

Values and Concepts of Multicultural Education in Hindu Religious Education According to Teachings Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

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ABSTRACT

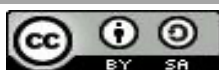
Multicultural education is a crucial approach in creating a harmonious and inclusive society, especially in Indonesia, which is rich in cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. This article discusses the values of multicultural education in the context of Hindu religious education, referring to the principle of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, which emphasizes that the whole world is one family. Through multicultural education, individuals are taught to appreciate and understand differences, as well as to internalize the noble values contained in Hindu teachings. However, the implementation of multicultural education is not without challenges. Various internal factors influence its success, such as the quality of educators, teaching methodologies, and openness to diversity. Additionally, external factors such as family support, social interactions, and government policies play a significant role in creating a conducive learning environment. Therefore, synergy among educators, students, families, communities, and the government is essential to achieve success in implementing multicultural education, thereby fostering a generation that is tolerant and respectful amidst existing diversity.

Keywords: Multicultural Education, Hindu Religious Education, Teachings of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the world has witnessed a significant rise in religion-based conflicts. According to the Pew Research Center (2024), government restrictions on religious practices reached an all-time high in 2021, with 82% of countries experiencing some form of religious interference. Similarly, ACN International (2023) reported that more than 4.9 billion people live in countries with serious violations of religious freedom. These global tensions are not just political or social they are deeply rooted in religious misunderstanding and intolerance. UNESCO (2017) emphasized that global peace is increasingly threatened by ethnic and religious tensions, highlighting the need for education that fosters coexistence.

Indonesia, despite its renowned diversity, faces significant challenges in maintaining social harmony. Many multicultural education programs have struggled with implementation due to inadequate teacher preparation and rigid curricula (Ediyanto et al., 2021). Furthermore, a study by Kurniawati and Prihandini (2019) found that regular school teachers often lack sufficient knowledge and training in inclusive and multicultural

pedagogy. Cultural misunderstandings and religious prejudice remain prevalent, especially in conflict-prone regions such as Ambon, Papua, and Poso (Kristiawati, 2016). These issues underline the need for context-sensitive educational models to address growing social fragmentation.

Several studies have attempted to bridge the gap between multicultural theory and educational practice. Anggraini et al. (2022) advocated for participatory multicultural classrooms where students share personal experiences to promote empathy. Sukiastini et al. (2024) stressed the need for structured teacher training focused on tolerance and diversity. Efendi and Lien (2021) proposed technology-based multicultural learning models that are adaptable to Indonesia's heterogeneous society. However, none of these studies directly address the integration of indigenous religious philosophies like Hinduism into multicultural frameworks.

This study offers a novel approach by integrating Hindu philosophical values, particularly Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam "the world is one family" into Hindu Religious Education (HRE) to promote tolerance and coexistence. Unlike previous studies that treat multicultural education as secular and general, this research roots its framework in religious values that inherently support inclusivity (Reddy, 2022; Sharma, 2021; Adnan, 2021). By contextualizing multicultural principles within HRE, this study presents a culturally grounded and spiritually meaningful pedagogical model.

The objective of this research is to explore how multicultural values can be effectively integrated into Hindu Religious Education based on the philosophical foundation of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, aiming to foster tolerance in Indonesia's diverse society.

Theoretically, this study aims to enrich multicultural education discourse by introducing a Hindu philosophical perspective. Practically, it can inform curriculum development in religious education, particularly in Hindu communities, by offering a framework for nurturing inclusive and tolerant citizens. Ultimately, the study seeks to position religious education as a strategic agent in fostering national harmony and unity in diversity.

METHOD

The research method used in this article involves a qualitative approach, focusing on literature review and analysis of existing educational practices related to multicultural education within the context of Hindu religious education. The study examines various sources, including academic journals and books, to identify key themes and principles of multicultural education, particularly the concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. Data collection includes analyzing the values, challenges, and successful strategies for implementing multicultural education in diverse educational settings. The research aims to provide insights into how these principles can be integrated into educational curricula to foster harmony and respect among students from different cultural and religious backgrounds.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Definition of Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is a combination of two terms, namely "education" and "multicultural". Education is defined as a process that aims to develop the attitudes and behaviors of individuals or groups, by means of human maturity through teaching, training, and various educational methods. In addition, education can also be

understood as the transfer of knowledge. On the other hand, the term "multicultural" comes from the word "multi" which means diverse, and "cultural" which refers to culture and tradition. Therefore, multicultural education is an approach to teaching and learning based on democratic values, humanism, and pluralism that encourages respect for cultural diversity, mutual acceptance, and broadening horizons in all aspects of life.

Meanwhile, Karman et al (2022) state that multicultural education is the process of developing all human potential that respects plurality and heterogeneity as a consequence of cultural, ethnic, tribal, and religious diversity. A simpler approach is proposed by Andersen and Custer in Utama and Sawitri (2023) who state that multicultural education is teaching about cultural diversity. This concept is in line with the thoughts of Paulo Freire who emphasized that education should not distance itself from social and cultural realities, but instead, should be able to free individuals from the various life challenges they face. Multicultural education aims to provide a better understanding of different cultural backgrounds, so as to develop an attitude of tolerance and mutual respect. The characteristics of multicultural education according to Wulandari (2024) are as follows:

1. Forming "cultural human beings" and creating a "cultured society"
2. (civilized)
3. The material teaches noble human values, national values, and ethnic group (cultural) values.
4. The method is democratic, which respects the different aspects and cultural diversity of the nation and ethnic groups (multiculturalist).
5. Evaluation is determined by assessing the behavior of learners which includes perception, appreciation, and action towards other cultures.

Multicultural education is important to instill an attitude of respect, sincerity, and tolerance towards the cultural diversity that exists in a plural society. Through multicultural education, the nation is expected to develop resilience and moral flexibility in the face of social conflict, so that national unity is maintained and not easily shaken. However, multicultural education is not to eliminate social conflict completely, but to reduce tension between different groups.

B. Values of Multicultural Education in Hindu Education According to Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

In Hindu education, the Vedas are regarded as the source of their scriptures, which are rich in good teachings derived from literature. In addition to the Vedas, there are also many other Hindu scriptures that contain religious teachings, one of which is the Hitopadesha. According to Tripathy & Behura (2017), hitopadesha is a collection of Sanskrit short stories compiled by Narayan Pandit thousands of years ago. The main purpose of creating Hitopadesha is to educate young people about the philosophy of life in an easy way so that they are able to grow into responsible adults.

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is one of the teachings contained in the Hitopadesha which contains a philosophy that instills the understanding that the whole world is one family. The first word consists of three Sanskrit words Vasudha, Eva and Kutumbakam. Vasudha means earth, Eva means emphasize and Kutumbakam means family. This means that the entire earth is just one family. It is a social philosophy derived from the spiritual understanding that the entire human race is made of one life energy. Based on the text Hitopadesha 1.3.71, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is explained as follows:

Ayam nijah paro veti gananaa laghuchetasaam,
 Udaarcharitaam tu Vasudhaiva
 Kutumbakam

Translation:

This is mine, and this stranger is the story of narrow-minded people, but to a philanthropist, the whole country is a family (Chandiramani in Ariputra et al., 2022). It can be interpreted that only narrow-minded people will distinguish one group from another. They tend to consider only those with blood ties as part of their family, while others are considered strangers. In contrast, a wise individual will see the entire world as part of one family, as all come from the same source. Thus, it can be said that Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam aims to create peace and harmony in society given that the diversity of human nature leads to differences of opinion, usually differences are natural, but when there is one person who makes a difference to the problem then it is difficult to establish harmonious relationships between people.

Saputra and Dewi (2023) mention that Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is also basically contained in the word Vedanta, namely in the maha upanishad (VI.71.73) which has been translated by Krishna Warriar as follows:

VI-71. Apparently, harnessing the spirit of inner surrender, he acts to achieve (a) the goal (or something else). Only the little men discriminate and say: One is the parent. That person is a stranger

VI-72-73(a). For those who live generously, the whole world is one family. All mental structures are abolished, and beyond old age and death, where attachments do not settle, a state is attained without regard to experienced life.

This means that in essence, when there is awareness of the unity of the family in a world, the self or ego of an established identity melts into a larger statement. The realization of tranquility in family life brings about a sensibility for everyone towards the environment, each other and even towards all elements in the world. In this regard, the concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam can be the basis for every Hindu in this world, regardless of differences, be it religion, ethnicity, nationality, skin color, etc., can relate to everyone without distinguishing one from another.

This teaching is relevant to multicultural education which encourages recognition of diversity by teaching learners that every culture, tradition and belief has equal value. This creates a learning space that respects differences and builds tolerance, where learners are invited to understand and respect different identities and perspectives without prejudice.

This confirms that education is not only about knowledge, but also about shaping learners' characters into compassionate, inclusive, and welfare-oriented individuals. In addition, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam provides a foundation for erasing stereotypes and prejudices that often become obstacles in building a multicultural society. Learners are invited to understand that differences are part of a greater whole, so they are encouraged to develop empathy and build a strong sense of solidarity.

Thus it can be said that Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam provides a strong philosophical foundation for multicultural education. By emphasizing unity in diversity and character development, education can shape young people who are not only knowledgeable but also have a high sense of social responsibility and humanity. In an increasingly complex and diverse world, the application of these values becomes even more important to create a harmonious and inclusive social environment.

C. Implementation of Multicultural Education in Hinduism

Multicultural education is a very important approach in building a harmonious and inclusive society. By integrating multicultural values in education, it is expected that students can understand and appreciate the diversity that exists in society, and internalize the noble values taught in Hinduism. This is very relevant considering that Indonesia is a country with diverse ethnicities, cultures, and religions, so multicultural education is the key to creating harmony and peace. In the context of Hindu teachings, the implementation of multicultural education can be done through various aspects, including the following:

1. Religious Education

Hindu religious education not only focuses on teaching the values and teachings of Hinduism itself, but also includes an introduction to other religions. The basic competencies of Hindu religious education are; students have *sraddha* and *bhakti* to *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa*, have noble character (noble character) which is reflected in their daily behavior in their relationship as God's creatures, fellow humans, and the surrounding environment are able to read and understand the Vedic scriptures, and are able to maintain internal and interreligious harmony (Wentas, 2019). Introduction to other religions can be done through discussions, seminars, or cultural exchange activities involving various religious communities. This aims to build understanding and respect for differences, and reduce the potential for conflict that may arise due to differences in beliefs.

2. Cultural Education

Cultural education in the context of Hinduism focuses on developing awareness of Hindu culture and traditions, while respecting other cultures. Schools as one of the places to organize Hindu religious education must be able to preserve local culture while still following the growing trend of global culture, for example, local languages, gamelan, and traditional dances need to be preserved as the nation's cultural heritage. But we cannot deny that mastery of foreign languages, bands, and modern dance must also be learned as a global culture favored by today's youth. Therefore, religious nuances in schools with the implementation of prayers/*Tri Sandhya* before learning should be a routine activity. Cultivating greetings and reprimanding each other with friendly language should be a common phenomenon (Wentas, 2019). In addition, cultural education also includes an introduction to local culture and culture from other religions. Activities such as cultural festivals, art exhibitions and art performances can be a means to introduce cultural diversity to learners. Thus, learners not only get to know their own culture but also learn to appreciate and celebrate the differences around them.

3. Moral Education

Moral education is an important aspect of multicultural education. In Hinduism, moral values such as tolerance, patience, and honesty are highly emphasized. Through moral education, learners are taught to appreciate differences and interact with others with mutual respect. Activities such as group discussions, role-playing, and case studies can be used to teach learners about the importance of moral values in everyday life.

4. Interfaith Dialogue

Interfaith dialog is an effective way to build communication and cooperation between religious communities. In the context of multicultural education, this dialog can be facilitated through activities such as discussion forums, seminars and

collaborative projects involving various religious communities. Through dialog, learners can learn to listen to and understand the perspectives of others, as well as find commonalities among differences. These activities not only strengthen interfaith relations, but also create an environment conducive to tolerance and harmony. By building good communication, it is hoped that a harmonious and respectful society will be created.

D. Barriers to the Implementation of Education

Implementing multicultural education in an education system is not a simple task. The process involves various challenges and complexities that must be faced by educators, learners and the educational institution itself. Multicultural education aims to appreciate and understand the diversity of cultures, religions and social backgrounds that exist in society. However, in practice many factors influence the implementation of multicultural education. According to Suasta (2017), there are two factors that can influence the implementation of multicultural education, namely, internal factors and external factors.

The internal factors that influence the implementation of multicultural education are (1) Educators, educators play a key role with the quality of teaching and good interaction between educators and students. Educators who have in-depth knowledge and are able to explain the material in a way that is easy to understand will increase the motivation of students. (2) Methodological, the quality of material delivery and the selection of appropriate learning methods, such as active and collaborative learning, can help learners understand the values of Hinduism in a multicultural context. (3) Cultural, the attitude and character of educators, such as openness and empathy, greatly affect the classroom atmosphere, creating a safe and comfortable learning environment for all learners. (4) Psychological, this includes emotions, interest, attention, talent, and readiness of educators in teaching also play an important role in the success of learning. Educators who are able to manage their emotions and show enthusiasm in teaching will be more effective in increasing learner engagement.

On the other hand, external factors also influence the implementation of multicultural education. External factors such as good social relations between educators and learners, as well as positive interactions with the community are very important to strengthen the learning process. In addition, the involvement of parents and communities in education not only provides support, but also creates synergies that support the success of learners considering that the family is the first educational institution that has a crucial role in providing emotional and material support, the family can significantly increase the motivation and learning success of learners.

In addition, the conducive environment of educational institutions and communities also affects the implementation of multicultural education, such as adequate facilities and active support from the community for education, which is essential to create a comfortable and productive learning atmosphere because a supportive environment will encourage learners to be more involved in the learning process. Supportive government policies, including the provision of adequate budgets for facilities and infrastructure, are necessary to ensure that the learning process can run well and achieve the expected goals.

Thus, both internal and external factors must be considered and managed properly. Synergy between educators, learners, families, communities and government is essential to achieve success in implementing education. Only with a holistic and

collaborative approach can multicultural education be implemented effectively and have a positive impact on all parties involved.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, multicultural education plays a crucial role in promoting understanding and tolerance in a diverse society, particularly in Indonesia. The principles of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam highlight the importance of viewing the world as one family, thus encouraging empathy and solidarity among individuals from different backgrounds. While there are challenges in implementing multicultural education, such as internal factors related to educators and external factors involving community support, a collaborative approach among educators, students, families, and government is essential for success. Ultimately, fostering a culture of inclusivity and respect through education can help build a more harmonious society, capable of navigating and celebrating its rich diversity.

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