedom to express their cultural identity while respecting others. This principle creates an environment where students can take pride in their unique traditions and, at the same time, appreciate and celebrate the cultures of their peers.

- d. Cultural Preservation (Kebudayaan Bangsa): Dewantara believed a nation could only move forward if it stayed connected to its cultural roots. Multicultural education supports this idea by incorporating local arts, traditions, and history into the learning process. This approach helps students stay grounded in their heritage while also opening their minds to the richness of other cultures.
- e. Unity (Kebersamaan): Education, according to Dewantara, should build social harmony and national unity. By bringing together students from diverse backgrounds, schools become spaces where young people learn to coexist, collaborate, and grow together. This is key to fostering the kind of unity and mutual respect that a multicultural society like Indonesia needs to thrive.

In practice, the Pancadarma principles guide schools in creating culturally responsive curricula that celebrate diversity while emphasizing shared values of humanity and unity. For example, incorporating lessons on traditional music or regional folklore can help students develop a greater appreciation for their own and others' cultures (Shabatini et al., 2023).

Multicultural Education: Principles and Goals Definitions and Importance of Multicultural Education in Diverse Societies

Multicultural education is all about respecting cultural diversity, ensuring equal opportunities for every student, and encouraging understanding and tolerance (Khairuddin, 2018). In Indonesia, a country rich in ethnic, religious, and cultural variety, this approach plays a vital role. It helps address the challenges that come with such diversity, like reducing social tensions and building a sense of unity. At the same time, it teaches people to value both individual uniqueness and the differences that exist between groups (Khairuddin, 2018).

Rachmawati et al. (2014) explain that multicultural education in Indonesia serves as a way to embrace and celebrate diversity as an integral part of the nation's identity. This idea aligns closely with the Indonesian motto Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (Unity in Diversity). By addressing biases and fostering harmony among different ethnic and religious groups, multicultural education helps create a more inclusive society (Rachmawati et al., 2014; Santoso et al., 2023). It also plays a vital role in providing equal opportunities for marginalized communities, while strengthening democratic values and promoting human rights (Rosyada, 2014; Wales, 2022).

Rosyada (2014)emphasizes that a good multicultural curriculum can help students navigate and thrive in a diverse global community. It teaches them how to engage with others respectfully in a pluralistic environment. This approach not only strengthens Indonesia's national identity but also positions the country as an example of multicultural harmony on the global stage

Key Goals of Multicultural Education

a. Inclusivity

Inclusivity lies at the heart of multicultural education, aiming to create fair and supportive learning environments for all students, regardless of their cultural or religious background. Khairuddin (2018) explains that inclusivity means removing systemic barriers in education and ensuring no group is excluded. It also involves representing minority cultures in the curriculum to foster mutual understanding and respect among students from diverse backgrounds (Khairuddin, 2018; Supiyardi et al., 2024).

In Indonesia, inclusivity is especially important for addressing challenges like the ruralurban education gap and the marginalization of indigenous and ethnic minority communities. Efforts such as integrating local wisdom into national curricula have shown promise in keeping students engaged while also preserving and celebrating cultural heritage (Rosyada, 2014; Shabatini et al., 2023)

b. Respect for Diversity

Respect for diversity is essential to maintaining social harmony in a multicultural society like Indonesia. Multicultural education helps foster this respect by encouraging students to engage with and learn from cultures different from their own. This principle aligns closely with Indonesia's motto, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (Unity in Diversity), which emphasizes the importance of unity while celebrating differences (Rosyada, 2014; Santoso et al., 2023; Shabatini et al., 2023).

Supiyardi et al. (2024) and Shabatini et al. (2023)highlight how classroom practices, such as celebrating cultural festivals or incorporating diverse historical narratives into lessons, can promote respect and reduce biases. These activities don't just teach students about Indonesia's rich cultural diversity—they help them develop empathy and an appreciation for others diversity (Rosyada, 2014; Shabatini et al., 2023; Supiyardi et al., 2024).

c. Character Building

Character building is another central goal of multicultural education, focusing on nurturing students' moral and ethical values. According to Ki Hadjar Dewantara's Pancadarma principles, education should emphasize budi pekerti (character) alongside intellectual development (Khairuddin, 2018; Supiyardi et al., 2024).

In the context of multicultural education, character building means fostering values like tolerance, empathy, and civic responsibility. Schools can encourage this by engaging students in activities like collaborative problem-solving with peers from diverse backgrounds (Rosyada, 2014). Such initiatives help instill these values, preparing students to become responsible citizens in Indonesia's pluralistic society (Rosyada, 2014; Wales, 2022).

Relation between Dewantara's Philosophy and Multicultural Education The Connection Between Dewantara's Ideas and Inclusivity

Ki Hadjar Dewantara's philosophy is deeply rooted in inclusivity and tolerance—principles that are fundamental to multicultural education. His vision for education, grounded in Indonesia's cultural and social realities, provides a practical framework for addressing diversity while fostering unity and mutual respect.

a. Inclusivity in Education

Inclusivity is central to Dewantara's Among System, which prioritizes a studentcentered approach to learning (Muthoifin, 2015) This method respects each student's individuality, cultural identity, and unique needs, ensuring that no one is marginalized based on ethnicity, religion, or socioeconomic status. Dewantara envisioned teachers as pamong (guides) who nurture students' growth in a supportive environment, empowering learners to take an active role in their education (K. H. Dewantara, 1977; Muthoifin, 2015; Wiryopranoto et al., 2017).

In a multicultural context, Dewantara's focus on inclusivity involves incorporating diverse cultural perspectives into school curricula and teaching methods. For instance, lessons could feature regional folklore, traditional dances, or indigenous crafts, making education more engaging and representative of all students. Teachers play a key role in fostering values like democracy, humanism, gender equality, and tolerance, while building students' confidence, pride in their individuality, and openness to diverse cultures (Supiyardi et al., 2024) .These practices empower marginalized communities by placing their heritage at the center of the educational experience (Supiyardi et al., 2024; Wales, 2022).

Dewantara's Tri-Pusat Pendidikan model, which emphasizes the roles of family, school, and community, further strengthens inclusivity (K. H. Dewantara, 1977; Muthoifin, 2015; Wiryopranoto et al., 2017. This approach envisions education as a collaborative effort, where families and communities work alongside schools to create environments that reflect and celebrate diversity. For example, bilingual education programs or extracurricular activities designed by the community can bring different cultural groups together, fostering mutual understanding and respect (Khairuddin, 2018).

b. Tolerance as a Cornerstone of Multicultural Education

Tolerance is another key element of Dewantara's philosophy, which is deeply tied to Budi Pekerti (noble character). He believed education should go beyond academic achievement to shape students' moral and ethical values. In a multicultural setting, this means teaching students to respect and empathize with cultural differences, creating an environment of mutual understanding (Muthoifin, 2015)

Dewantara's emphasis on tolerance aligns with Indonesia's national motto, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (Unity in Diversity) (Bahrudin & Anjana, 2023; Supriatin & Nasution, 2017; Wales, 2022). He saw diversity not as a challenge, but as a source of strength (Supiyardi et al., 2024). For instance, schools can implement programs that encourage dialogue between students from different ethnic or religious backgrounds, breaking down stereotypes and fostering friendships across cultural divides. These efforts not only build tolerance but also help students appreciate the richness of Indonesia's pluralistic society.

Strategies for Incorporating Multicultural Education based on Ki Hajar Dewantara's Thought in **School Curricula**

Based on the aforementioned result and discussion, the strategies in incorporating multicultural education in the classroom. Those strategies are:

a. Embedding Local Wisdom into Learning Materials

Dewantara strongly believed in preserving cultural heritage through education. Schools can achieve this by embedding local traditions, arts, and histories into the curriculum. For example, students can learn traditional dances, crafts, or folklore from their region, fostering pride in their cultural roots. At the same time, exposing students to traditions from other regions encourages mutual respect and a deeper appreciation for Indonesia's cultural richness.

b. Character Education Through Multicultural Activities

Dewantara's emphasis on Budi Pekerti can be translated into multicultural activities that promote collaboration and ethical values. Schools can organize cultural exchange programs, interfaith dialogues, or team-based projects where students from different backgrounds work together. These activities help students develop empathy, tolerance, and interpersonal skills—essential traits for navigating Indonesia's diverse society.

c. Promoting Community Involvement in Education

Dewantara's Tri-Pusat Pendidikan highlight the importance of community involvement in education. Schools can partner with local cultural organizations, religious institutions, and civic groups to create holistic learning experiences. Activities like heritage tours, cultural fairs, or community service projects can give students hands-on exposure to different cultural practices, deepening their respect and understanding of diversity.

CONCLUSION

Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy offers timeless lessons for fostering multicultural education in Indonesia. His principles-Among System, Tri-Pusat Pendidikan, and Pancadarma—emphasize inclusivity, tolerance, and cultural preservation, making them especially relevant for promoting unity in a diverse society. By centering education on student needs, integrating the roles of family and community, and prioritizing moral character development, Dewantara's vision aligns closely with the goals of multicultural education. His approach not only addresses challenges like social cohesion and equitable access but also ensures that education becomes a unifying force, celebrating Indonesia's rich cultural and social diversity.

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