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Implementation of multicultural education to face the ERA of society 5.0 at Indonesian schools abroad

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Abstract: Entering the Society 5.0 era, characterized by rapid digital development and globalization, education must not only equip students with technological skills but also foster social and cultural understanding. The Society 5.0 initiative aims to enable individuals to adapt and thrive in an increasingly diverse and interconnected environment. The purpose of this research is to investigate the implementation of multicultural education at the Indonesian School Abroad in Kuala Lumpur (SIKL). The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis, including modules, books, and curriculum guides related to multicultural education at SIKL. Based on the study's findings, it was observed that SIKL has effectively implemented multicultural education; however, there are areas that still require improvement. The implementation of multicultural education encompasses school policy and politics, school culture and hidden curriculum, learning styles, language and dialect, community participation and input, counseling programs, assessment and testing procedures, instructional materials, formalized curriculum and courses of study, teaching styles and strategies, and the attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, and actions of school staff.

Keywords: Education, Multicultural, Society 5.0, SIKL.

1. Introduction

In the era of Society 5.0, characterized by the rapid development of the digital world and globalization, education is required not only to equip students with technological skills but also to instill social and cultural awareness, enabling them to thrive in a diverse and interconnected environment. The concept of Society 5.0 centers on humans, integrating advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things to enhance the quality of life and address various social challenges. In this era, people will live lives supported by technological advances. Therefore, improving human resource competencies is crucial for utilizing and optimizing various technological innovations [1, 2]. To realize this vision, the education system must instill the value of inclusivity, foster cross-cultural understanding, and cultivate adaptability so that students can navigate increasingly complex global dynamics [3, 4]. This also needs to be balanced with the development of 21st-century skills, which identify four key competencies required in the modern era: critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, and collaboration. These four competencies, known as the 4Cs, are fundamental to developing adaptive and innovative human resources in the 21st century [5, 6]. Multicultural awareness, efforts, and understanding are essential for effective implementation in everyday Indonesian life, thereby reducing the potential for conflict across various sectors. The concept of multiculturalism is considered an appropriate

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solution because it emphasizes cultural diversity and aligns with Indonesia's reality as a nation with ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity [7, 8].

SIKL, as a place for students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to learn, multicultural education plays a crucial role in instilling the values of harmony and mutual respect. With Indonesia's rich cultural heritage and Malaysia's integration into the ASEAN community, the school has a unique opportunity to serve as a model for cross-cultural collaboration. Multicultural education emphasizes recognizing and respecting diverse cultural identities, encouraging students to embrace pluralism, and equipping them with the skills to collaborate on global issues. Multicultural education helps students appreciate and understand the impact of cultural diversity, with the most ideal stage for its implementation being in elementary school [9]. At this stage, students are developing the basic skills that form the foundation for their understanding of cultural differences [10].

In this context, integrating multicultural education into the curriculum is not only about managing diversity at the local level, but also equipping students with the skills to become empathetic, tolerant, and critical-thinking global citizens [11]. This approach aligns with the concept of Society 5.0, which emphasizes the integration of technological advancements and humanitarian values to create a more inclusive and human-centered society. In this era, education focuses not only on technological mastery but also on developing cultural awareness and social skills, enabling individuals to adapt and contribute to an increasingly connected and complex world [12]. Therefore, this study will further examine the implementation of multicultural education at SIKL.

2. Research Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research method. This research was conducted in February 2025 at SIKL. The data analysis process was based on the theory of Miles, et al. [13] which includes the stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis of modules, books, curriculum guides, and questionnaires related to multicultural education at SIKL. The multicultural implementation questionnaire used was based on [14] opinion, namely: (1) school policies, (2) school culture and the school's hidden curriculum, (3) classroom learning styles, (4) language and dialect in the school, (5) formal curriculum and classroom subjects, (6) learning materials, (7) assessment and testing processes, (8) counseling programs, (9) school community participation, (10) teacher teaching styles and strategies, and (11) behaviors, perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of school members. The questionnaire was given to 17 teachers and staff at SIKL

Data reduction was carried out by filtering, simplifying, and organizing the raw data to make it more structured [15]. Data presentation used visual diagrams to aid in understanding emerging relationships. Drawing and verifying conclusions is done repeatedly, where researchers formulate findings based on data that has been analyzed and then verify them through triangulation or additional analysis to ensure the accuracy of the research results.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Multicultural Education

The diversity of Indonesian society, comprising various ethnicities, cultures, customs, religions, and races, makes it a multicultural society. This diversity can pose a challenge to uniting Indonesia as a strong nation amidst its diversity. To address this, multicultural education needs to be taught from an early age by instilling the values of diversity in students through the learning process [14]. Multicultural education is an approach within the education system designed to accommodate differences in culture, ethnicity, religion, and social background in the learning process. This concept emphasizes the importance of inclusivity, equality, and respect for differences, allowing students to learn in an environment that values diversity [16].

The integration of multicultural values into educational materials is a crucial step in instilling inclusivity, empathy, and understanding in an increasingly diverse society [17]. The integration of

multicultural education into the curriculum can occur through specific strategies such as embedding diversity values into each subject, selecting instructional materials that reflect multiple cultural viewpoints, and employing experiential learning methods, including cross-cultural dialogues and case study evaluations [18]. Multicultural education is not limited to the conventional curriculum but also encompasses various aspects, such as culture, history, language, and different perspectives, to create a more comprehensive and equitable learning environment.

Multicultural education focuses not only on teaching about cultural diversity but also on how multicultural values are reflected in learning materials, educational policies, and teaching methods. In this context, representation refers to how different cultural, ethnic, and social groups are treated and portrayed within the education system, including in the curriculum, textbooks, and classroom interactions [19]. Inclusive and equitable representation in multicultural education aims to ensure that diversity is recognized equally, so that every student feels valued and supported throughout their learning process. Inclusive representation in multicultural education plays a crucial role in shaping positive social identities for students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Research by Sultan, et al. [20] and Pradana, et al. [21] shows that when students see their culture represented positively in textbooks and the curriculum, they feel more valued and have a higher level of engagement in the process. Conversely, a lack of representation or bias in presentation can lead to the marginalization of certain groups, reinforce negative stereotypes, and decrease students' motivation to learn. Through multicultural education, it is hoped that openness and flexibility in understanding differences based on ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations (SARA) will be fostered, thereby maintaining national unity and preventing potential disintegration [22]. Therefore, multicultural education must ensure that the representation of various social groups is not merely symbolic but also reflects a just and diverse social reality.

3.2. Multicultural Education in Indonesia

Multiculturalism is considered an appropriate solution because it emphasizes the concept of cultural diversity, which aligns with the multinational character of Indonesian society. Given Indonesia's diverse ethnicities, religions, races, and cultures, adopting the concept of multiculturalism is imperative. According to the Statistics Indonesia (BPS) census data, the encyclopedia of ethnic groups in Indonesia, and the Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) [23] processing manual, the total number of ethnic groups in Indonesia exceeds 1,300 [24]. Regarding culture, according to the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud), 1,239 cultural works were registered as Indonesian intangible cultural heritage in 2020. This cultural heritage includes performing arts, traditions, oral expressions, customs, knowledge, crafts, and various festivals [7]. Therefore, cross-cultural understanding needs to be continuously developed in the daily lives of Indonesians to minimize the potential for conflict in various aspects of life. Bhineka Tunggal Ika is Indonesia's national motto, meaning "Different but still one." This motto reflects the diversity of cultures, religions, and ethnicities in Indonesia, serving as the foundation for implementing multicultural education. Multicultural education aims to create a harmonious society by instilling an attitude of tolerance, mutual respect, and acceptance of differences as valuable assets for the nation [25, 26].

Indonesian schools are expected to be places that strengthen unity through diversity by teaching students to appreciate it from an early age. Multicultural education based on the motto "Bhineka Tunggal Ika" (Unity in Diversity) can help reduce social conflict and increase awareness and appreciation of diversity among students. This education also plays a role in developing the character of a younger generation that is more inclusive, tolerant, and has a broader understanding of differences [27]. Thus, "Bhineka Tunggal Ika" is not just a slogan but also a key principle in building a more just and inclusive education system in Indonesia.

3.3. Multicultural Education in the Society 5.0 Era

The Society 5.0 era is seen as a further development of the previous era, Society 4.0, or the digital industrial era [2, 4, 28]. Developed in Japan, this era aims to optimize the role of technology while not neglecting human involvement in various aspects of human life. The Industrial Revolution 4.0 and Society 5.0 represent significant advancements in technology and information. While the Industrial Revolution 4.0 focused on digitalization and automation, Society 5.0 seeks to create a balance between technological advancement and human life by utilizing technology as a solution to various social problems [29]. This concept integrates the physical and digital worlds through the use of artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), robotics, and big data, aiming to enhance the quality of human life. Society 5.0 is a concept of a society capable of addressing various social challenges and problems by utilizing innovations developed in the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era. This concept is designed to build a more advanced and sustainable society, considering social, economic, and environmental aspects [30]. This development poses a unique challenge for the world of education and all levels of society, both in urban and rural areas. Society 5.0 itself can be understood as a concept of a human-centered society supported by advanced technology.

In the upcoming Society 5.0 era, artificial intelligence and machine learning will process vast amounts of data generated via the internet across various aspects of daily life. This data will be converted into new knowledge that can be stored or utilized to enhance individual capacity, thereby opening up opportunities for human development [31]. Multicultural education in the Society 5.0 era plays a transformative role by combining the values of inclusivity and diversity with the use of advanced technology. The Society 5.0 concept, which integrates the digital world and the physical environment, focuses on human-centered innovation and aims to solve various social challenges through technological advancement. The Society 5.0 concept is a social idea that positions technology as a tool to support individual needs [32]. This approach is expected to create new value by narrowing the technological gap between society and the economic sector. In education, Society 5.0 is transforming learning methods by emphasizing technology-based personalized education. With the support of artificial intelligence and big data, the learning process becomes more interactive and adapts to the individual needs of each student. Furthermore, the use of technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) is increasing, resulting in more immersive and innovative learning experiences.

In the world of education, Society 5.0 presents a major shift in learning methods. Education in the Society 5.0 era is transforming by integrating advanced technology to increase effectiveness and accessibility. The learning process is no longer confined to the physical classroom but has evolved to become more flexible with the support of technology. Artificial intelligence, virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) enable more interactive and immersive learning experiences. Furthermore, the use of big data and artificial intelligence analysis allows the education system to adapt to the needs and learning styles of each student. In the Society 5.0 era, human resources are needed who can develop creativity, critical thinking, and innovation to face the various challenges of the future [33]. The Society 5.0 concept also emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning, where individuals can continuously improve their skills as technology advances. With advances in digital connectivity, students can access high-quality materials, learn from global sources, and collaborate with students from various countries at any time and from anywhere. However, the implementation of Society 5.0 in education still faces challenges, such as disparities in access to technology, particularly in remote areas or developing countries. Furthermore, the readiness of educators is a crucial factor, as not all teachers possess the necessary skills to adopt technology-based learning methods.

3.4. Multicultural Education at SIKL

SIKL is an Indonesian educational institution located in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, intended for Indonesian citizens residing there. Officially established on July 10, 1969, the school continues to emphasize the importance of character education for its students, despite the rapid advancement of technology. This is crucial, given that they are in a foreign country and must uphold Indonesia's

reputation. Character education at the school is implemented through various activities that instill values such as honesty, intelligence, responsibility, courage, self-confidence, discipline, hard work, curiosity, a love of knowledge, and an appreciation for work and diversity, as well as nationalism and patriotism. This achievement is due to the learning system implemented at SIKL, which is always ready to adapt to changing times. With an educational approach that is responsive to advances in science and technology, SIKL has successfully maintained academically recognized quality standards. The community at SIKL consists of students from diverse cultural backgrounds, including teachers, students, and educational staff. The students and school community come from various regions in Indonesia, representing different ethnicities, races, and religions. According to school data, the ethnic composition of SIKL includes Javanese (27%), Sundanese (16%), Betawi (10%), Acehnese (9%), Batak (14%), Minangkabau (15%), Toraja (1%), Malay (4%), and Madurese (2%), while the remaining ethnicities are Bugis, Dayak, Balinese, and Sumbawa.

Students and school community members living in Malaysia interact with local communities with diverse cultures. Malay culture is dominant in the students' neighborhood, but in addition to native Malaysian Malay culture, there are also influences from Indian and Arabic cultures. This diversity reflects the diverse cultural backgrounds of the students and school community at SIKL, creating a multicultural environment rich in cultural values.

Concerning multicultural education, the SIKL (School of Education and Culture) reflects the implementation of ethnic, cultural, and gender diversity. Ethnic, cultural, and gender diversity play a crucial role in education. Good implementation will create an inclusive learning environment where every student feels valued and has an equal opportunity to develop. Based on collected data, school policies adequately reflect the principle of diversity (90%). Examples of implementation include schools that accept students from various ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds without discrimination, demonstrating a true commitment to inclusivity. An inclusive school culture respects and accepts every individual, regardless of their background [21, 34, 35]. In this regard, schools strive to create an environment that supports ethnic and cultural diversity. Celebrating various holidays from diverse cultures is concrete evidence of this effort. In addition to displaying traditional attire, schools also encourage students to discuss the role of society from various perspectives, reflecting the deeper meaning of diversity.

Schools implement regulations that emphasize respect for differences and instill values of tolerance. The culture at SIKL reflects ethnic and cultural diversity through various annual activities, such as the Culture Day celebration, which showcases traditional clothing from ethnic groups in Indonesia and Malaysia. Furthermore, the arts and music program introduces regional dances and traditional musical instruments, enhancing students' understanding of the richness of their culture. In daily life, the values of tolerance and respect for diversity are taught through inclusive religious discussions and activities. The implementation of multicultural education can also increase students' empathy for others with different circumstances and backgrounds. This is supported by Dolby [36] findings that the implementation of multicultural education can increase students' empathy for one another

As an institution located overseas, SIKL not only uses Indonesian as the language of instruction but also values the use of regional languages and Malay in daily interactions. Students are allowed to discuss in their mother tongue within a multicultural context, while Indonesian and literature lessons integrate literary works from various regions. Furthermore, the teaching of foreign languages, such as English, supports global needs and enhances linguistic diversity within the school.

Parental involvement in the implementation of multicultural education is evident in collaborative cultural projects assigned to students, such as a project introducing traditional foods from students' regions, which are then showcased at Market Day or a P5 project. In addition to collaborative projects, parents are also involved in celebrations of important holidays with cultural nuances, such as the celebration of Batik Day, where students wear batik from their respective regions, or during Independence Day, students and school staff wear traditional attire from their respective regions.

Research conducted by Izza [37] found that the role of parents in supporting multicultural education is significant in the Society 5.0 era

In terms of learning materials and media, SIKL ensures that teaching materials reflect diversity by including textbooks that feature characters and stories from various Indonesian cultures. Attention to gender representation is also evident in the reading materials and examples of social roles provided to students. The school curriculum encompasses local and global history and culture to broaden students' understanding of the world's cultural diversity. While various initiatives have been implemented, there are still areas for improvement, such as teacher training to teach more inclusively, particularly regarding gender and social issues. The school could also provide more opportunities for students to express their cultural identities through special projects or activities, and strengthen collaboration with cross-cultural communities in Malaysia. Research conducted by Villegas [38] and Sultan, et al. [20] enhances this finding, that the appropriate use of materials and media can increase diversity values in students.

Based on the data obtained, the school curriculum has integrated multicultural and multi-ethnic elements with an implementation rate of 90%. This indicates that the curriculum is designed to help students understand various situations, events, and concepts related to ethnic and cultural diversity within the school environment [39]. Furthermore, the counseling program implemented also reflects this diversity, indicating that guidance and mentoring services take into account differences in backgrounds and individual needs. Overall, the school climate demonstrates a positive response to racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity, reflecting an inclusive environment that supports values of tolerance and respect for differences.

CELEBRATION OF SPECIAL DAYS OF EVERY ETHNIC & CULTURAL DIVERSY

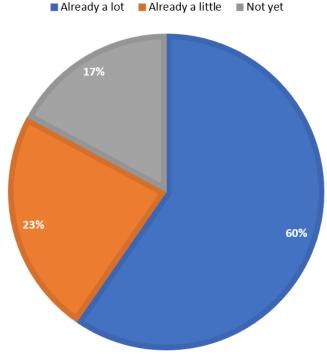


Figure 1. Celebration of Special Days.

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Based on the data displayed in Figure 1, it can be seen that Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur has observed special days as part of its multicultural education. These celebrations are held to foster tolerance, respect for diversity, and enhance students' understanding of the traditions and customs of diverse community groups. These activities serve to strengthen cultural identity, encourage interaction and cooperation among students, while also teaching universal values such as empathy and unity. Examples include Indonesian Independence Day celebrations, which feature flag ceremonies and various traditional competitions, while Kartini Day is celebrated with traditional fashion shows and speech competitions. Furthermore, on National Batik Day, students participate in activities such as wearing batik and creating their own batik creations.

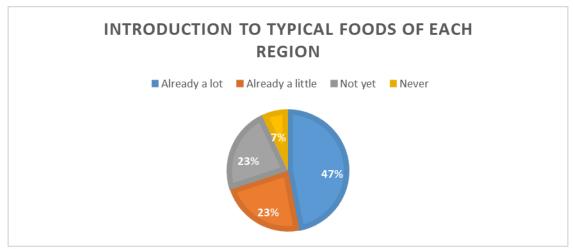


Figure 2. Introduction to Traditional Foods.

Based on the pie chart in the figure, data on the introduction of regional traditional foods indicates that nearly half of the programs have been implemented successfully. However, although most programs have been implemented, approximately 30% remain unimplemented or lack a structured program, requiring improvement in their implementation. One possible implementation approach is to teach the history and uniqueness of traditional foods in school subjects, such as introducing rendang from West Sumatra or pempek from Palembang. Using the right learning approach can strengthen the implementation of multicultural education. This is supported by Banks and Banks [39], Gibson [40] and Acar-Ciftci [41] findings that using the right approach influences the success of multicultural education.

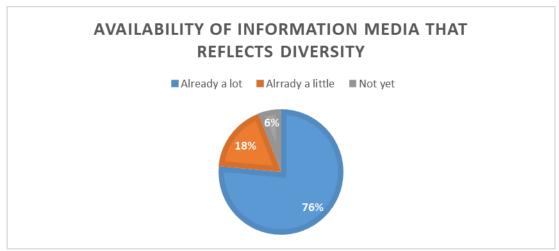


Figure 3. Availability of Information Media.

The availability of information media that reflects diversity in SIKL is illustrated in Figure 3. Various media, such as bulletin boards, wall magazines, and extracurricular activities, already reflect ethnic and cultural diversity. Information media and extracurricular activities in schools reflect ethnic and cultural diversity if they include information about celebrations of various ethnic groups' holidays, announcements of cultural events, and multicultural education materials. Meanwhile, extracurricular activities such as regional dances, traditional music, and cultural studies clubs demonstrate inclusivity, unlike schools that focus solely on general activities like sports and science without incorporating cultural elements. If these aspects represent diversity, then the school can be said to have implemented the value of inclusivity. This is supported by the findings of Koc-Damgaci and Aydin [42], Yawisah, et al. [43] and Surahman, et al. [44] the use of various media can optimize the implementation of multicultural education.

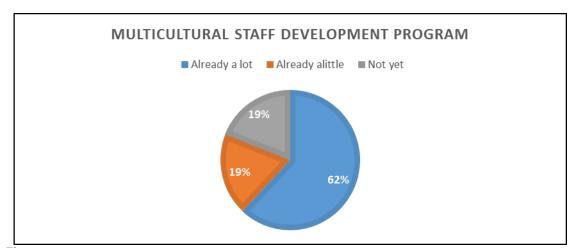


Figure 4. Monitoring of Multicultural Education.

Based on the diagram above, 59% of respondents stated that monitoring of curriculum implementation has been conducted widely, while 23% stated that it has been conducted in several aspects. Meanwhile, 18% of respondents stated that monitoring of curriculum implementation has not

been implemented. Overall, it can be concluded that the multicultural education monitoring program has been running quite well. The scope of multicultural education monitoring in 23% of schools is still limited. This could mean that evaluations are only conducted on certain aspects or do not cover all grade levels and teaching staff. This incomplete monitoring may be due to limited resources or a lack of awareness of the importance of multicultural education. This evaluation is an important point, according to Banks and Banks [39] which can maximize the implementation of multicultural education.

4. Conclusion

Multicultural education is an approach in the education system that aims to accommodate cultural, ethnic, religious, and social diversity in the teaching and learning process. This approach emphasizes the importance of inclusivity, equality, and respect for differences. Meanwhile, the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and Society 5.0 reflect rapid developments in the fields of technology and information. The Industrial Revolution 4.0 focuses on digitalization and automation in various aspects of life, while Society 5.0 seeks to create a balance between technological progress and humanitarian aspects by utilizing technology as a solution to overcome multiple social challenges. Based on the study's results, it can be concluded that the Indonesian School of Kuala Lumpur has effectively implemented multicultural education to address the era of Society 5.0. In the era of Society 5.0, which prioritizes the balance between technology and humanitarian values, multicultural education has a crucial role in shaping a generation that is not only proficient in technology but also has a deep understanding of diversity and inclusivity.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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