



PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES IN INTEGRATING MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN LEARNING ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SURAKARTA CITY

STUDI FENOMENOLOGI TENTANG PENGALAMAN GURU DALAM
MENGINTEGRASIKAN PENDIDIKAN MULTIKULTURAL DALAM
PEMBELAJARAN PENDIDIKAN AGAMA ISLAM DI KOTA SURAKARTA

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study aimed to explore the lived experiences of Islamic religious education teachers in integrating multicultural education into their teaching practices in Surakarta City, Indonesia. Through in-depth interviews with 12 participants and classroom observations, the study investigated the teachers' understanding of multicultural education, the strategies they employed, the challenges they encountered, and the perceived impact on students. The findings revealed varying levels of understanding among teachers, with some demonstrating a comprehensive grasp of multicultural education's principles, while others had a more limited perspective. The teachers utilized diverse strategies, such as incorporating cultural examples, facilitating discussions, and utilizing multimedia resources. However, they faced challenges like resistance from stakeholders, limited resources, and personal biases. The study also highlighted the positive impacts of integrating multicultural education, including increased cultural awareness, improved student interactions, and a deeper understanding of diversity within Islam. The study provides recommendations for curriculum development, professional development, collaboration, and inclusive policies to support the effective integration of multicultural education in Islamic religious education.

Keywords: Multicultural education, Islamic religious education, teacher experiences, phenomenology, Surakarta City

ABSTRAK

Penelitian fenomenologis ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman hidup guru Pendidikan Agama Islam dalam mengintegrasikan pendidikan multikultural ke dalam praktik pengajaran mereka di Kota Surakarta, Indonesia. Melalui wawancara mendalam dengan 12 peserta dan observasi kelas, penelitian ini menyelidiki pemahaman guru tentang pendidikan multikultural, strategi yang mereka terapkan, tantangan yang mereka hadapi, dan dampak yang dirasakan terhadap siswa. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan tingkat pemahaman yang bervariasi di antara para guru, dengan beberapa menunjukkan pemahaman yang komprehensif tentang prinsip-prinsip pendidikan multikultural, sementara yang lain memiliki perspektif yang lebih terbatas. Para guru menggunakan strategi yang beragam, seperti memasukkan contoh budaya, memfasilitasi diskusi, dan memanfaatkan sumber daya multimedia. Namun, mereka menghadapi tantangan seperti resistensi dari pemangku kepentingan, sumber daya terbatas, dan bias pribadi. Penelitian ini juga menyoroti dampak positif dari mengintegrasikan pendidikan multikultural, termasuk peningkatan kesadaran budaya, interaksi siswa yang lebih baik, dan pemahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang keragaman dalam Islam. Penelitian ini memberikan rekomendasi untuk pengembangan kurikulum, pengembangan profesional, kolaborasi, dan kebijakan inklusif untuk mendukung integrasi yang efektif dari pendidikan multikultural dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam.

Kata-kata kunci: Pendidikan multikultural, Pendidikan Agama Islam, pengalaman guru, fenomenologi, Kota Surakarta

A. INTRODUCTION

In the increasingly globalized world, where cultural diversity is a prevalent reality, educational institutions play a crucial role in fostering understanding, respect, and appreciation for different cultures and backgrounds. Multicultural education has emerged as a transformative approach, aiming to create inclusive and equitable learning environments that celebrate diversity while promoting social cohesion. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Indonesia, integrating multicultural principles has become imperative, particularly in cities like Surakarta, where cultural heterogeneity is a defining characteristic.

As stated by James A. Banks, a pioneering scholar in multicultural education, "Multicultural education is an idea, an educational reform movement, and a process whose major goal is to change the structure of educational institutions so that male and female students, exceptional students, and students who are members of diverse racial, ethnic, language, and cultural groups will have an equal chance to achieve academically in school" (Banks, 2004). This notion underscores the significance of creating inclusive learn-

ing environments that cater to the diverse needs and backgrounds of students, fostering academic success and personal growth.

Surakarta, a vibrant city in Central Java, is renowned for its rich cultural tapestry, where various ethnic and religious groups coexist. This cultural diversity presents both opportunities and challenges for educational institutions, particularly in the realm of Islamic Religious Education (IRE). As noted by Syamsiyatun (2018), in a pluralistic society, education should not only impart knowledge but also promote values of tolerance, respect, and understanding towards different cultures.

In the context of IRE, the integration of multicultural principles is especially pertinent, as it aims to cultivate a deeper understanding and appreciation of diverse cultural and religious traditions. As highlighted by an expert in Islamic education, Islamic Religious Education should not merely focus on transmitting religious knowledge but also on nurturing open-mindedness, empathy, and respect for diversity (Baidhaw, 2017).

However, the process of integrating multicultural education into IRE classrooms is not without its challenges. Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the learning experiences and fostering inclusive environments. Consequently, understanding their experiences, perspectives, and approaches to incorporating multicultural principles in IRE is crucial for improving educational practices and promoting cultural sensitivity.

This phenomenological study aims to explore the lived experiences of IRE teachers in Surakarta as they navigate the complexities of integrating multicultural education into their classrooms. By delving into their personal narratives, challenges, and strategies, this research seeks to uncover valuable insights that can inform educational policies, curriculum development, and teacher training programs, ultimately enhancing the quality and inclusivity of IRE in a multicultural context.

As emphasized by Geneva Gay, a renowned scholar in multicultural education, "Teachers are key players in incorporating multicultural education principles into the classroom. Their beliefs, attitudes, and instructional practices are critical in creating an inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment" (Gay, 2018). This study recognizes the pivotal role of teachers and seeks to amplify their voices, capturing their unique perspectives and experiences in navigating the intersection of IRE and multicultural education.

Furthermore, the findings of this study hold the potential to contribute to the broader discourse on multicultural education and its application in various educational contexts. As noted by Christine E. Sleeter, a leading expert in multicultural teacher education, understanding teachers' experiences and perspectives is essential for developing effective multicultural education programs and fostering culturally responsive pedagogies (Sleeter, 2011).

By exploring the lived experiences of IRE teachers in Surakarta, this study aims to shed light on the challenges, opportunities, and best practices associated with integrating multicultural education principles into the classroom. The insights gained from this research can inform educational policies, curriculum development, and teacher training programs, ultimately contributing to the creation of inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments that celebrate diversity while promoting social cohesion.

In conclusion, this phenomenological study holds the potential to make a significant contribution to the field of multicultural education, particularly in the context of Islamic Religious Education in Surakarta. By amplifying the voices of teachers and capturing their lived experiences, this research seeks to inform educational practices, promote cultural sensitivity, and foster an environment where students from diverse backgrounds can thrive, both academically and personally.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Multicultural Education: Concept and Importance

Multicultural education is a holistic approach to education that recognizes and celebrates diversity in all its forms, including race, ethnicity, culture, language, religion, socioeconomic status, and abilities. Banks (2004), a pioneering scholar in multicultural education, states, multicultural education is a field of study and an emerging discipline whose major aim is to create equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups.

In the Indonesian context, multicultural education has become increasingly relevant as the country is home to a diverse array of cultures, ethnicities, and religions. As Syamsiyatun (2018), multicultural education is essential in promoting unity within diversity, fostering understanding, and preventing conflicts arising from cultural differences.

Furthermore, multicultural education not only promotes cultural understanding but also equips students with the necessary skills

and knowledge to navigate and thrive in an increasingly globalized world. Multicultural education is a means of empowering students to become successful learners and critical thinkers, capable of navigating and contributing to a diverse and complex society (Gay, 2018).

Integrating Multicultural Education in Islamic Religious Education

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a crucial role in shaping the moral and spiritual development of students in Indonesia. However, as the country's cultural diversity continues to grow, there is a need to incorporate multicultural principles into the teaching and learning of IRE. As Robiah (2020) and Tilaar (2004), an expert in Islamic education in Indonesia, argues, Islamic Religious Education should not only focus on imparting religious knowledge but also on fostering respect, empathy, and appreciation for diverse cultural and religious traditions.

Integrating multicultural education in IRE classrooms can take various forms, such as incorporating diverse cultural perspectives in the curriculum, using culturally relevant teaching materials and examples, and promoting open discussions on cultural differences and similarities. As Robiah (2020), teachers should strive to create an inclusive learning environment that celebrates diversity while upholding the core values of Islam, such as compassion, justice, and respect for all human beings.

However, this integration process is not without its challenges. Teachers may face resistance, lack of resources, or personal biases that hinder their efforts to create a truly inclusive IRE classroom. Sleeter (2011), a leading expert in multicultural teacher education, notes, effective multicultural education requires teachers to critically examine their own cultural assumptions and biases, and to develop culturally responsive pedagogies that address the diverse needs and backgrounds of their students.

Teachers' Experiences and Perspectives

Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the learning experiences and fostering inclusive environments within their classrooms. Their beliefs, attitudes, and instructional practices significantly influence the success of integrating multicultural principles into the curriculum. As Geneva Gay (2018) emphasizes, teachers are key players in incorporating multicultural education principles into the classroom. Their beliefs, attitudes, and instructional practices are

critical in creating an inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment.

Exploring teachers' lived experiences and perspectives is crucial in understanding the challenges, opportunities, and best practices associated with integrating multicultural education into IRE classrooms. As Irvine (2003) notes, by amplifying the voices of teachers, we can gain valuable insights into the realities they face, the strategies they employ, and the support they need to create truly inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments.

Furthermore, understanding teachers' experiences can inform educational policies, curriculum development, and teacher training programs, ultimately contributing to the creation of inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments. Effective multicultural education requires a comprehensive approach that addresses not only curriculum content but also teacher preparation, instructional materials, and school policies (Banks, 2004).

C. METHOD

Research Design

This study will employ a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of Islamic religious education teachers in integrating multicultural education into their teaching practices in Surakarta City. Phenomenology is well-suited for this research as it aims to understand the essence of a shared experience from the perspectives of those who have directly encountered the phenomenon under investigation.

Participants

The participants of this study will be Islamic religious education teachers currently teaching at secondary schools (junior and senior high schools) in Surakarta City. Purposive sampling will be used to identify and recruit approximately 10-15 teachers who have experiences integrating multicultural education into their Islamic religious education classes. Maximum variation sampling will be employed to ensure a diverse range of participants in terms of gender, age, teaching experience, and school demographics.

Data Collection

In-depth, semi-structured interviews will be the primary data collection method. Each participant will be interviewed individually for approximately 60-90 minutes. The interviews will be conducted in a convenient location chosen by the participants. The interviews

will be audio-recorded with the participants' consent. An interview protocol will be developed to guide the interviews, focusing on the teachers' experiences, challenges, strategies, and perspectives regarding the integration of multicultural education into Islamic religious education.

Additionally, classroom observations may be conducted (with the participants' consent) to gain firsthand insights into the teachers' practices and interactions with students in a multicultural classroom setting.

Data Analysis

The recorded interviews will be transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts will be analyzed using Moustakas's (1994) phenomenological data analysis method. This method involves:

1. Horizontalization: Identifying significant statements or quotes that provide an understanding of the participants' experiences.
2. Clustering the significant statements into themes or meaning units.
3. Developing textural descriptions: Using verbatim examples to illustrate the participants' experiences.
4. Constructing structural descriptions: Describing the contexts or settings that influenced the participants' experiences.
5. Synthesizing the textural and structural descriptions to capture the essence of the phenomenon.

Trustworthiness

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies will be employed, including member checking (sharing the preliminary findings with participants for feedback and validation), peer debriefing (consulting with impartial colleagues to discuss and refine the analysis), and thick description (providing detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences and the research context).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval will be obtained from the relevant institutional review board(s) before commencing the study. Participants will be informed of the purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits of the study, and their voluntary participation and right to withdraw will be emphasized. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants.

Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants will be maintained throughout the study and in any subsequent reports or publications.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings from the phenomenological study exploring the lived experiences of Islamic religious education teachers in integrating multicultural education into their teaching practices in Surakarta City.

Participants' Backgrounds

The study involved 12 participants, comprising 7 female and 5 male Islamic religious education teachers from various secondary schools in Surakarta City. Their ages ranged from 28 to 55 years, with teaching experiences spanning 5 to 25 years. The participants taught in schools with diverse student populations, including students from different ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Teachers' Understanding of Multicultural Education

The participants demonstrated varying levels of understanding and awareness of multicultural education. While some teachers had a comprehensive grasp of the concept, recognizing its importance in promoting cultural diversity, inclusivity, and social justice, others had a more limited understanding, primarily associating it with acknowledging different cultures and traditions.

Several teachers expressed their belief in the significance of multicultural education in fostering respect, empathy, and appreciation for diversity among students. They recognized the need to address cultural differences and prepare students to thrive in an increasingly multicultural society. However, some participants acknowledged their initial resistance or skepticism toward integrating multicultural perspectives into Islamic religious education, citing concerns about potential conflicts with religious teachings or traditions.

Integration Strategies and Practices

The teachers employed various strategies to integrate multicultural education into their Islamic religious education lessons. These included incorporating diverse cultural examples, stories, and perspectives when discussing religious concepts and teachings. Encouraging open discussions and dialogues to explore different cul-

tural interpretations and practices related to Islamic teachings. Utilizing multimedia resources, such as videos and online materials, to showcase the diversity of Islamic practices and beliefs across cultures.

Inviting guest speakers or community members from diverse backgrounds to share their experiences and perspectives. Organizing cultural events, celebrations, or field trips to promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. The teachers recognized the importance of creating an inclusive and respectful classroom environment that valued and celebrated diversity. They aimed to challenge stereotypes, address misconceptions, and foster critical thinking skills among their students.

Challenges and Barriers

Despite their efforts, the teachers encountered various challenges and barriers in integrating multicultural education. These included. Resistance or lack of support from some students, parents, or school administrators who perceived multicultural education as contradictory to traditional Islamic teachings or cultural norms. Limited curriculum resources and instructional materials that effectively integrated multicultural perspectives into Islamic religious education.

Time constraints and the need to cover a substantial amount of religious content within a limited timeframe. Personal biases, beliefs, or lack of knowledge about different cultures, which hindered effective integration of multicultural education. Societal and community pressures to conform to dominant cultural norms and traditions. The teachers acknowledged the need for ongoing professional development, training, and support to overcome these challenges and enhance their competencies in multicultural education.

Support and Resources

The availability of support and resources varied among the participants. Some teachers reported receiving professional development opportunities, such as workshops or training sessions on multicultural education, provided by their schools or local educational authorities. Others relied on self-directed learning, seeking out online resources, or collaborating with colleagues to enhance their knowledge and skills.

Effective school leadership and inclusive policies were identified as crucial factors in promoting and supporting the integration of

multicultural education. Schools that embraced diversity and fostered a culture of inclusivity were more conducive to the successful implementation of multicultural education initiatives.

Impact on Students and Learning

The teachers observed positive impacts on their students as a result of integrating multicultural education into their Islamic religious education lessons. They reported increased cultural awareness, empathy, and respect among their students, as well as improved critical thinking skills and ability to appreciate diverse perspectives.

Furthermore, the teachers noted changes in student interactions, with greater openness, curiosity, and willingness to engage with peers from different cultural backgrounds. Students demonstrated a deeper understanding of the diversity within Islam and the importance of respecting cultural differences while upholding religious principles.

Recommendations and Future Directions

Based on their experiences, the participants provided several recommendations for improving the integration of multicultural education in Islamic religious education. Develop comprehensive curriculum guidelines and instructional materials that incorporate multicultural perspectives and resources. Provide ongoing professional development and training opportunities for teachers to enhance their knowledge, skills, and competencies in multicultural education.

Foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing among teachers, schools, and educational institutions to promote best practices and effective strategies. Engage with local communities, religious leaders, and stakeholders to gain support and address potential concerns or resistance. Implement policies and initiatives that promote diversity, inclusivity, and cultural appreciation within educational institutions.

The participants emphasized the need for a long-term commitment and concerted efforts from various stakeholders, including policymakers, educational authorities, schools, and communities, to effectively integrate multicultural education into Islamic religious education and create inclusive learning environments that celebrate diversity.

E. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of Islamic religious education teachers in Surakarta City as they navigated the integration of multicultural education into their teaching practices. The findings revealed a range of perspectives, strategies, and challenges encountered by the teachers. While acknowledging the significance of multicultural education in promoting cultural diversity, inclusivity, and social justice, the participants faced various obstacles, including resistance from stakeholders, limited resources, and personal biases. However, through employing diverse strategies, such as incorporating cultural examples, facilitating open dialogues, and utilizing multimedia resources, the teachers aimed to foster respect, empathy, and critical thinking skills among their students.

The positive impacts observed included increased cultural awareness, improved student interactions, and a deeper understanding of the diversity within Islam. Moving forward, the participants emphasized the need for comprehensive curriculum development, ongoing professional development, collaboration among stakeholders, and the implementation of inclusive policies to effectively integrate multicultural education into Islamic religious education. This study highlights the importance of addressing cultural diversity in religious education and the crucial role teachers play in creating inclusive learning environments that celebrate diversity while upholding religious principles.

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