

# Multicultural Education English Teachers' Perceptions and Practices in International School

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## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received

14<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Accepted

28<sup>th</sup> February 2023

Available online

28<sup>th</sup> February 2023

### Kata Kunci:

Pendidikan multikultur, implementasi, sekolah internasional

### Keywords:

Multicultural education, practice, international school

## ABSTRAK

Pendidikan multikultural dikatakan menjadi penting untuk mengembangkan toleransi dan kesadaran akan budaya peserta didik agar dapat hidup bersama dalam masyarakat yang terdiri dari individu-individu dari berbagai latar belakang. Namun, belum banyak penelitian yang dilakukan untuk menggali persepsi guru dan bagaimana mereka menerapkannya dalam mengajar mata pelajaran tertentu di kelas, khususnya di sekolah internasional. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui persepsi guru bahasa Inggris tentang pendidikan multikultural, dan bagaimana mereka mengimplementasikan pendidikan multikultural baik di tingkat sekolah maupun dalam proses belajar mengajar pada mata pelajaran bahasa Inggris di salah satu sekolah internasional di Bali. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, khususnya dengan desain studi kasus. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan pemberian angket dengan pertanyaan terbuka dan dilanjutkan dengan wawancara dengan 5 orang guru sebagai responden. Data tersebut kemudian dianalisis secara kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menemukan bahwa pendidikan multikultural dianggap penting oleh guru untuk diterapkan di sekolah internasional, dengan bahasa sebagai unsur budaya yang dipersepsikan paling penting diantara unsur budaya lainnya. Penelitian juga menemukan bahwa implementasi pendidikan multikultural di tingkat sekolah adalah (1) merayakan hari libur lokal, (2) merayakan perayaan global dan (3) mengadakan acara budaya, sedangkan implementasi di tingkat kelas adalah (1) menemukan latar belakang siswa dan berbagi pengalaman, (2) melakukan diskusi dan (3) kerja kelompok.

## ABSTRACT

Multicultural education has been called to be important to develop students' tolerance to be able to live together in a society which consists of various people. However, there is a lack of research conducted about how it is implemented in teaching certain subjects in the classroom. This research was aimed to find out English teachers' perception on multicultural education, and its implementation both at school level and in the teaching and learning process in English Subject in one international school in Bali. The research was conducted in the form of a qualitative approach, especially case study design. The data were collected by administering questionnaires with open ended questions and followed by conducting interviews with 5 teachers as respondents. The data were then analyzed qualitatively. The result of the research found that multicultural education is considered important by teachers to be implemented in an international school, with language as the most important cultural element. It is also found that the practices of multicultural education at schools' levels are (1) celebrating local holidays, (2) celebrating global celebration and (3) holding cultural events, while the practices at classroom levels are (1) find students' background and conduct real life experience sharing, (2) conduct discussion and (3) arrange group work.

## 1. Introduction

One of the global challenges faced by teachers today is to organize a learning process that is based on the four pillars of learning recommended by UNESCO, one of which is learning to live together. In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, the boundaries between countries are becoming more blurred, the parts of the world are interconnected, and the world is undergoing rapid changes. Thus, the students need to be able to adapt themselves living within a society which varies (Zamroni, et al., 2021). Education has a big responsibility to make sure that their students are able to cope with the changes of the world and live in various societies. The students need to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to appreciate human rights, the equality of gender, the culture of global citizenship, and an appreciation of cultural diversity.

The urgency of making the students aware of social difference is coming from the multiculturalism exist in Indonesian society (Hasanah, Marini, & Maksum, 2021; Setiyonugroho, Umasih, & Kurniawati, 2022; Jayadi, Abduh, & Basri, 2022). Indonesia consists of people with different culture, traditions, religion, arts, language and many more other differences. The urgency of making the students aware and tolerant of multiculturalism is even stronger in international schools in Indonesia. It is due to the fact that international schools consist of students not only from Indonesia, but also from other countries which have more significant gaps in culture. Thus, the education which pays attention to multiculturalism is needed especially in international schools in Indonesia.

The awareness of multiculturalism in education can be addressed by implementing multicultural education (Ndura & Dogbevia, 2013; Jayadi, Abduh, & Basri, 2022). The main goal of multicultural education is to restructure schools so that all students acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to continue to serve and run the nation and the world consisting of different ethnicities and races. Multicultural education wants to guarantee equal education for members of different racial, ethnic, cultural and socio-economic groups and to facilitate their participation as critical and reflective citizens in an inclusive national culture (Zamroni, 2008). Ideally, multicultural education experts emphasize diverse components and cultural groups, but have a consensus in the form of respect for the main principles, concepts and goals of this cross-cultural education. Promoting multiculturalism helps international schools promote peace, tolerance and understanding between nations. Multiethnicity makes the school more realistic and effective by treating all students equally regardless of their ethnicity or culture.

Despite its importance, in practice, there is a debate about how the policy regarding multicultural education is and how it is implemented. Teachers feel that their multicultural practice is unclear and not optimal, although they really wish that they could include a more complete component of multicultural education. In practice, teachers experience different concepts and perceptions about multicultural education so many teachers experience uncertainty in its implementation (Roiha & Sommier, 2021).

Because multicultural education is important to be implemented especially in international schools, and there are still differences in perceptions or concepts in its implementation, this research analyzes teachers' perception of multicultural education and how they implement multicultural education both at school level and in the classroom. Many research on multicultural education has been conducted, but how it is implemented in the classroom has rarely been discussed.

The research questions cover: a. what is the perception of teachers at the Green School international school on multicultural education? b. what is the perception of

students at the international Green School about multicultural education? c. how is the implementation of multicultural education in the Green School international school?

## 2. Method

This research was conducted qualitatively in the form of case study which include topic selection, research design selection, data source determination, data collection and data analysis. The participants were 5 teachers and 25 students in Green School. There were two data collection namely a questionnaire and an interview guide used in this research. The questionnaire (open-ended) was used to collect data about teacher and students' perception on the implementation of the multicultural education. The interview was used to confirm the questionnaire results. The data were analyzed by using Miles and Huberman models which covers: data collection, data reduction, data display and conclusion.

Green School as one of the international high schools located in Bali, was chosen as the setting of the study and used five language teachers consisting of two males and three females as respondents. The data were collected by administering a questionnaire with open questions to find out data about teachers' perception of multicultural education and the practices they implemented both in the classroom and at school level. Interview was also conducted to find some additional information to the questionnaire result. The data were analyzed by reducing data, distributing data, and making conclusion

## 3. Finding and Discussion

### Teachers' Perception on Multicultural Education in International School

There are several findings related to teacher perceptions, namely: teachers' understanding of multicultural education, cultural coverage, and the importance of multicultural education.

#### *Teachers' Understanding About Multicultural Education*

Regarding teachers' understanding of multicultural education, several teachers claimed to have heard of the term multicultural education. Respondent 1 sees multicultural education from the student's perspective. He stated that he understood multicultural education as the freedom that students have to show and express their own culture, and respect the culture shown by other students. He sees multicultural education to fulfill the needs of an individual, to be able to express identity and to be respected. It is in line with what has been stated by Riyanto (2015) that multicultural education has humanist value that is to respect and be respected. So, multicultural education is not only address students as human beings but also to address teachers as human being (Demir & Ozden, 2014; Ndura & Dogbevia, 2013; Zamroni, et al., 2021) Some teachers view multicultural education from a pedagogical perspective. They see multicultural education in terms of pedagogy with a more active teacher role in realizing appreciation and acceptance of the cultural diversity of students. Respondent 4 shared that multicultural education is a set of systems and strategies that have planning, implementation and evaluation. Respondent 3 interprets multicultural education with equal opportunity for students She states that teachers must act fairly, not privileging students from certain cultural backgrounds. Respondent 5 defines multicultural education as education that combines and takes into account the diverse cultures of students. The results of the interview further found that what is meant by combining is the existence of cultural diversity that is presented in learning and is not dominated by a particular culture. Furthermore, what is meant by considering is taking into account the cultural background of students, for example in

group formation or in discussing certain cultures. The result found supported the definition of multicultural education as an education which covers a set of learning system (Ndura & Dogbevia, 2013; Zamroni, et al., 2021) that gives equal education to students (Riyanto 2015), that have a goal to develop students cultural awareness and tolerance (Roiha & Sommier, 2021; Zamroni, et al., 2021; Jayadi, Abduh, & Basri, 2022).

#### Cultural Coverage

All respondents agreed that the following elements are important cultural coverage in learning, with the rank of its importance.

**Table 1. Important Cultural Elements Taught at School**

Cultural Elements	Rank
Language (language used, expressions, gestures in communication, etc)	1
Knowledge System (knowledge of time, knowledge of nature, how society views human behavior, etc.),	7
System of Social Organization (family system, marriage system, social group, etc.),	2
Equipment and technology for living (means of transportation, food/beverage, housing, equipment used daily, etc.),	4
Economic System (the work of a group of people, etc.),	6
Religion (religious ceremonies, certain religious beliefs, etc.),	5
Art (music, painting, dance, etc.)	3

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that language is considered the most important cultural element because it is used in communication. Based on the results of interviews, the respondents stated that communication is a crucial activity that involves several parties, which can lead to a good relationship, or vice versa a bad relationship. Therefore, it is important for students to be able to know, understand and appreciate how people from other cultures communicate, so that they can bring that communication to a good relationship for the people involved in the communication.

The cultural element that is considered the most important after language is the system of social organization which includes the family system, marriage system, and social groups. It was found that the system of social organization is also needed in communication. The way a speaker treats the interlocutor is also influenced by the cultural background they have.

In contrast to cultural elements related to communication, elements such as religion, economic system, and knowledge system rank at the bottom because they are considered only related to oneself. Religion concerns the relationship between a person and his God. Meanwhile, economics concerns a person's financial situation which tends to be personal.

The result of the questionnaire about the importance of cultural elements is supported with the result of a research conducted by Kim (2020) that language is very important and someone's culture can be clearly seen from their language. It is also stated that language and culture are something that cannot be separated (Kim, 2020; Nechifor & Borca, 2016). This result is also due to the fact that the teachers becoming the respondents in this study are language teachers, who teach English. Thus, they considered

that language is the most important cultural element to be taught, while the other elements can be easier to get or to know.

### *The Importance of Multicultural Education in International Schools*

It was found that all teachers becoming respondents in this research considered that multicultural education is very important to implement, especially in an international school. They believe it can direct students not to be discriminatory and respects differences is very important for students to become part of the world community. With cultural awareness, one can live with better interaction with the people around them. In international school, most students who come from various countries with various cultural backgrounds are required not only to be able to interact with friends at school who come from various countries, but also with people around who are dominated by Balinese people. who make up the majority around them. Therefore, students need to be equipped with cultural awareness.

The result is supported by Jayadi, Abduh and Basri (2022) who stated that multicultural education has the paradigm of unity in diversity and the paradigm of social interaction. The paradigm of unity in diversity makes the students realize that they are the citizens of Indonesia who have multicultural values and principles (Jayadi, Abduh, & Basri, 2022; Setiyonugroho, Umasih, & Kurniawati, 2022). The social interaction paradigm promotes that multicultural education nurtures tolerance among students in interaction (Roiha & Sommier, 2021; Zamroni, et al., 2021; Jayadi, Abduh, & Basri, 2022).

In addition to external benefits, the results of the questionnaire also confirm that multicultural education also has internal benefits for students. Respondent 5 stated that multicultural education that allows students to get to know other cultures also makes students understand themselves better and the culture that is attached to them. They can reassess their culture to get to know their own culture better.

Multicultural education is also needed in learning to create a more inclusive and nurturing learning atmosphere. The existence of empathy, mutual respect and respect for cultural differences creates a comfortable, mutually supportive and inclusive learning atmosphere. Through this supportive learning atmosphere, the students tend to be able to learn better, to build better cognitive abilities and attitudes that they develop for their future. In relation to the benefit of multicultural education for students' themselves, Zamroni et. al (2022) also put forward that multicultural education enables the students to develop their personality, especially their personal and social competence. They may be able to have better ability in communicating in multiethnic society, which will be beneficial for them not only at present but also in their life in the future (Zamroni, et al., 2021; Roiha & Sommier, 2021; Demir & Ozden, 2014; Setiyonugroho, Umasih, & Kurniawati, 2022; Ndura & Dogbevia, 2013).

All respondents agreed that multicultural education is indispensable in international schools. Multicultural education is very important for students both internally and externally. It directs students to be able to empathize, build respect and respect for others so that they can avoid clashes, stereotyped views, according to the results of the following interview.

### **Multicultural Education Practice at School Level**

Below is the practice of multicultural education at school level.

#### *a. Celebration of Local Holidays.*

The international school used as the setting of the study is Green School, located in the South Bali, Indonesia. Thus, what is considered to be local holidays are the holidays

celebrated by Balinese people who are mostly Hindu with many traditions as well as the holidays celebrated by Indonesian citizens. The students are requested to create the celebration, and do the tradition to join the celebration with teachers and other school members. For example, the celebration of Balinese Silent Day, when Balinese people celebrate it with the making of “*Ogoh-ogoh*”, made from bamboo, and the celebration of Indonesian Independence Day, when people hold flag ceremony and hold various games.

The important point in holding the celebration is that the students are also given some explanation related to the tradition they are join into give some understanding to the students so they can respect the traditions. They can negotiate the meaning of the traditions being celebrated.

*b. Celebration of Global Celebration*

The celebrations which are celebrated globally are also celebrated by the students as an implementation of multicultural education. It is considered important by the teachers to make the students realize that they are a part of global society. The examples are the celebration of Halloween, Christmas and Valentine’s Day.

*c. Cultural Exhibition*

Cultural exhibition is conducted annually, as a platform for the students to present their own background and understand the background of others. The cultural exhibition conducted in Green School is called Bamboo Valuzza. On this day, students present the country they are coming from, to the other friends and teachers. Interestingly, parents are often involved. They were invited to school to help their children present their culture.

The school makes a real effort to implement multicultural education. The implementation which is at the school level supports the implementation of multicultural education of the school as a whole. Multicultural education views schools as a social system composed of related elements and variables (Zamroni, et al., 2021) which need to go hand in hand in achieving the goal, in this case creating the tolerant students through multicultural education (Roiha & Sommier, 2021). There are three actions or practices implemented by the school.

The celebration of national holidays introduces culture to the students and makes them experience the culture. It will create tolerance and understanding (Jayadi, Abduh, & Basri, 2022; Demir & Ozden, 2014). On the other hand, the celebration of global holidays is also important to unite them. Both of the celebration are important since it can make the students realized that they are different without forgetting their similarities as social members (Hasanah, Marini, & Maksun, 2021; Setiyonugroho, Umasih, & Kurniawati, 2022). The cultural exhibition where the students wear the costume presenting their identity make them realize their own identity and help them in reflecting on their culture to know their culture better (Benediktsson & Ragnarsdottir, 2019) (Zamroni, et al., 2021).

### **Multicultural Education in the Classroom**

Below are the practices of multicultural education in language class.

*a. Find students’ background and conduct real life experience sharing*

The teachers find out the background of the students about the country, religion, where they have been living. This is done to be able to choose the learning material and activities that suit the students. In this case, teachers use the students’ background as a source for multicultural education by asking them to tell their real life experience. For example, teachers ask the students to tell about how the people from different cultural backgrounds get dressed.

*b. Conduct discussion*

The teachers can ask the students to give their point of view about an issue. Students' opinions must present their cultural background. The teachers reported that the most important thing is reminding the students of not making judgment.

*c. Arrange group work*

The students are asked to work in groups with various activities, such as making wall magazines, making an article, creating videos, etc. the most important thing to implement this is that the teachers make sure that the group is as heterogeneous as possible, or consists of members from different cultural backgrounds. Thus, the students will be able to have a real interaction with people from different backgrounds.

From the result of the research about the practice of multicultural education in language class, it can be seen that teachers do take action in implementing multicultural education in the classroom. It is supported by several experts that multicultural education can be implemented in the classroom subject (Setiyonugroho, Umasih, & Kurniawati, 2022; Muliono, 2020; Tajima, 2013). Moreover, the values of multicultural education can be presented in the classroom by integrating them in the class subject, including English class (Setiyonugroho, Umasih, & Kurniawati, 2022).

The first practice is finding information about the background of the students and enables the students to tell real life experience. Roiha & Sommier (2021) stated that multicultural education offers an alternative strategy by making use of students' cultural background, including ethnic diversity, culture, language, religion, social status, gender and race. It is expected that through the implementation of the strategy, the awareness of students to act humanist and pluralist can be developed in addressing the varieties exist in society (Benediktsson & Ragnarsdottir, 2019; Roiha & Sommier, 2021; Kelly, 2014; Kim, 2020).

Discussion as the second practice may follow the implementation of students' real life experience sharing or may stand as its own. This practice is considered interactive and it plays an important role in the teaching and learning process, especially in the implementation of multicultural education (Benediktsson & Ragnarsdottir, 2019). Discussion is also considered to give a more positive effect on students' performance because students actively participate in the information and idea exchange (Ndura & Dogbevia, 2013; Popov, Biemans, Brinkman, & Mulder, 2012).

Group work as the third practice is a challenging activity and if the students can overcome the problem, they may benefit from it. It is because the interaction that happens in the group among the members of the groups with different backgrounds may create misunderstandings and conflicts. If the students can overcome them, they can develop their ability in handling conflict, being more flexible and more tolerant (Popov, Biemans, Brinkman, & Mulder, 2012; Kelly, 2014; Benediktsson & Ragnarsdottir, 2019).

#### **4. Conclusion**

Based on the result of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that multicultural education is perceived to be important. Moreover, teachers and school principals have taken action to implement it both at school level and in language class. More specifically, most of the teachers have heard about multicultural education and have implemented it. Related to the cultural elements which are considered to be the most important to be presented in the classroom is language, followed by a system of social organization and art. Multicultural education is considered important because it gives benefits for the students both internally and externally. The practices of multicultural education at school levels are celebrating local holidays, celebrating global celebration and holding cultural events, while the practices at classroom levels are Find students'

background and conduct real life experience sharing, conduct discussion and arrange group work. From the result, it is suggested to implement multicultural education at school and in the classroom, to prepare students to live in the global world.

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