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STUDENT’S CHARACTER BUILDING IN THE PERSPECTIVES OF KKNI-BASED CURRICULUM AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

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Abstract: The Directorate of Higher Education has stipulated that the significance of student’s character building lies on the integration of the domain of science, knowledge and competence. This integration is perceived as students’ life skills in order to address the issues of plurality of culture, religion, gender and social class in the multicultural society. This paper attempts to examine how student’s character building is framed in KKNI-based Curriculum in the light of multicultural education. This is significant as the students’ higher order of thinking skills, especially in analysing multicultural phenomena in the learning process, reflect students’ competences and character building as the Indonesian national qualification framework (KKNI-based curriculum) demanded. Integrating the principles of multicultural education with KKNI-based Curriculum potentially enhance students’ life skills, especially in the form of student’s multicultural awareness.

Keywords: Character building, life skills, multicultural education

Introduction
KKNI-based Curriculum

*Kerangka Kualifikasi Nasional Indonesia* (KKNI) or Indonesian Qualification Framework-based curriculum and competence-based curriculum are two interchangeable terms (Dikti, 2011). The core element of KKNI-based curriculum lies on the teaching learning praxis that corresponds with the needs and demands of the stakeholders/market. The Directorate of Higher Education in 2011 perceived this curriculum as the reflection of the embodiment of quality as well as the nation’s identity as it also represents the parallelism of strata competence qualification in education and industries. The notion of identity is perceived not merely as representing the mental process of identifying and
attributing (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004), but also signifies the concept of difference (Woodward, 1997). In this lens, discussing the character building in the light of the national identity means putting the framework of how the education system (in this case KKN1-based curriculum) operates as the systemic tool in order to build student's character as the representation of the education quality as part of national identity – the signature of Indonesian educational system. From this perspective, the center point of learning objective in KKN1-based curriculum lies on the synthesis of science, knowledge and competence achieved through structured learning process (Dikti, 2011).

The diagram below illustrates the spheres and integration of science, knowledge, practical knowledge (know-how), skills, affection and competence domains.

![Diagram showing the integration of science, knowledge, skills, and competence](image)

*Source: adapted from Dikti, 2011*

The central element in the learning objective lies on the affective domain, i.e. shaping students' attitudes towards real-life practices. As discussed earlier, these attitudes are derived from the integration of science, knowledge, and competence. How science as the methodological system shapes student's knowledge (theories and practices in one discipline) is seen as one of the important components in the learning objective. Student's competence is perceived as the synthesis of the psychomotoric aspects (manual dexterity, method, instrument, material are achieved through standardized training based on (practical) knowledge) and the practical knowledge (the mastery of theories and skills about methodology and technical skills). In this perspective, student's competence is seen as the accumulation of one's abilities in order to conduct standardized work. The notion of competence is positioned in the same sphere as the learning objective. This paper examines how student's character building (as a set of attitudes) is framed in KKN1-based Curriculum in the perspective of multicultural education.
Pancasila and Multiculturalism

The law no. 20/2003 Article 4 about national education system stipulated that multicultural education has been set as an education paradigm in realizing democratic and non-discriminating education which upholds human rights, religiosity, culturalism and pluralism (Rahmad, 2008). In relation to the aforementioned law and the set of (students') attitudes as the core element in KKNI-based curriculum, the implementation of educational system in Indonesia is framed parallel to state (Pancasila)'s ideological/affective values. The values are as follows:

- Belief in One Almighty God;
- Having good moral conduct, ethics and personality in accomplishing the works;
- Nationalism and world peace;
- Having social sensitivity and care towards the society and environment;
- Appreciate multiculturalism, different various perspectives, beliefs, religions;
- Upholding law enforcement;
- Putting nation interest above the individual's.

(Dikti, 2011)

Within the light of these values, shaping students' attitudes in the framework of the state ideology needs the teaching and learning of multicultural education. Multiculturalism and multicultural education are two inter-related concepts that cannot be detached from one another. The concept of multicultural education stems from multiculturalism – "a normative doctrine advancing a specific view on how we should respond to cultural diversity, and entailing significant regulatory policy recommendations" (Parekh, 1997, p. 169) itself. Budianta (in Leiliyanti, 2009, pp. 1-2) noted the historical background of how the concept of multiculturalism developed from the cultural concepts of melting pot, salad bowl, pluralism and multiculturalism, especially in U.S.A. Budianta (2003, pp. 3-10) argued that this doctrine derived from U.S. historical background at the time when the Anglo-Saxon came to the continent and labelled the natives as Indian. This labeling marked the discriminating act as the name itself connotes heathen. The Anglo-Saxon perceived the natives' belief on the Gods and Nature as endangering the life of Anglo-Saxon religion-based community. The concept of melting pot was introduced to unite various different cultures of the immigrants. This concept failed to operate as the melting different cultures into one entity was a utopianism notion. The concept of Salad Bowl was designed to replace the melting pot, but met its failure. Putting different cultural background and perspectives into one nationalist cultural framework – U.S. Culture – was seen as an artificial accommodating concept. The term pluralism was then used to segregate obscure boundary between public sphere with the private one. This also failed to represent the cultural diversity. Multiculturalism is afterwards positioned as a felicitous term as well as doctrine representing cultural equality.
Multicultural Education

The concept of multicultural education was first introduced as a response to the feminist movement in 1960. The feminists criticized gender inequality in education and works. In alignment with the movement, James A. Banks, the pioneer of multiculturalism in the 1980s demonstrated clear and lucid account on the significance of multicultural education. He investigated school as social institution from the perspective of multiculturalism (Muhammad, 2004). Banks (1991) examined school policy, teachers’ attitude and work ethics, learning materials, teaching methods, assessment methods, and counseling. Banks (1993, 1994 in Grafura, 2007) also develop five dimensions in multicultural education:

1. Content integration
   The integration of learning materials in the curriculum is conducted by employing various teaching and learning methods.

2. Knowledge integration
   Understanding the multicultural perspectives from various disciplines.

3. Prejudice reduction
   Students’ positive attitudes about cultural differences can also be shaped by developing teaching and learning materials.

4. Equitable pedagogy = cooperative learning

5. Empowering school culture and social structure
   Utilizing students’ multicultures in order to develop school culture.

In line with Banks, Gorski (2001) argues that there are two learning models in multicultural education. The first model concentrates on the material and textbook revisions. The second one focuses not only on the material revision, but more importantly also on education system, i.e. in the form of affirmative action (students’ and teachers’ selection process, workshops and trainings). These two models can be implemented based on two approaches: single group studies and multi perspectives approach. In the single group studies, students learn one specific group deeply from various perspectives. Whilst in the multi perspectives approach, the learning model concentrates on the discussion of one specific issue by various group of students.

In the same perspective as Banks and Gorski, Nieto (1992) defined multicultural education as an anti-racist education which highlights skills and basic knowledge of world citizen/students – a critical education that can penetrate all educational aspects as it develops attitudes, knowledge and skills which enable students to work for social justice and building students’ life skills in making choices for their social actions. The teaching and learning process concentrates on the significance of culture as the key variable that determines student’s achievement. Thus, Parekh (1997) summed up that multicultural education is a free-biased education. i.e. free from monolithic culture as it explores
different cultural perspectives in the purpose of making students sensitive towards the plurality of life styles.

Multicultural Education in Indonesia

Budianta (2003) argues that the discourse of multiculturalism emerged in Indonesia in the beginning of the Reform era in the form of ideological deconstruction after the downfall of Soeharto’s centralistic government. The notion of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (diversity in unity) is still seen as relevant and ideal representation of Indonesian multicultural society. In its development the centralistic notion in Soeharto’s government were deconstructed. Decentralisation in the form of regional autonomy given to the provincial government leads not only to the empowerment of regional potentials but also the overt emergence of primordialism (mono-culture). This primordial notion can overtly be seen in, for instance, A.F. Saifuddin’s (2004) research. He found that the gap in education quality between Java and ‘Outer’ Islands was reinforced by teachers’ homogeneous assumption, especially the ones coming from Java, in thirty schools in five provinces (Sulawesi Tengah, Sulawesi Utara, Sulawesi Tenggara, Kalimantan Timur, dan Kalimantan Selatan) in 2002. These teachers considered that students from Java has higher intelligence than those from ‘Outer’ Islands.

Other related research was conducted by Agustian, et.al. (2006). They conducted multicultural-based action research at four public schools and four private schools. Students were given pre-test about “anak dalam suku Jambi” and children in Tual, a refugee camp, Moluccas. They found that 99% of the students did not have sufficient knowledge about Indonesian multicultural society. They claimed that after certain treatments regarding multicultural perspectives about “anak dalam suku Jambi” and children in Tual, a refugee camp, Moluccas, from buku seri pustaka anak nusantara (PAN), students’ knowledge of this multicultural issue enhanced significantly.

In a similar light with Agustin, et.al. and A.F. Saifuddin, Danoebroto (2012) conducted a research in Mathematics learning by integrating Banks’ five dimensions in multicultural education. Danoebroto used batik, anti-racist forms of stories and statistical data about the community to teach geometry and algebra. He found that using cooperative learning based on multicultural education principles, students’ competence in Mathematics and their life skills enhanced optimally.

In the field of Indonesian literature, Leiliyanti (2009) developed a teaching and learning model of one of Pramoedya Ananta Toer’s canons, Gadis Pantai, based on KTSP (Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan) and multicultural education principles. She integrated the multicultural education principles with the cooperative learning and problem-based learning (PBL) in the framework of KTSP.
Conclusions

Multicultural education as a paradigm is greatly useful for building the cohesiveness, solidarity, intimacy among ethnic groups, race, religion, and culture. This educational model cultivates students’ as well as teachers’ attitudes in appreciating differences, other cultures, religions and beliefs without making rush and poor judgment. This will enhance, especially students’ life skills. Other important points are that students’ competence in problem solving, critical thinking, making conflict resolution can be sharpened by integrating the teaching learning materials, methods, techniques, process into products.

References


