TEACHER CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN MULTICULTURAL CLASS LEARNING AT MUHAMMADIYAH KUPANG HIGH SCHOOL

Muhajir Musa
Universitas Muhammadiyah Kupang, Indonesia
E-mail: zainmuhajir29@gmail.com

Abstract
Learning in multicultural classes presents its own challenges for teachers, especially in managing students' cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. This research aims to analyze the challenges faced by teachers and the strategies implemented in multicultural classroom learning at Muhammadiyah High School Kupang. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with teachers, classroom observations, and analysis of documentation related to policies and learning strategies. The research results show that the main challenges faced by teachers include differences in student learning styles, language barriers, and the potential for stereotypes and social conflict. To overcome this challenge, teachers apply various strategies, such as the use of inclusive learning methods, adaptive communication approaches, and character education based on tolerance and cooperation. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategy shows that this approach helps increase student interaction, build a harmonious learning environment, and strengthen their academic understanding. This research emphasizes the importance of support from schools in the form of teacher training and provision of resources to support multicultural learning. With the right strategy and adequate support, multicultural education can be an effective means of building an inclusive and tolerant learning environment.
Keywords: Teacher Challenges, Learning Strategies, Multicultural Classes, Kupang Muhammadiyah High School.

INTRODUCTION

Multicultural education is a learning approach that emphasizes respect for cultural, ethnic and religious diversity in the educational environment (Bayne, 2022). In the context of globalization, multicultural education is becoming increasingly important because it helps students understand differences, build tolerance, and develop inclusive attitudes (Nazar & Barton, 2022). In Indonesia, which is a country with ethnic, religious and cultural diversity, multicultural education plays an important role in creating social harmony and building national character. Therefore, schools as educational

institutions have a responsibility to implement learning that respects diversity and ensures that every student has a fair and inclusive learning experience.

Kupang Muhammadiyah High School is a school that has high diversity among students and teaching staff. This diversity includes different cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious backgrounds. As a school under the auspices of an Islamic organization, SMA Muhammadiyah Kupang continues to accept students from various backgrounds without discrimination. This shows that the school is committed to creating an educational environment that is open to all. However, this diversity also brings its own challenges in managing learning, especially for teachers who have to adapt teaching methods and strategies to suit the needs of all students.

Teachers play a central role in creating an inclusive and effective learning environment in multicultural classrooms. They are not only responsible for delivering lesson material, but also for building a conducive atmosphere for all students, regardless of their different backgrounds (Ruth-Herbein et al., 2022). Teachers must be able to instill the values of tolerance, justice and respect for diversity in every learning activity (Iwai, 2023). Therefore, teacher competence in understanding social dynamics in the classroom is very important to prevent the emergence of misunderstandings and conflicts due to differences in culture and values held by students.

Although multicultural education provides many benefits for students' social and academic development, teachers often face various challenges in managing heterogeneous classes (Xu, 2024). One of the main challenges is differences in language and communication patterns among students, which can cause gaps in understanding the material (Uliassi, 2022). In addition, the existence of stereotypes and social prejudice in the school environment can influence interactions between students and lead to social exclusion. Teachers also have to face the challenge of developing learning strategies that can accommodate all student backgrounds without causing inequality or discrimination (Balaman, 2023).

Apart from academic aspects, students' social and psychological aspects are also important concerns in multicultural learning. Some students may experience social pressure because they feel different from the majority of their classmates. This can have an impact on their learning motivation and self-confidence in the classroom (Kristinsdóttir, 2022). Therefore, teachers must be able to create an atmosphere that encourages the active participation of all students and provides the emotional support they need.

Using more interactive and experience-based learning methods can be one way to overcome this problem.

In facing these various challenges, teachers need to implement appropriate strategies to manage multicultural classes effectively. A differentiation approach to learning can be one solution, where teachers adjust teaching methods based on student needs and characteristics (Knoester & Meshulam, 2023). In addition, using teaching materials that reflect cultural diversity can help students feel more valued and increase their understanding of multicultural values. Strengthening cooperation between teachers, students and parents is also an important factor in creating a harmonious educational environment (Hollombe et al., 2024).

This research is very important to identify the challenges faced by teachers in multicultural classroom learning at Muhammadiyah High School Kupang and explore the strategies that have been implemented to overcome these problems. By understanding the challenges and strategies teachers use, schools can design policies that are more effective in supporting inclusive and diversity-oriented learning. It is hoped that the results of this research can provide useful recommendations for educators in managing multicultural classes better.

With a deeper understanding of the challenges and strategies in multicultural learning, schools can play a more active role in creating an education system that is more adaptive and responsive to diversity. Inclusive education will not only improve the quality of learning, but will also form a young generation that is more tolerant, appreciates differences, and is able to contribute to an increasingly global and multicultural society (Hu & Mi, 2024).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to understand in depth the challenges and strategies implemented by teachers in learning in multicultural classes at SMA Muhammadiyah Kupang. Case studies were chosen because they allow researchers to explore phenomena thoroughly in real contexts, so they can provide a more comprehensive picture of teachers' experiences in dealing with cultural, ethnic and religious diversity in the classroom. The research subjects consist of teachers who teach in classes with students who have diverse backgrounds, with a focus on how they manage learning and overcome various challenges that arise.

Data collection techniques are carried out through in-depth interviews with teachers to obtain information about the challenges they face and the

strategies they have implemented. In addition, direct observations in the classroom were carried out to see how interactions between teachers and students took place in daily learning practices. Documentation such as school policies and teaching materials are also analyzed to understand the extent to which a multicultural approach is implemented in the educational environment. The data obtained was analyzed using data reduction techniques, data presentation, and drawing conclusions as proposed by Miles and Huberman, so that the research results can provide a systematic and in-depth understanding of the effectiveness of teacher strategies in managing multicultural classes (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2009).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Challenges Faced by Teachers in Multicultural Classrooms

Based on the results of interviews and observations conducted at SMA Muhammadiyah Kupang, it was found that teachers face various challenges in managing classes that have cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. One of the main challenges is differences in cultural backgrounds that influence the way students communicate, think and learn. Some students may be more active in discussions, while others tend to be passive because their culture emphasizes respecting teachers by listening. These differences cause gaps in class participation and require special strategies from teachers to create a more inclusive learning atmosphere.

Apart from that, language barriers are a significant factor in learning. Even though the language of instruction used is Indonesian, some students have a different dialect or mother tongue, which sometimes affects their understanding of the lesson material. Teachers must look for ways to explain concepts more simply or use a visual approach so that all students can understand the material well. These communication difficulties can also hinder interaction between students, especially if there are differences in the verbal and non-verbal expressions used (Houghton, 2023).

Another challenge is the existence of social stereotypes and prejudices that are still inherent in the school environment. Some students may bring pre-formed perspectives from their families or environments regarding certain cultural groups (Nazar & Barton, 2022). This can lead to social exclusion, where some students feel isolated or less accepted in study groups. Teachers must play an active role in instilling the values of tolerance and togetherness, and ensure that there is no discrimination or different treatment that could have a negative psychological impact on students.

In terms of learning strategies, teachers face challenges in developing methods that can accommodate the diversity of student learning styles. Some students may be more accustomed to conventional learning methods such as lectures, while others understand better through practice or discussion-based approaches. Teachers must be able to adapt teaching methods in order to create a learning environment that is not only effective but also enjoyable for all students. However, limited time and resources often become obstacles in implementing more varied and interactive methods (Melo-Pfeifer, 2023).

One challenge that is quite complex is overcoming conflicts that may arise due to differences in student backgrounds. In some cases, differences of opinion regarding culture or beliefs can lead to tension in the classroom (Loftin, 2024). Teachers must have skills in conflict mediation and ensure that any differences can be discussed in a healthy and constructive manner. Creating a safe and respectful space for dialogue is an important part of multicultural learning, but this requires sensitivity and readiness from teachers to navigate differences wisely.

Observation results also show that not all teachers have special training in dealing with multicultural classes. Some teachers find it difficult to adapt learning strategies due to a lack of in-depth understanding of multicultural education. This shows the need for training and professional development programs for teachers so that they can be better prepared to handle diverse classroom dynamics. Schools also need to provide support in the form of clearer policies regarding the implementation of multicultural education in the curriculum.

With the various challenges faced, teachers still have a crucial role in creating a harmonious and inclusive learning environment. Managing a multicultural classroom is not just about delivering lesson material, but also about building positive relationships between students from different backgrounds. Therefore, it is important for schools to provide adequate support so that teachers can continue to develop in facing the complexity of multicultural education at SMA Muhammadiyah Kupang.

Teacher Strategies in Facing Challenges

Based on the results of interviews and observations at SMA Muhammadiyah Kupang, it was found that teachers implemented various strategies to overcome challenges in learning in multicultural classes. One of the main strategies implemented is the use of learning methods that are inclusive and based on cultural diversity. Teachers try to adapt teaching

materials to students' backgrounds, for example by including examples that are relevant to the culture in the class. This approach helps students feel more valued and involved in the learning process.

In addition, teachers use adaptive communication strategies to overcome language barriers. They ensure that each student understands the material by providing simpler explanations, using language that is easy to understand, and involving various visual media such as images, videos and interactive presentations (Nadiya et al., 2024). Teachers also often encourage students to work in heterogeneous groups, where students with better language skills can help friends who are still having difficulty. This collaborative approach not only increases student understanding but also strengthens social relationships in the classroom (Chatham et al., 2024).

To overcome stereotypes and social prejudice, teachers apply character education strategies that instill the values of tolerance, cooperation and respect for diversity. One method that is often used is open discussion regarding the culture and values held by each student. By providing space for students to share their experiences, teachers help create a more inclusive environment and encourage understanding between students (Gennaro & Marino, 2024). In addition, teachers also use a project-based approach, where students are given assignments that involve exploring other cultures, such as presentations about their respective regional traditions.

In dealing with differences in learning styles, teachers apply a differentiated learning approach, where they use a variety of teaching methods to suit the needs of all students. Some of the strategies used include lectures for students who are more comfortable with conventional methods, group discussions for those who are more active, and practice-based assignments for students who understand better with direct experience (Suryati et al., 2023). By providing a variety of teaching methods, teachers can ensure that each student has the opportunity to learn in the most effective way for them (Chen, 2024).

One of the case studies of successful strategies in learning at SMA Muhammadiyah Kupang is the application of a project-based learning model in history subjects. Teachers ask students from various backgrounds to work together to create presentations about historical events related to different cultures. Through this project, students not only learn about history but also understand other cultural perspectives. As a result, students showed an increase in historical understanding and mutual respect for each other.

Teachers also act as mediators in handling conflicts that arise due to differences in student backgrounds. They apply conflict resolution strategies by inviting students to discuss openly in a conducive atmosphere. Teachers emphasize the importance of good communication and mutual respect in resolving differences of opinion. Apart from that, they also use an empathy-based approach, where students are invited to see a problem from another person's perspective. In this way, students better understand the feelings and points of view of their friends, so that conflict can be minimized (Mendler & Vedder-Weiss, 2023).

Overall, the strategies implemented by teachers at SMA Muhammadiyah Kupang in facing the challenges of multicultural classes have shown positive results. Through an inclusive approach, the use of varied learning methods, and strong character education, teachers have succeeded in creating a more harmonious and effective learning environment. This success shows that with the right strategy, multicultural education can be an opportunity to enrich students' learning experiences and build a more tolerant and inclusive society.

Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Learning Strategies

Evaluation of the strategies implemented in multicultural classroom learning at SMA Muhammadiyah Kupang shows that these strategies have a significant impact on student interactions. One of the most visible changes is the increased involvement of students in class discussions. Students who were previously passive began to participate more actively because they felt the classroom environment was more inclusive and respected differences. The application of project-based learning methods and open discussions also helps reduce awkwardness between students from different backgrounds, so that social interactions become more dynamic.

From interviews with teachers, they stated that the use of more diverse learning methods, such as heterogeneous group discussions and visual media, had helped students understand the material more easily. Teachers saw an increase in understanding of academic concepts because students more easily connected course material to their own cultural experiences. In addition, with assignments that encourage cultural exploration, students become more interested in learning and feel more valued in the school environment.

Meanwhile, responses from students show that they feel more comfortable in the learning process than before. Some students who initially

felt isolated or lacked confidence in expressing their opinions began to open up more because they felt accepted in the classroom environment. Apart from that, the group work methods applied by teachers also help them to better understand their friends who come from different backgrounds. With better interaction, relationships between students become more harmonious, and the potential for conflict due to cultural differences can be minimized.

However, the effectiveness of this learning strategy also faces several challenges. Several teachers expressed that applying various methods requires more time and preparation than conventional methods. Not all teachers have special training in multicultural education, so there are differences in how each teacher manages the classroom. Apart from that, technical obstacles such as limited resources and learning media that support diversity are also factors that need to be considered in increasing the effectiveness of this strategy in the future.

In some cases, there are still students who experience difficulty in adapting to new learning approaches. For example, students who are used to the lecture method find it difficult to adapt to discussion or project-based learning models. Therefore, a more flexible approach is needed, where teachers can balance traditional methods with more interactive methods to ensure that all students get optimal benefits from the learning strategies implemented (Pollio & Riemma, 2024).

Although there are several obstacles, overall the evaluation shows that the strategies used by teachers in facing the challenges of multicultural classes are quite effective in increasing student interaction and building a more inclusive learning environment. The use of more varied methods and the application of character education has helped create a more conducive atmosphere for students with different backgrounds (Fernández, 2024). This shows that multicultural education is not just a concept, but can be applied actually in learning to provide concrete benefits for students and teachers.

In the future, to increase the effectiveness of this strategy, schools need to provide further training for teachers regarding multicultural education and provide more learning resources that can support diversity. With better support, learning strategies in multicultural classrooms can continue to develop and have a greater impact in creating a harmonious, inclusive and effective educational environment for all students (Sakuma et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This research shows that teachers at SMA Muhammadiyah Kupang face various challenges in managing multicultural classes, including differences in culture and student learning styles, language barriers, as well as potential stereotypes and social conflict. To overcome this challenge, teachers apply various strategies, such as the use of inclusive learning methods, adaptive communication approaches, and character education based on tolerance and cooperation. Evaluation results show that this strategy is generally effective in increasing student interaction, building a harmonious learning environment, and improving their academic understanding.

The implication of this research for multicultural learning at SMA Muhammadiyah Kupang is the need for further support from the school in the form of teacher training on multicultural education and the provision of more adequate resources. In addition, more flexible and innovative learning approaches need to continue to be developed to accommodate the needs of all students. With the right strategy and optimal support, multicultural education can be an effective means of building inclusive, tolerant and respectful attitudes in the school environment.

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