CLASSROOM PRACTICES IN MULTICULTURAL CONTEXTS
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A. Introduction

Cultural horizon will determine one's desired knowledge, ways to gain it, and ways to interpret it. This view results from the understanding that culture determines ways people use to gain and construct information. Societies with different social background, for instance, interpret badly damaged natural disaster differently. Religious groups of people claim sin and bad things done by society as the cause of the disaster and offer prayers as the solution. To traditional people in coasts, disaster results from their carelessness to worship gods. Scientists have their own view that natural disaster is a merely part of natural phenomenon. Debate and claim of which of the views is right lead to a needless discussion due cultural field is regarded multidimensional depending upon angles of people view and dimension of interest people have. Hence, different efforts might be taken to solve the problem.

Worldview, which includes cultural experiences, is an important part in understanding multiculturalism. Nieto (2000:140) views that it is important to investigate how culture could affect learning and class achievement in schools. Since individuals grow in their own culture, they might think, behave, speak, and academically perform differently. These differences should be well managed. Unmanaged differences lead to psychological and sociological harm, which potentially creates conflict and discrimination practices in schools by school officers, teachers, and students. School's habit and climate toward difference determines narrow-mindedness or broadmindedness of school's members.

In a multicultural context of life, multicultural-dimensional understanding should be present in order to enlarge humans' view, which arguably keeps defending cultural and religious selfishness. Haviland (1988:289) states that maintenance of cultural plurality or diversity results in peaceful and friendly living. Cultural plurality constitutes social and political interaction among people whose way of life and think different. Ideally, cultural

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plurality or multiculturalism resists fanaticism, prejudice, racism, tribalism, and inclusively welcomes the existing diversity.

One's affability, open-mindedness, respect to different values, culture, and belief do not automatically develop alone since dependability to expect others to be like him/her strongly embeds (Ruslan Ibrahim, 2008:117). Respect and appreciate others shall develop fast with an inserted training at schools. Through education, respect to difference could be well designed – students' awareness on difference becomes part of life skills they might need to employ in their future. Therefore, multicultural education in classes should significantly play the role.

The most important thing to note in a multicultural education is that teachers are not only demanded to master and professionally teach subjects to students but also more to be able to inscribe multicultural values of education such as democracy, humanism, gender fairness, being different, and cultural plurality. Psychological base of multicultural education emphasizes on development of bigger self-understanding, positive self-conception, and pride to self-identity in which students positively response interaction and respect their own culture and identity. In line with this explanation, Bannet (1990) argues that mutual relation exists among self-concept, academic achievement, individual identity, ethnicity, and culture.

Howard (1993) has his own view that multicultural education should give multicultural competence. Students' time span was with particular ethnicity and special cultural practices that lead to severe tribalism and religious fanaticism when they misinterpret the values and aspiration from certain culture. Through early age multicultural education, children are expected to be able to accept and understand cultural difference that implicate on the difference of usage, folkways, and costumes. Further, students obtain skill to accept difference, to respond to different criticism, to show empathy and tolerance regardless social layers, academic performance, and religions (Farida Hanum, 2005). Musa Asya'rie (2004) seconds it that multicultural education means as process of education on living skill with heartfelt respect and tolerance to cultural plurality.

B. Definition and Goals of Multicultural Education

According to Parekh (1997), multiculturalism consists of three things. First, multiculturalism deals with culture. Second, multiculturalism refers to the existing difference. Third, multiculturalism deals with specific treatment toward the existing difference. The suffix 'ism' means a normative doctrine that is expected to matter in any context of multicultural society. Multiculturalism becomes political due to the process of existing as well as its implementations are through policy, particularly in education.

Education environtment is a system with many primary variables like school's culture, school policy, politic, and formalised curriculum. The shift apparently occured shoulddirect the focus to create and maintain effective multicultural school. Each child should adapt school's multicultural circumtance. The primary goal of multicultural education is to shift learning and teaching approach toward one offering fair opportunity to all children. Nobody is sacrified for the sake of togetherness. Therefore, groups should be peaceful in co-existance, fully understanding, and neglect difference for the sake of unity. This could be implemented by inserting lateral thinking, and respect to multiculture and uniqueness that by consequence will hopefully result in attitude shift, partiulary, for academicians. In result, students will be familiar and understanding when they gather along with those who are different and eventually consider their difference to enrich their knowledge.

Banks (in Sutarno, 2007) states that multicultural education is an idea of educational reformation movement and a process of education whose primary goal is to change the structure of education institution to provide fair service and opportunity to gain academic achievement to male and female students, handicapped students, and to different ethnicities. The difference existing around children's life are minorities, religion holders, differece in religions, sex, economy condition., origin, physical and mental disadvantages, and age (Baker, 1994: 11). This multicultural education, then, offers the children opportunity to observe one and two cultural practices including value system, way of life, and laguage.

Multicultural education, at least, covers three things; (1) idea and awareness of the importance of multiculture, (2) educationl reformation movement, and (3) process.

1. Awareness of the imprtance of multi ulture

It seems that it desperately needs to icrease awareness on students' different characteristic based on age, religion, gender, social class, ethicity, and other cultural characteristic embeded in each student. Then, multicultural education deals with idea that regarless different characteristics students should have same opportunity to study in school. The existing deifferent is an absolute condition. However, that is not to make different but to be accepted as caharacteristics. This could also means that difference can be treated as common things, not to make different, and tolerance matters to maintan peaceful life.

2. Education Reformation movement

Another importance idea in multicultural education is that different level of performance could create different opportunity. Some students deserve to get favorite school and others with particular culture cannot get that opportunity. Certain institutional characteristics systemically resist, though in a smooth way framed in special and exclusive, certain groups to join. Gap emerges proven by the mushrooming of favorite schools in society which only the have who can afford the school.

Multicultural education could be in form of subjects, planned programs and practices to respond society's demand and aspiration. Like what is stated by Grant and Saleeten (in Sutarno, 2007), multicultural education is not only actual practices or subjects or educational program, but also programs covering all aspects of education.

3. Process of Education

Multicultural education is also an educational process whose goal cannot be fully obtained. This is a *being* process, an ongoing process whose result cannot be directly seen. Goal of multicultural education is to increase performance, not only to increase score.

Education like freedom and justice is something that needs hard struggle. No matter how hard the struggle is, difference in race, gender, and discrimination to the disadvantage people remain exist. Prejudice does not extinct but more shift to be another form with another different target. Due to goal of education should continually run principle of education for all should be maintained.

Recent thoughts on multicultural education are the shifted ones from those in 1960s. Some of which discuss multicultural education as a curriculum change with a material and perspective. Other talks about class climate and teaching style employed by certain groups. Other focuses on system and institutional issue like department, test form, or mismatch between budgeting and service given. The difference, however, remains similar concept that can be paramount to understand multicultural education, as follows:

a. Preparing students to participate in inter culture society.

b. Preparing teachers to be effective teachers regardless cultural difference or sameness

c. School's participation in reducing negliance. This could be in two ways, first, reducing negliance within the school and lastly producing graduates who are actively and socially aware.

d. Student-centered education with big focuses on students' experience and aspiration.

e. A more active role to reanalyze all educational practices including learning theory, teaching approach, evaluation, school's psychology and counseling, materials, and text books.

C. Approach in Implementing Multicultural Education

Form of development of multicultural education in each contry varies adjusting to the problems faced. Baks (1993) advances four approaches that integrate materials for multicultural education into curriculum hat seems relevant with Indonesian context.

1. *Contributions approach*. This level is the most commonly used, especially in Indonesia, in initial phase of awakening using special characteristics like inserting heros/heroins and cultural artifacts into classroom practices.

2. *Additive approach*. This level adds material, concept, theme, and perspective to curriculum without changing the structure, goal, and base characteristics. This approach often utilizes books, modules, or subject matter that does not change the content of curriculum. This is an initial phase in implementing multiculturalism due it does not yet deal with primary curriculum.

3. *Transformation approach*. This approach is different from the two above. It shifts presumption of curriculum and builds student's skill to see concept, issue, theme, and problem from some different perspectives and ethnic angles. Those perspectives lie on

the core of the subject explored. Students are allowed to use other different perspectives. Banks (1993) claims this as a process of multiple acculturations, alowing respect, togetherness, and love as learning experience. Besides, multiple acculturation conception heads to the perspective that consider arts, music, ethnic, as an integrated part of culture. Dominant culture is only regarded as a part of bigger culture.

4. *Sosial action approach* covers all elements from transformation approach adding components that require students to make action delaing with concept, issue, or problem in unit study. The main goal of this approach is to educate students to be able to criticize and train them to make decision to strengthen their political education. Schools help students become social critics allowing them to participate in social context.

E. Classroom Implementation of Multicultural Education

The fourth approaches above can be employed to integrate material of multicultural education into curriculum and into the actual teaching of all subjects, although it seems easier to integrate it into socio-cultural subjects only. Contribution approach is a stepping point to more intellectually challenging approach like transformation and social action. This implementation adjusts to level of education and age of students.

1. Classroom implementation of contribution approach

    At kindergarten and younger age of elementary school (grade I, II, and III), the following contribution practices can be done.

    a. Introducing various kinds of traditional house and clothes

    b. Tasting various traditional foods.

    c. Listening to traditional songs

    d. Showing the way people from other ethnic or country dress.

    e. Introducing heros/heroins from many different areas or countries.

    f. Showing different religious places and the way people say prayers.

    g. Illustrating wedding ceremony from different ethnics.

    h. Introducing vocabularies from various society background like *matur nuwun* (Java), *muliate (*Batak), *thank you* (English), *kamsia* China), and many others.

i. Introducing different addressing system like *Upik* (Padang), *ujang* (Sundanese), *koko* (China), etc.

The core of multicultural education in this phase is to inscribe that humans are various. Basically, all forms of difference are the same. Students should deeply understand that principle; so that they will regard all the difference have the same value. Thus, they can accept any difference and finally regard the difference as God's blessing.

2. Classroom implementation of additive education

Students of grade IV, V, and VI of elementary school and those junior high school students are already able to understand meaning. Hence, additive approach fits the practices.

a. Completing collections of folklore in library.

b. Providing multicultural education module as supplement of classroom subjects such as multicultural module for social science subject for grade IV by Farida Hanum dan Setya Raharja in 2006.

c. Screening of social condition in villages and cities or in different countries.

d. Assigning students to crossed-country correspond using email or other electronic forms like facebook.

e. Experience sharing by teachers based on their experience. Teachers of science, for instance, tell kinds of animals he ever find. Teachers of Bahasa Indoensia tell about Indonesian poets, and teachers of social science tell about historical facts of a country.

f. Integrating multicultural values into any subject and implement it to classroom practices.

The efforts above aim to broaden students' knowledge. Curiosity resulted from activities in class stimulates students to read more, surf; visit places, and ask anything about multicultural they get in classroom. The wider the knowledge the more welcome to difference the students will be. Students will grow inclusively, accepting and respecting

difference. Besides, students would easily be able interact with new and complex environment.

3. Classroom implementation of transformation approach

At secondary schools, implementation of multicultural education functions as transformation approach. Students of this level have their own views to see concept, issue, theme, and problem from various ethnic perspectives. They do have their own cultural values enabling them to compete and argue, and present in different perspective. Dialog and arguments made in interaction enrich their understanding as what Banks (1993) calls as process of multiple acculturations. Consequently, respect, togetherness, and love can be felt through learning and teaching process. Practically, the process could be in through the following practices.

a. Discussion groups should consist of members with different social background. This allows students to exchange their understanding that eventually give them opportunity to explore weaknesses and excellence of each difference.

b. Students should be familiar with argumentation. There is no reason to worry about conflict among them.

c. Teachers could stimulate opinions from students about facts or issues like problem of suicide bombing and poverty. Let students explore their stance on the issues.

d. Students should be familiar with giving assistance in different religion's activities.

e. School program should encourage students to feel different environments such as in home stay programs. Students could be assigned to stay in families with different background of economy, ethnic, religion, and social status during their holidays. .

f. Involving students in humanitarian actions like giving aids to the poor, visiting the disadvantage people with different background is a recommended program.

g. Train students to appreciate positive points from others.

h. Train students to accept difference, failure, and success.

i. Assign students to present social portrayal involving tradition, ethnic and religious activities, and different cultural practices.

Above learning experience trains students to appreciate excellence and weaknesses of themselves or of others. This leads to the building of students' skill to respect and acknowledge minorities and to be open-minded and positive thinker where judgment does not based on prejudice.

4. Implementation of social action approach

At this level, students apply their concept mapping skill. Since the objective of the teaching and learning at this level is to encourage students to be able to criticize, make decision, and execute planning, concept mapping to search alternatives solutions problems fits. This social action precisely suits teaching and learning in university level that is possibly implemented through the following practices.

a. Analyzing ineffectual, gender biased, unfair, discriminative policy.
b. Protesting against injustice through demonstration
c. Supporting the victims of injustice.
d. Creating cross country network
e. Gathering along in activities with people from various backgrounds.
f. Maintaining friendship without limited to any difference
g. Skills to behave before people with different religion, ethnic, and culture.
h. Ability to consider human beings as integrated parts of the world regardless difference in culture.

The main goal of this approach is to prepare students to own knowledge, value, and skills employed to be actively involved in national, regional, and international social reformation. At this context, lecturers play their role as agent of change aiming at increasing value of democracy, humanism, and students' capacity.

Teachers play dominant role in implementing multicultural practices in classroom. The following are guidance for teachers to implement such practices.

1. Be sensitive with racial attitude, stereotype, prejudice, labeling, and any judgment to other ethnic group. Avoid to claim that Chinese is extremely tightfisted, Javanese is easygoing, etc.

2. Widen knowledge on lives of people with different ethnic background, religion, sex, and economy level. This is important to recognize sense of multicultural.

3. Ensure that you orchestrate positive image in the difference. Practical activities related to this are wall magazines, posters, calendars showing different pictures of people with different background.

4. Be sensitive with students' racial attitude. Guide and ensure them to accept difference as something common and even blessing.

5. Use books, films, videos, and recordings to enrich students understanding on multicultural world.

6. Create open-mind atmosphere by giving opportunity for students to share their culture and to explore what they know from other culture.

7. Employ cooperative learning to increase social integration in classroom. Carefully observe the exclusive groups that might exist.

Closing

Multicultural education in Indonesia is relatively unpopular among big numbers of teachers (Farida Hanum and Setya Raharja, 2006). Socialization, therefore, on multicultural education is desperately needed, both in form of seminars, workshop, sharing idea, and resources supply multicultural education fits Indonesia society due to its diversity. Practices in multicultural education stimulate peaceful interaction and integration that eventually create tolerance, togetherness, humanism, and democracy to head to state of Pancasila. Amen.

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