

# The Influence of Qualitative Study on Teacher and Student Perceptions of Multicultural Education at Primary School of Inpres 17 Sorong Regency

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## ABSTRACT

*This research aims to explore teachers' and students' perceptions of multicultural education at SD Inpres 17 Sorong Regency, an elementary school that has a diversity of religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The research uses a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach for one semester or around three months, with a focus on increasing understanding and application of multicultural education. General research results show that teachers generally have a positive perception of multicultural education because they are considered capable of creating an inclusive and harmonious school environment. However, some teachers still need additional training to integrate multicultural values into learning. Students also show an open and positive attitude, and feel more appreciated and understand the importance of cultural diversity. Multicultural education has been proven to encourage social interaction between students across backgrounds and strengthen attitudes of tolerance. However, there are still challenges in its implementation, such as limited resources, varying teacher understanding, social stereotypes, and the influence of the environment outside the school. Overall, multicultural education at Elementary School of Inpres 17 has a positive impact in fostering inclusive attitudes and mutual respect between students.*



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## INTRODUCTION

Education has an important role in shaping children's character and thinking patterns, especially at elementary school age, which is a crucial period of intellectual and social development. At this stage, children begin to understand the differences that exist in society. Multicultural education has a strategic function in building tolerance, respecting differences, and fostering mutual respect between individuals from different cultural backgrounds, so that it is hoped that it can create harmony in diversity.

Indonesia, as a country rich in ethnic, religious, racial and cultural diversity, has its own challenges in implementing multicultural education. In elementary school, children from different cultural backgrounds are brought together, which allows them to learn about differences from an early age. Therefore, it is important for teachers to have understanding and skills in managing diversity in the classroom.

Sorong Regency, which is located in Southwest Papua Province, has very high cultural diversity, inhabited by various ethnic groups, both native Papuans and immigrants. This diversity creates opportunities and challenges in education, especially in the application of multicultural education. It is important to research

the perceptions of teachers and students in Sorong Regency towards multicultural education, in order to understand the extent to which they can appreciate and manage differences.

SD Inpres 17 Sorong Regency is an example of an elementary school with striking ethnic, religious and cultural diversity. Students at this school come from various ethnicities and different social backgrounds, so they face challenges in creating an inclusive classroom atmosphere.

A number of previous studies show that teachers play a very important role in implementing multicultural education. According to research conducted by Lee (2020:45), multicultural education can strengthen mutual respect and build better relationships between students from various backgrounds. This shows that the role of teachers in creating an inclusive learning environment and respecting differences is vital. However, most of this research has been conducted more at the secondary education level, while at the elementary level, the implementation of multicultural education still requires greater attention.

At the elementary level, children are in a crucial developmental phase, where they begin to understand and appreciate differences. Therefore, it is important to explore how teachers at the elementary school level can implement multicultural education effectively, as well as the challenges they face in the process. It is hoped that further research in this area will provide deeper insight into strategies that can be used to increase the understanding and application of multicultural education among students at the elementary level.

Multicultural education is a pedagogical approach that aims to appreciate and understand cultural, ethnic, religious, racial and ethnic diversity in the educational environment. More than simply teaching about different cultures (Banks, 2016), multicultural education emphasizes the development of positive attitudes toward differences and inclusiveness. Nieto (2010) adds that this approach must recognize students' individual identities and experiences, creating a learning environment that is responsive and inclusive for all.

The importance of the teacher's role in implementing multicultural education is also emphasized, with the hope that teachers can facilitate respectful relationships between students from various backgrounds (Lee, 2020). Students' perceptions of multicultural education, as revealed by Santoso and Setyawan (2021), are influenced by their personal experiences and social environment. Therefore, multicultural education is not only important for increasing intercultural understanding, but also for forming students' characters who are tolerant and respect differences, while creating a fair and equal educational environment for all.

Multicultural education, according to Banks (2016) and Nieto (2010), emphasizes appreciation and understanding of cultural, ethnic, religious, racial and ethnic diversity in the educational environment, as well as the development of positive attitudes towards differences and inclusiveness. The teacher's role in facilitating respectful relationships between students from various backgrounds is also very important (Lee, 2020).

The successful implementation of multicultural education really depends on the perceptions of stakeholders, especially students and teachers. Perception, as defined by the Big Indonesian Dictionary (2003:863), is a direct response to a process known through the five senses. Tanra (2015) added that perception is the process of observing the environment using the senses, which results in awareness of everything around it.

Teacher perceptions of multicultural education refer to teachers' views or attitudes regarding the application of diversity values in the learning process. According to Gay (2010:55), teachers who have a positive perception of multicultural education tend to integrate diversity topics into the curriculum and create an inclusive classroom atmosphere. In this case, the teacher plays a role as the main actor in changing students' attitudes towards cultural differences. Research by Lee (2020) also shows that teachers who understand the importance of multicultural education can strengthen mutual respect between students from various backgrounds.

Students' perceptions of multicultural education refer to students' views, attitudes and understanding of the concept of diversity as applied in the educational process. Students who have a positive perception of multicultural education tend to be more open and respectful of differences in culture, ethnicity, religion and other social backgrounds. According to Banks (2008:45), multicultural education provides opportunities for students to understand different perspectives, which in turn forms attitudes of tolerance and mutual respect between them. Research by Santoso and Setyawan (2021) also shows that students who are exposed to multicultural education are better able to interact with peers from diverse backgrounds, thereby creating a more harmonious learning environment.

Multicultural education in elementary schools must prioritize the principles of inclusivity, diversity and social justice. As the first place where children interact with peers from diverse cultural backgrounds, elementary schools have an important role in shaping their attitudes towards differences. Therefore, the multicultural education approach implemented in elementary schools must be adapted to the age and stage of development of students. According to Fraser (2005:113), multicultural education does not only aim to teach about diversity, but also to create an environment that supports all students to feel accepted and appreciated.

Research on teachers' and students' perceptions of multicultural education in elementary schools has received significant attention. Previous research has defined multicultural education as an approach that emphasizes appreciation and understanding of cultural, ethnic, religious, racial and ethnic diversity in the educational environment (Banks, 2016; Nieto, 2010). The importance of the teacher's role in facilitating respectful relationships between students from various backgrounds has also been emphasized (Lee, 2020). The successful implementation of multicultural education really depends on the perceptions of stakeholders, especially students and teachers.

Perception itself has been defined as a direct response to a process that is known through the five senses (KBBI, 2003: 863), the process of observing the environment using the senses which produces awareness of everything around it (Tanra, 2015), and a process that begins with sensing (Bimo Walgito, 2004: 87). Research by Santoso & Setyawan (2021) shows that students' perceptions of multicultural education are influenced by personal experiences and the social environment.

This research fills the gap of the previous researches which only focus on the multicultural education. The novelty of this research is about to find the influence of qualitative study on teacher and student perception of multicultural education in primary school level.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The first study was conducted by Peggy Shannon-Baker (2018) entitled, "A Multicultural Education Praxis: Integrating Past and Present, Living Theories, and Practice" or if translated into Indonesian the study is entitled "Praxis of Multicultural Education: Integrating Past and Present, Living Theories, and Practice" in her study Baker explains the need to reframe multicultural education as a praxis based on social justice oriented to principles, values, and practices. Using practitioner action research, Baker examines her implementation of such praxis in college courses. Baker discusses critical reflection in showing the interconnections between historical social currents and movements, theories and lived experiences, and students and their learning. Baker concludes by arguing that reframing multicultural education as a praxis can encourage more coalitions inside and outside of schools.

The second study, "Ready for Change": Pre-service Teacher Perspectives on Diversity Preparation in Rural Appalachia" was conducted by Todd McCardle and Zachary Milford (2024). The study examined how preservice teachers, or PSTs (in their own terms) in teacher education programs in rural Appalachia shared their perspectives on their preparation to work with diverse students. It examined how their lived experiences and their teacher education programs impacted their approaches to understanding and addressing the diverse needs of their students. Results illustrate the unique ways preservice teachers [re]imagined their programs to better equip future PSTs for diverse classrooms. We argue for a programmatic approach to developing a diversity-prepared teaching corps in the classroom and challenge the narrow-minded notion that rural Appalachian students are unwilling to confront the realities of diverse classrooms.

## **METHOD**

This research uses a classroom action research (PTK) approach which aims to increase understanding and application of multicultural education in elementary schools. The objects of this research are students at SD Inpres 17 Sorong Regency, consisting of various religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The research was carried out for one semester, with a total planned action time of 3 months. This research procedure consists of several stages which are detailed as follows:

- **Planning:** At this stage, researchers design learning activities that integrate multicultural values. This plan includes preparing a syllabus, lesson plans and evaluation tools that are appropriate to student characteristics.
- **Action Implementation:** Actions are carried out in the form of learning activities that actively involve students. This activity is designed to encourage students to interact and discuss cultural diversity in the classroom.
- **Observation:** During the implementation of the action, the researcher made observations to observe students' interactions, their involvement in activities, as well as changes in their attitudes and understanding of multicultural education.
- **Evaluation-Reflection:** After each cycle, the researcher carries out an evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the actions that have been implemented. Reflection is carried out to analyze the results of observations and evaluate whether learning objectives are achieved. The results of this evaluation will be used to plan further actions in the next cycle.

This process is repeated in one or several cycles, depending on the results achieved and the need for further improvements in the implementation of multicultural education in the classroom

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Teachers' Perceptions of Multicultural Education at Primary School of Inpres 17 Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua Province**

Multicultural education is an educational approach designed to promote awareness, understanding, and appreciation of cultural diversity. In the Indonesian context, multicultural education aims to reduce social conflict caused by differences in cultural identity and create an inclusive environment, where every individual can feel accepted regardless of their background. This is especially relevant in Indonesia, considering the diverse ethnic and religious groups that live side by side.

In the Indonesian education system, especially at the basic education level, multicultural education is not only about getting to know different cultures, but also about building social skills that enable individuals to live harmoniously in a pluralistic society. This education emphasizes the importance of mutual respect, understanding shared values, and strengthening social relationships amidst diversity.

Teachers' perceptions of multicultural education at Primary School of Inpres 17 can be measured through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and reviewing documents such as the curriculum used or student portfolio results. Multicultural education at Primary School of Inpres 17 Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua Province, is seen as a very important approach by teachers. In interviews conducted with several teachers at the school, it was revealed that they realized that Sorong Regency is an area rich in cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. Therefore, multicultural education is considered as a means of promoting tolerance, mutual respect, and intercultural understanding among students. Multicultural education in Indonesia, especially in the Southwest Papua region, has a very important role in building understanding and appreciation for existing cultural diversity. Indonesia is known as a country rich in diversity, both in terms of ethnicity, religion, language and customs. Therefore, multicultural education is a basic need to instill the values of tolerance, mutual respect and maintaining harmony between people from an early age.

The teachers stated that multicultural education not only serves to introduce students to various existing cultures, but also to build character and positive attitudes in students. This shows that the teachers at Primary School of Inpres 17 have a high awareness of the importance of multicultural education in the social context around them.

Southwest Papua, as a region rich in cultural diversity, is a very relevant place for implementing multicultural education. This province is inhabited by various tribes with different languages, customs and social systems. Apart from that, Southwest Papua also has a population with diverse religious backgrounds, which further emphasizes the importance of teaching multicultural values in elementary schools. However, although teachers have positive perceptions of multicultural education, they also face several challenges in its implementation. Some teachers complain about the lack of resources and teaching materials that support multicultural education. In addition, teachers also emphasized the importance of training and professional development to increase their understanding of multicultural education. They hope to take part in workshops or seminars that can give them better skills and knowledge in teaching multicultural values to students. Multicultural education at Primary School of Inpres 17 Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua Province, is a very important approach in the context of cultural diversity in Indonesia. As according to Banks (2008:79), teachers' perceptions of multicultural education are influenced by various factors, including personal factors, life experiences, and the professional training they receive.

According to (Rahman, 2024), improving teachers' skills through training and institutional support is a strategic way to ensure that student leadership development in schools is more effective and adaptable to changes in educational technology.

In interviews conducted with several teachers at Primary School of Inpres 17, it was revealed that those who have diverse educational backgrounds and life experiences tend to have a more positive view of multicultural education. On the other hand, some teachers who lack experience in dealing with cultural diversity express doubts about the effectiveness of multicultural education. This suggests that a lack of experience and professional training can hinder understanding and acceptance of multicultural education. Furthermore, the professional training received by teachers also plays an important role in shaping their perceptions. Teachers who have attended training on multicultural education feel more prepared and confident in implementing this approach in the classroom. They realize that multicultural education not only improves the quality of learning, but also helps create an inclusive and harmonious environment in schools.

Overall, teachers' perceptions of multicultural education at Primary School of Inpres 17 Sorong Regency show that they realize the importance of this approach in creating an inclusive and harmonious

learning environment. Despite the challenges faced, the teachers' commitment to implementing multicultural education remains high, and they hope to obtain better support from the school and government to realize this goal. Apart from that, teachers' perceptions of multicultural education are also greatly influenced by personal experiences, cultural backgrounds, and the training they receive. Therefore, it is important for schools and the government to provide adequate training and support teachers in understanding and implementing multicultural education, so that they can improve the quality of education and create a more tolerant and respectful society.

## **2. Student Perceptions of Multicultural Education at Primary School of Inpres 17 Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua Province**

As part of efforts to build awareness of cultural diversity, multicultural education not only needs to be implemented from the teacher's perspective, but also from the student's perspective. Students are the ones who will feel the direct impact of multicultural education in their daily lives, both at school and in society.

At Primary School of Inpres 17, Sorong Regency, multicultural education plays an important role in introducing students to the concept of diversity around them, especially because the Southwest Papua region is known for its cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. Therefore, it is important to know how students perceive multicultural education, because they are the next generation who will carry these values into the future. Through multicultural education, it is hoped that students can grow into individuals who are open, tolerant and appreciate the cultural diversity that exists in Indonesia, especially in the Southwest Papua region.

Most students at Primary School of Inpres 17 show a positive understanding of multicultural education. They understand that cultural diversity is something that is important to appreciate and maintain. According to several students, multicultural education teaches them to get to know friends who come from different cultural backgrounds, whether in terms of ethnicity, religion or language. Students realize that this diversity provides its own richness for their life together at school. They explained that by getting to know other cultures, they could broaden their horizons and enrich their life experiences. In terms of implementing multicultural education, students at Primary School of Inpres 17 admitted that they had a lot of experiences that taught them about cultural diversity. For example, through learning materials that include folklore from various tribes in Papua and Indonesia, students are invited to understand various habits, customs and ways of life of people from various cultures.

Several students also expressed that they enjoyed activities involving traditional culture, such as getting to know traditional dances or listening to regional songs from various tribes. In this way, students feel closer to other cultures and appreciate their differences more. However, although many students benefit from this learning, there are also those who feel that learning about other cultures is not in-depth enough. Some students feel that they only know the surface of other cultures and wish they could learn more about the traditions and daily life of people outside their tribe.

Multicultural education at Primary School of Inpres 17 also has a significant impact on student attitudes and behavior. Many students claim to be more open to differences after participating in this learning. They no longer feel afraid or awkward about interacting with friends who come from different cultural backgrounds. For example, some students expressed that they felt more comfortable talking to friends of a different religion or ethnicity, because they better understood and appreciated these differences. However, some students also admitted that even though they knew about the importance of tolerance, there were still challenges in implementing it in everyday life. One factor that influences this is the lack of opportunities to interact directly with friends from other ethnicities or religions outside school hours. Therefore, students hope that activities that involve more intercultural interactions can be carried out more often at school, so that they can better understand and experience firsthand the importance of diversity in their lives.

Several factors influence how students view multicultural education in schools. One of the main factors is family and community background. Students who come from families with values that are open to diversity tend to have more positive perceptions of multicultural education. They are used to interacting with various cultures outside the school environment, so it is easier for them to understand and accept the concept of multiculturalism. In addition, students' personal experiences also play an important role in shaping their perceptions. Students who have friends from different cultural backgrounds outside of school, or who frequently interact with diverse cultures in everyday life, tend to have a deeper understanding of multiculturalism. Students like this not only understand theoretically, but also experience directly the benefits of cultural diversity in their lives.

The application of inclusive learning methods is also an important factor in shaping student perceptions. Learning that involves interaction between students with different cultural backgrounds, such as group projects involving students from various ethnic groups or cultural activities that invite

active student participation, is very helpful in strengthening students' understanding of multicultural education. Overall, students' perceptions of multicultural education at Primary School of Inpres 17 Sorong Regency tend to be positive. Students understand that cultural diversity is a wealth that needs to be appreciated and maintained.

Multicultural education at Primary School of Inpres 17 not only provides knowledge about cultural diversity, but also forms attitudes of tolerance and mutual respect among students. By continuing to develop multicultural education that is more holistic and applicable, it is hoped that students can grow into individuals who respect differences and contribute to the creation of a harmonious and inclusive society.

### **3. The Influence of Multicultural Education on Social Interaction between Students at SD Inpres 17 Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua Province**

Multicultural education plays a very important role in shaping social dynamics in the school environment, especially in the context of cultural diversity in Indonesia, especially in the Southwest Papua region. SD Inpres 17 Sorong Regency, which is located in an area with ethnic, religious and cultural diversity, has its own challenges in creating an inclusive and harmonious environment. One of the main goals of multicultural education at this school is to introduce students to the importance of tolerance and mutual respect between individuals from various cultural backgrounds. In this context, multicultural education is expected to improve and enrich social interactions between students, who come from various ethnicities and religions.

Before the systematic implementation of multicultural education at Primary School of Inpres 17, social interactions between students were often influenced by limitations caused by cultural, religious and ethnic differences. Many students are more likely to group with friends who have similar cultural or religious backgrounds. This causes the formation of social clusters in the classroom which reduces opportunities for interaction between students from different backgrounds. However, after multicultural education began to be implemented, many students reported changes in the way they interacted with friends who came from different cultural backgrounds. For example, they begin to be more open in discussing or collaborating on group projects with friends who have different customs or languages. This multicultural education encourages them to share experiences, respect differences, and collaborate regardless of cultural background.

Multicultural education focuses not only on teaching diversity theory, but also on developing social skills that enable students to interact harmoniously with peers from various backgrounds. Through various class activities involving group work, culture-based projects, or discussions about the customs of tribes in Papua and Indonesia in general, students are invited to develop communication and collaboration skills with people who have different cultures. Students who previously felt awkward or were not used to interacting with friends from different ethnicities or religions are now starting to show a more open attitude. They learn to overcome the initial discomfort that may arise when interacting with people from different cultures.

Multicultural education at Primary School of Inpres 17 has been proven to have a positive influence on students' levels of empathy and tolerance towards friends from different cultural backgrounds. By studying cultural diversity, students not only learn about different tribes and customs, but also about the importance of mutual respect and maintaining harmony in life together. Apart from that, increasingly open social interaction between students helps reduce potential conflicts that may arise due to cultural differences. Students are now more able to accept the fact that differences are something natural and should be a strength, not a barrier.

Overall, multicultural education at Primary School of Inpres 17 Sorong Regency has proven to have a positive impact on social interactions between students. This education not only opens students' understanding of cultural diversity, but also improves the way they interact with friends from different backgrounds. Students become more empathetic, tolerant, and able to work together in an inclusive and harmonious environment. Even though there are challenges that need to be overcome, such as influences from outside the school, multicultural education still makes a major contribution in creating a more open and respectful social climate.

### **4. Challenges Faced in Implementing Multicultural Education at Primary School of Inpres 17 Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua Province**

The implementation of multicultural education at Primary School of Inpres 17, Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua Province, is an important step in creating an inclusive and harmonious school environment. One of the main challenges in implementing multicultural education at Primary School of Inpres 17 is the difference in the level of understanding and acceptance among teachers regarding the concept and importance of multicultural education. Some teachers may not fully understand the meaning

of multicultural education and how to integrate it effectively into the curriculum and daily learning methods. Some teachers find it difficult to adapt teaching approaches that can include students' cultural diversity, especially in local contexts that have many different ethnicities and customs. These teachers are sometimes trapped in traditional teaching patterns that are more focused on delivering academic material without considering the diverse cultural aspects of students.

Another challenge faced by Primary School of Inpres 17 in implementing multicultural education is the limited resources available. This school faces difficulties in providing more varied teaching materials that reflect the cultural diversity that exists in Indonesia, especially Papua. In addition, the lack of reference books, teaching aids that support multicultural themes, and facilities for cultural activities means that the implementation of multicultural education is limited. Several teachers and students expressed that they felt there was a lack of teaching materials that included the culture of the various tribes in Papua, so they were unable to deliver lessons in a more lively and interesting way. This makes it difficult for them to dig deeper into cultural diversity directly in learning.

Apart from the challenges that exist at school, support from the community and students' parents is also an important factor in the successful implementation of multicultural education. In some cases, there is a mismatch between the values taught at school and the values held by the students' parents. This can cause students to receive two different influences, which then confuses them. Some parents may not fully support multicultural education because they lean more towards the values of their own culture, which may conflict with other cultures. For example, some parents may feel that teaching that emphasizes diversity could threaten their local cultural identity. Therefore, it is important to build a better understanding between schools and parents, as well as providing information about the importance of multicultural education in forming a more open and tolerant generation.

Joint efforts are needed between schools, parents and the community to create an environment that supports cultural diversity. This can be done by providing better resources, expanding opportunities for interaction between students from different backgrounds, and providing training to teachers to better understand and implement multicultural education effectively. By overcoming these challenges, it is hoped that multicultural education at Primary School of Inpres 17 can develop better and have a positive impact on students in forming attitudes of mutual respect, tolerance and cooperation in a diverse society.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the data analysis that has been carried out, it can be concluded that in general, teachers at Primary School of Inpres 17 have a positive perception of multicultural education. They realize the importance of this education in creating an inclusive, safe and harmonious school environment. Teachers believe that multicultural education is very important to equip students with an understanding of the cultural diversity that exists in Indonesia, especially in Southwest Papua. However, several teachers expressed that they still needed further training in implementing multicultural education effectively in learning activities. Students at Primary School of Inpres 17 show an open and positive attitude towards multicultural education. They feel more appreciated and better understand the importance of cultural differences after participating in multicultural learning at school. Students admit that multicultural education helps them develop attitudes of tolerance and mutual respect towards friends who come from different ethnicities, religions and cultures.

According to Rahman (2024), improving teachers' skills through training and assistance from their schools is a smart way to guarantee that student leadership development in schools may be more successful and flexible when new educational technologies come out.

They feel more comfortable interacting with friends from different backgrounds and begin to see differences as wealth that must be protected. Multicultural education at Primary School of Inpres 17 has a positive influence on social interactions between students. Students who previously tended to group with friends who have the same cultural background, now interact more often with friends who come from different ethnicities or religions. This shows that multicultural education has succeeded in opening up opportunities for students to collaborate, share experiences, and understand each other's diversity. Challenges in Implementing Multicultural Education Even though multicultural education has a positive impact, there are several challenges faced in implementing it at SD Inpres 17. Some of them are differences in teachers' levels of understanding regarding the concept and application of multicultural education, limited resources and facilities that support learning activities that focus on cultural diversity, and the existence of social stereotypes that still exist among students. Another challenge is the influence of the environment outside the school, such as family cultural views which sometimes do not fully support multicultural teaching.

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