



Implementation of Multicultural Education in History Learning in Middle Schools in Yogyakarta City, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation of multicultural education in history teaching at secondary schools in Yogyakarta City, Indonesia. As a culturally diverse educational environment, Yogyakarta provides a unique context for exploring how history teachers integrate multicultural perspectives into their pedagogical practices. The research investigates teaching strategies, curriculum adaptation, and challenges faced by educators in fostering intercultural understanding through historical narratives. Using a qualitative approach with classroom observations, teacher interviews, and document analysis across five secondary schools, the study reveals that while teachers demonstrate awareness of multicultural principles, implementation remains inconsistent due to standardized curriculum constraints, limited teaching resources, and varying levels of pedagogical training. The findings indicate that successful multicultural history education requires comprehensive teacher professional development, culturally responsive teaching materials, and institutional support for inclusive pedagogical approaches. This research contributes to understanding multicultural education practices in Indonesian contexts and offers

recommendations for enhancing intercultural competence through history instruction in diverse educational settings.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's remarkable cultural diversity, encompassing over 300 ethnic groups and 700 languages, presents both opportunities and challenges for the national education system (Parker & Nilan, 2013). This heterogeneity necessitates educational approaches that acknowledge, respect, and celebrate cultural differences while simultaneously building national cohesion. Yogyakarta, renowned as Indonesia's cultural and educational center, exemplifies this diversity through its unique blend of Javanese traditions, regional migration patterns, and cosmopolitan student populations. The city's secondary schools serve students from varied ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds, making it an ideal setting for examining multicultural education implementation.

History education occupies a strategic position in promoting multicultural understanding, as historical narratives significantly influence how students perceive cultural identities, intergroup relations, and national belonging (Banks, 2008). Traditional history curricula in Indonesia have often emphasized dominant narratives centered on Javanese perspectives and nationalist historiography, potentially marginalizing minority experiences and alternative interpretations. According to Hasan (2012), Indonesian history textbooks have historically presented monocultural perspectives that overlook regional diversity and local historical experiences. This approach contradicts contemporary educational philosophy that recognizes learning as culturally situated and advocates for inclusive pedagogies that validate diverse student identities.

Multicultural education, as conceptualized by Banks (2019) and Ahmad Nur, Muhsyanur (2024), involves transforming educational institutions to ensure equitable learning opportunities for students from diverse cultural, ethnic, and social-class groups. In history teaching contexts, this transformation requires moving beyond additive approaches that merely include diverse cultural content toward integrative methods that fundamentally reconceptualize historical narratives from multiple perspectives. Gay (2018) emphasizes that culturally responsive teaching in history must connect curriculum content to students' lived experiences while challenging dominant historical narratives that perpetuate cultural hegemony. These theoretical frameworks provide essential foundations for examining how Yogyakarta's history teachers navigate the complex terrain of multicultural pedagogy.

Despite policy frameworks supporting multicultural education in Indonesia, including the 2003 National Education System Law emphasizing character education

and cultural appreciation, implementation at the classroom level remains understudied. Previous research has primarily focused on multicultural education theory rather than actual teaching practices, leaving gaps in understanding how teachers translate multicultural principles into daily instruction (Tilaar, 2004). Furthermore, the specific challenges and strategies employed by history teachers in multicultural contexts require deeper investigation to inform teacher education and curriculum development initiatives.

The current study addresses these gaps by examining how secondary school history teachers in Yogyakarta implement multicultural education principles within existing curriculum structures and institutional constraints (Muhsyanur, 2023). Research questions guiding this investigation include: How do history teachers conceptualize and practice multicultural education? What teaching strategies do educators employ to present diverse historical perspectives? What challenges impede effective multicultural history instruction? Understanding these dimensions provides insights into the realities of multicultural pedagogy and identifies areas requiring policy intervention and professional development support (Mulyana et al., 2021).

This research contributes to both theoretical and practical dimensions of multicultural education scholarship. Theoretically, it extends understanding of how global multicultural education frameworks operate within specific Indonesian sociocultural contexts, where communal harmony (*rukun*) and national unity (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika - Unity in Diversity*) shape educational priorities. Practically, the findings inform teacher education programs, curriculum development processes, and educational policy formulation aimed at fostering intercultural competence among Indonesia's youth. As societies worldwide grapple with increasing diversity and polarization, this study offers valuable lessons for educators seeking to build inclusive, equitable learning environments through history instruction.

METHODE

This qualitative study employed a multiple case study design to examine multicultural education implementation across five purposively selected secondary schools in Yogyakarta City during the 2023-2024 academic year. The participating schools represented diverse institutional characteristics, including public and private governance, Islamic and secular orientations, and varied socioeconomic student populations. Data collection involved three primary methods: semi-structured interviews with fifteen history teachers, classroom observations of thirty history lessons, and document analysis of curriculum materials, lesson plans, and teaching resources. Interview protocols explored teachers' understanding of multicultural education, pedagogical strategies, resource utilization, and perceived challenges. Classroom observations focused on instructional methods, content presentation, student engagement patterns, and multicultural elements integrated into lessons. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic analysis techniques (Muhsyanur, 2024b).

Data analysis followed an iterative process combining deductive and inductive coding approaches. Initial codes derived from Banks' (2019) multicultural education framework and Gay's (2018) culturally responsive teaching principles, while emergent codes captured context-specific themes arising from the data. Cross-case analysis identified patterns and variations across participating schools, revealing how institutional contexts influenced implementation practices. To ensure trustworthiness, the study employed member checking, where preliminary findings were shared with participating teachers for validation, and triangulation across multiple data sources. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring confidentiality through pseudonyms, and securing research approval from relevant educational authorities. The research acknowledges potential limitations, including the relatively small sample size and geographic specificity, which may affect generalizability beyond similar urban Indonesian contexts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' Conceptualizations of Multicultural Education in History Teaching

History teachers in Yogyakarta demonstrated varied understandings of multicultural education, ranging from superficial awareness to sophisticated conceptual frameworks. Most participants recognized Indonesia's cultural diversity as relevant to history instruction, yet their interpretations of how multiculturalism should inform pedagogy differed significantly. Eight teachers conceptualized multicultural education primarily as content addition, believing that including information about various ethnic groups, regional kingdoms, and local heroes constituted adequate multicultural practice. This approach aligns with what Banks (2019) identifies as the "contributions approach," the most basic level of curriculum integration that leaves dominant narratives fundamentally unchallenged. Teachers employing this perspective typically supplemented standard curriculum materials with brief mentions of regional histories without critically examining whose perspectives dominated historical accounts.

A smaller group of five teachers demonstrated more transformative understandings, recognizing multicultural education as involving critical examination of historical narratives from multiple perspectives. These educators articulated awareness that history is interpreted differently across cultural communities and that teaching should help students understand these varied interpretations (M Muhsyanur, SY Sudikan, 2025). One teacher explained, "I try to show students that historical events like the Indonesian Revolution were experienced differently by people in Java, Sumatra, and Eastern Indonesia. Each region contributed uniquely, and their stories deserve equal attention." This perspective reflects what Gay (2018) describes as culturally responsive pedagogy that validates diverse cultural knowledge and challenges monolithic historical narratives. However, even these teachers acknowledged struggling to implement

transformative approaches consistently due to curriculum constraints and assessment pressures.

Notably, teachers' conceptualizations correlated strongly with their educational backgrounds and professional development experiences. Educators who had participated in multicultural education training or possessed advanced degrees in history education articulated more nuanced understandings compared to those relying solely on pre-service preparation. This finding underscores the critical importance of ongoing professional development in cultivating sophisticated multicultural pedagogical competence. Furthermore, teachers in schools serving more heterogeneous student populations expressed greater urgency regarding multicultural approaches, suggesting that classroom diversity itself serves as an impetus for developing inclusive teaching practices. These variations highlight the need for differentiated professional development strategies that address teachers' diverse starting points and contextual challenges.

Pedagogical Strategies for Integrating Multicultural Perspectives

Teachers employed various strategies to incorporate multicultural elements into history instruction, though implementation depth varied considerably across classrooms. The most common approach involved supplementing textbook content with regional historical examples, particularly when teaching about Indonesia's pre-colonial period and independence struggle. Teachers described incorporating stories of local resistance figures, regional sultanates, and ethnic cultural contributions that textbooks often omitted or minimized. For instance, when teaching about anti-colonial movements, several teachers highlighted resistance efforts in their students' ancestral regions, connecting national historical narratives to students' family and community histories. This strategy demonstrates recognition of what Banks (2008) identifies as the importance of helping students see themselves as active participants in historical processes rather than passive recipients of predetermined narratives (Muhsyanur and Mustapha, 2023).

Comparative historical analysis emerged as another significant pedagogical strategy, with teachers presenting multiple perspectives on contested historical events. Six teachers reported using primary source documents representing different ethnic or regional viewpoints on events like the 1945 Proclamation of Independence or the 1965-1966 political upheaval. Students analyzed these varied accounts, identifying differences in interpretation and considering how cultural, political, and geographical positions influenced historical understanding. One teacher described assigning students to research how the same historical event was commemorated differently across Indonesian regions, revealing that historical memory itself is culturally constructed. These activities align with critical pedagogy principles that position students as active knowledge constructors capable of analyzing how power relations shape historical narratives (Hasan, 2012). However, teachers noted that such approaches required significantly more preparation time and resources than conventional lecture-based instruction (Muhsyanur et.al, 2025).

Despite these promising practices, implementation remained limited by several factors. Most teachers reported that time constraints imposed by standardized curriculum coverage requirements restricted opportunities for in-depth exploration of multiple perspectives. The examination-oriented education system prioritized content coverage over critical analysis, pushing teachers toward transmission models rather than inquiry-based approaches. Additionally, available teaching materials predominantly reflected dominant Javanese-centric narratives, requiring teachers to independently research and develop supplementary resources—a burden many found unsustainable given their teaching loads. Table 1 presents the frequency of various multicultural teaching strategies reported by participating teachers, illustrating the gap between awareness and consistent implementation.

Table 1. Frequency of Multicultural Teaching Strategies in History Instruction

Teaching Strategy	Frequency of Use	Percentage of Teachers
Regional historical examples supplementation	Regular	80% (12 teachers)
Multiple perspective primary source analysis	Occasional	40% (6 teachers)
Critical examination of textbook narratives	Rare	27% (4 teachers)
Student cultural heritage research projects	Occasional	53% (8 teachers)
Comparative regional historical analysis	Rare	33% (5 teachers)
Discussion of historical memory differences	Occasional	47% (7 teachers)
Integration of minority group histories	Rare	20% (3 teachers)

Challenges and Institutional Constraints in Multicultural History Education

Teachers identified numerous challenges impeding effective multicultural history education implementation, with curriculum standardization emerging as the most significant obstacle (Jonathan Kera, Daniel Wong, 2024). Indonesia's national curriculum prescribes specific content coverage and learning objectives that teachers must address, leaving limited flexibility for incorporating diverse regional or minority perspectives. Teachers expressed frustration that standardized assessments, particularly the national examination system, emphasized factual recall of dominant historical narratives rather than critical thinking about multiple perspectives. This assessment structure incentivized teaching approaches focused on exam preparation rather than deep multicultural learning, creating tension between teachers' pedagogical ideals and institutional accountability pressures. As one teacher lamented, "I want to explore different perspectives, but ultimately students need to know the 'correct' answers for exams, which reflect official historical interpretations."

Resource limitations constituted another substantial challenge, particularly regarding culturally diverse teaching materials. Most available textbooks and supplementary materials reflected Javanese-centric perspectives, with minimal coverage of non-Javanese ethnic groups, regional histories, or alternative historical interpretations. Teachers reported spending considerable personal time researching regional histories, locating primary sources, and developing materials representing diverse perspectives—efforts made more difficult by limited access to specialized historical archives and scholarly resources. Schools serving lower-income communities faced additional resource constraints, lacking funds for supplementary materials, library resources, or technology that could facilitate access to diverse historical sources. This resource disparity created inequities wherein schools serving privileged populations could more readily implement multicultural approaches compared to under-resourced institutions.

Teacher preparedness represented a third critical challenge, as most participants reported receiving minimal pre-service or in-service training specifically addressing multicultural pedagogy in history teaching. While teacher education programs included general multicultural education theory, few provided discipline-specific guidance on integrating multicultural perspectives into history instruction or addressing sensitive historical topics involving intercultural conflict. Teachers expressed uncertainty about how to facilitate discussions of controversial historical events, such as ethnic conflicts or religious tensions, without inadvertently reinforcing stereotypes or provoking student discomfort. This pedagogical uncertainty sometimes led teachers to avoid addressing contentious topics altogether, thereby missing opportunities for developing students' critical intercultural understanding (Muhsyanur, 2024a). According to Tilaar (2004), effective multicultural education requires teachers equipped with both content knowledge about diverse cultural histories and pedagogical skills for facilitating difficult conversations—competencies that current teacher preparation systems inadequately develop.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that while Yogyakarta secondary school history teachers recognize the importance of multicultural education and employ various strategies to integrate diverse perspectives, implementation remains constrained by standardized curricula, limited resources, and insufficient pedagogical preparation. To advance multicultural history education, stakeholders must address these systemic barriers through comprehensive teacher professional development programs emphasizing discipline-specific multicultural pedagogical strategies, curriculum reforms allowing greater flexibility for regional and minority historical perspectives, development of culturally diverse teaching materials accessible to all schools, and assessment systems valuing critical thinking about multiple perspectives over rote memorization. Educational institutions should create collaborative platforms where teachers share multicultural teaching resources and

strategies, while policymakers must align national education policies with stated commitments to cultural diversity. These coordinated efforts can transform history education into a powerful vehicle for fostering intercultural understanding, critical consciousness, and inclusive national identity among Indonesia's diverse youth populations.

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