

## “TEACHING SOCIAL SKILL THROUGH MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO IMPARTING DIVERSITY”

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**Abstract:** Education in multicultural society and global society environment should equip the students to have cognitive ability and interpersonal skill in order to learn and to work, and to live with others, coming from different race, religion, language and cultural background. For that reasons, education should be prepared to have attitude to be ready to cooperate and skill to create cooperation. Without social skill, human beings cannot interact with others corresponding to the role in social structure existing in their environment. The best means of building and socializing multicultural concept in order to bring about conducive social behavior constituting “Social wisdom”, “cultural wisdom”, and “moral wisdom”, and noble character is “multiculturalism education”.

**Keywords:** *Social Skill, Multicultural education.*

### A. Introduction

Globalization is a challenge to education world and creates new opportunity all at once. Understanding globalization with all of its aspect is the strategic measure to improve education. Opportunity and threat are generated by global integration in education area in three main ways. *Firstly*, it enables the students and nations to operate more effectively in more competitive global economy. To be competitive in global market, high productivity and flexibility is required in using new technology to reform product and service value. *Secondly*, globalization makes states closer; for that reason, cross-border communication should be improved. The improvement of international trade and mobility and social and cultural interaction makes the state more interdependent economically, socially, and politically. *Thirdly*, globalization will contributes to the more rapid education change, so that new knowledge and skill are required to respond to threat and opportunity of globalization. The improvement of mobility and trade will be followed with the increased disease transmission that can threaten economic growth and education quality. Trade improvement also examines the society’s tolerance level and can threaten social stability.

The present generation should develop cognitive ability and interpersonal skill to learn and to work, and to live with others, with different race, religion, language and cultural

backgrounds. ( Suarez-Orozco and Gardner: 2002) .Education in global vision should prepare the children and the youth to be citizen and for participation in new millennium century in the term of social skill. Students should have social skill because of the following reasons. *Firstly*, there is a negative tendency in the present social relationship, in which our children and youth tend to step toward individualistic behavior. Individualistic behavior can encourage uncaring about others surrounding or uncaring about interacting socially with others, in Goleman (2006) called *social insulation* or *social autism*.

*Secondly*, there is a tendency of weaker social feeling and empathy to others among some of our children and adolescent. *Thirdly*, it is the spread of violence and the more people infected with AVID (*Aquired Violence Immune Deficiency*), the decreased immunity to violence (Naisbit, 2001). Human’s life is faced with so tight competition that the principle of *The survival to the fittest* (the endurance individual who has characteristics mostly fit with its environment) prevails. *Fourthly*, there is interdependency in social life. In globalization age, recently building cross-culture social network is a certainty, whether it is done by individual citizens, groups, social organization, education institution, or government, at local, national, regional and international levels. To build social network,

social, understanding and collaboration skills are needed.

*Fifthly*, the multicultural condition of Indonesian people and the diversity of multicultural society as nation wealth, on the other hand, trigger conflict and dissension vulnerably. To build a great multicultural nation-state, the skills of cooperating (collaborating), empathy, and tolerance to diversity are needed. As Nasikun suggested (2007: 33), plurality condition sometimes brings about many problems and potential conflicts ending up in dissension. Indonesian multicultural society can be seen from its two unique characteristics: firstly, horizontally it is characterized with social unity based on ethnic, religion, custom, and locality differences. Secondly, vertically it is characterized with vertical difference between upper and lower layers. The state with multiethnic and multicultural uniqueness like Indonesia is faced with distinctive dilemma, on the one hand, leading Indonesia to be a great nation-state as multicultural nation-state, and on the other hand, constituting a threat. It represents that basically, it is not easy to unite a plurality without supported by the society's awareness of multiculturalism.

For that reasons, education that can develop social skill of students is required in order to participate actively in the life of multicultural society and global society. To cooperate well, both conventionally and through cyberspace, at local, national, and global levels, every citizen should be prepares to have willingness (attitude) to cooperative and the skill to create cooperative. Those skill and skill are not given, but it should be educated and practiced earlier. This paper will study how to teach social skill through Multicultural education as the alternative to imparting diversity.

## **B. Discussion**

### **1. Teaching Social Skill**

Social skill is one of skills needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As cited by Bunyamin from Metiri Group (2000), there are four primary skills in 21<sup>st</sup> century: 1) digital age literacy, including: (a) basic, scientific, and technology literacy, (b) visual and information literacy, and (c) cultural

literacy and global consciousness; 2) thinking inventively – intellectual capital, including: (a) adaptability/managing complexity and (self-direction), (b) curiosity, creativity, and taking risk bravely, (c) higher-order thinking and reasoning; 3) interactive communication – social and personal skill, including: (a) working in group and cooperating (collaboration), (b) personal and social responsibility, (c) interactive communication; 4) high-quality and recent results, including: (a) prioritizing, planning and managing the result (outcome), (b) using real world's tool effectively, (c) high-quality outcome with the application in real world.

In this occasion, I would like to discuss the social skill including: interpersonal skill, cross-network collaborative skill, social interaction and cross-cultural skill, personal and social responsibility, interactive communication, cultural literacy and global awareness. Social skill is needed not only in the context of global society but also in cultural society.

Social skill is an ability of developing harmonious and satisfactory social relationship, adapting to social environment, and solving the social problem encountered and developing aspiration and featuring ourselves, characterized with mutual appreciation, independency, finding out the objective of life, discipline, and decision making ability (Iyep Sepriyan, <http://www.digilib.ui.edu>). Without social skill, human being cannot interact with others surrounding because social skill is the one used to interact and to communicate with others according to the existing role in social structure.

Some scholars with different terminology paid special attention to this social skill. For example, Thorndike (Goleman, 2006) in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century exactly in 1920 introduced the term of social intelligence for the first time. He defined social intelligence as *'the ability to understand and manage men and women'*. He suggested that the effectiveness of interpersonal relationship is the very important thing for the success in many areas, particularly in leadership are.

Comb and Slaby (1977: 162) defined social skill as: “*The social skill is the ability to interact with others in a given social context in specific ways that are socially acceptable or valued at the same time personally beneficial, manually beneficial, or beneficial primary to others*”. Meanwhile, Jarolimek (1993: 9) stated that social skill includes (1) *Living and working together; taking turns; respecting the rights of others; being socially sensitive*, (2) *Learning self-control and self-direction*, dan (3) *Sharing ideas and experience with others*.

Social skill is also a pro-social behavior including: (1) empathy, the expression of emotional feeling by paying attention to an distressed individual due to a problem and expressing others’ feeling as the form that that students are aware of others’ feeling; (2) charity, in which students share or give something they have to others; (3) awareness, in which students can comply with the instruction (command) voluntarily in turn without conflict; (4) helping, in which students help others to complete a task and help others needing.

Social skill is the ability of communicating between one individual and another such as: task-oriented behavior constituting the ability of being responsible, of working and cooperating in group, working creatively, and attempting to get quality in working. Essentially, social skill can be developed and manifested in interaction. An individual’s skill characteristics are personal, situational, and relative. As Frazier (1980: 41) suggested that: “*Social skills as the same as values are personal situational and relative*”.

The result of research showed that the students with low social skill will develop behavioral disorder. They tend to show hostility, and when faced with ambiguous social stimulus, they often interpret it as the sign of hostility thereby dealing with it with aggressive measure (Crick & Dodge in Carr, 2001). They are less capable of controlling emotion, understand others’ feeling and want difficultly, and solving social problems less skillfully (Carr, 2001). This low social skill makes the children less capable of establishing interaction effectively with their environment and preferring taking aggressive measure as

coping strategy. They tend to consider aggressive measure as the most appropriate way of dealing with social problem and obtaining what they want.

In contrast, the students with high social skill will speak more bravely, express any feeling or problems face and find the adaptive solution to it. Libet and Lewinsohn (in Cartledge and Milburn, 1995) suggested that social skill is a complex ability to demonstrate behavior considered as either positive or negative by environment.

Bunyamin (2010) mentioned that children developing a good interactive skill show better academic performance. As summarized by Brigman et al (Hargie & Dickson, 2003: 2) a number of studies has identified the skills of presence, listening and social skill as the long-term predictive factors of the school’s success. Such the advantage continued in a variety of life aspects after school period. Social skill, either directly or indirectly, helps the students to adapt to the society’s expectation in the norms prevailing surrounding (Matson, in Gimpel & Merrell, 1998).

Social skill is not the congenital ability but it is acquired through learning process, both learning from parents as the figure closest to children and learning from peer and society environment. Michelson, et al (in Ramdhani, 1994) mentioned that social skill is a skill an individual acquires through learning process, concerning how to deal with or to build social relationship appropriately and well.

## 2. Multiculturalism Education

The people always mentioned in the constitution must refer to Indonesian multicultural society with slogan “*bhinneka tunggal ika* (Unity in Diversity). Ideally, all of those constitutions embrace concept of democracy and unity in diversity for multicultural society. Thus, since the establishment of Republic of Indonesia country in 1945 until today, the concept of constitutional democracy is the foundation and the orientation of life within Indonesian society, nation, and state that is multicultural in nature – Unity in Diversity.

Article 4 clause (1) of Law No.20 of 2003 about National Education System mentioned that “Education is organized democratically, justly and non-discriminatively by upholding human right, religious value, cultural value, and nation plurality”. This article implies that multiculturalism paradigm becomes one focus of attention in National Education system in Indonesia. In this context, it can be stated that, the main objective of multicultural education is to impart sympathy, respect, appreciation, and empathy to different religious and cultural adherents (Tilaar, 2004: 123).

The term *multicultural* can be understood as a concept of appreciation to ethnic, religion, viewpoint diversities and other life complexity. It is consistent with Mahfud (2008: viii) defines multicultural education as: the manifestation of the awareness of cultural diversity, human right and reduction or elimination of various prejudices to build a just and prosperous society life. Multicultural education can also be defined as a strategy to develop the pride in one’s home nation.

According to Sonia Nieto that multicultural education is a comprehensive fundamental education process for all of students. In her opinion, this multicultural education should be inherent to curriculum and teaching strategy, including every interaction conducted between teachers, students, and family as well as entire teaching-learning circumstance, and should develop democratic principle in social justice. Bikhu Parekh (2000) defined multicultural education as an education in freedom, both in the sense of freedom from ethnocentric prejudices and biases, and freedom to explore and learn from other cultures and perspectives”.

Gorsky (2009) defines multicultural education into five principles, namely (a) multicultural education is a political movement and process that attempts to secure social justice underserved and disenfranchised students; (b) multicultural education recognizes that, while some individual classroom practices are philosophically consistent with multicultural education, social

justice is an institutional matter, and as such can be secured only through comprehensive school reform; (c) multicultural education insists that comprehensive school reform can be achieved only through a critical analysis of systems of power and privilege;(d) multicultural education’s underlying goal – the purpose of this critical analysis – is the elimination of educational inequities; and (e) multicultural education is good education for all students

Multiculturalism discourse in education is cultural identity, transparency and diversity and social transformation. Identity, as one element of education presupposes that students and teachers are one individual or group representing certain culture within society. Thus, in multicultural education, those identities are sharpened through interaction, either internal or external culture. For that reasons, multicultural education is an education model running on diversity rail. This cultural diversity will likely be achieved in education if the education recognizes the existing diversity, is opened, and gives space to every existing difference in order to be involved in education process.

Banks (2001) explained that the objective of multicultural education is to make the school the social transformation element of unbalanced society structure in justice structure, so that there should be five dimensions of multicultural: (1) content integration involving diversity in one education culture, the main objective of which is to remove prejudice, (2) knowledge construction manifested into knowing and understanding comprehensively the existing diversity, (3) prejudice reduction born from interaction between diversity in education culture, (4) equity pedagogy giving equal space and opportunity to every diverse element, (5) empowering school culture.

Meanwhile, H. A.R. Tilaar (2002) mentioned that multicultural education model needed in Indonesia should consider the six following matters: (1) having “right to culture” dimension and local identity, (2) being Indonesian culture, meaning Indonesian culture is Weltanschauung undertaking ongoing process and constituting the integral part of micro

cultural process. For that reason, there should be an attempt of optimizing local culture along with appreciation on national culture, (3) normative cultural education model, is the one confirming national identity without removing the existing local cultural identity, (4) constituting a social reconstruction, meaning that multicultural education may not be entrapped into xenophobia, fanaticism and fundamentalism, whether ethnic, race or religion, (5) constituting pedagogy of empowerment and equity pedagogy in diverse culture (pedagogy of equity). An individual is invited to be familiar with his/her own identity and to use it to develop Indonesian culture in the frame of Indonesia nation-state. For that reason, pedagogy of equity between individuals, between races, and diverse difference existing is required; (6) multicultural education aims to bring the future mission of Indonesia and nation ethics into reality. This education should be implemented to develop ethical (moral) principles of Indonesian society that is understood by all of plural social-cultural components.

Operationally, multicultural education is basically an education program providing a multiple learning source (environment) for learners that is consistent with academic and social needs of students. Anderson and Cusher (in Hasan: 2001) stated that multicultural education is the education of cultural diversity. This definition contains broader element, however the position of is still the same, involving cultural diversity.

In other words, cultural diversity becomes a learning material that should be considered, particularly for curriculum development plan. Azra (2002) explains multicultural education as the substitute for intercultural education, expected to grow care and understanding or the presence of politics of recognition on human group's culture such as tolerance, ethno-cultural and religion difference, discrimination, HAM, democracy and plurality, universal humanity and other relevant subjects. Multicultural education is highly urgent as one supplement to disconnect the dark history chain of violence between many elements in Indonesia.

Ideally, multicultural education can be implemented at School. As Cholis, S suggested (2008: 29), the school has provided the room enabling to reinforce the students' knowledge basis and life experience to appreciate difference and plurality. Durkheim (1999) stated that the school plays important roles: firstly, to create a new creature shaped consistent with the society's needs. Secondly, it serves as moral agent, in which through school the children can systematically learn to be familiar with and to love their state. Thirdly, in school, the collective life tends to be imparted more easily by the teacher. Fourthly, the school is also a society that can develop from the diverse origin group.

For teaching purpose, Grant and Sleeter (in Gorsky, 2009: 310) distinguished five teaching approaches to teach the difference of human being. **Firstly**, assimilationistic view is "*teaching the exceptional and culturally different*". This research aimed to enable the students to learn traditional curriculum successfully in traditional class and in society life existing surrounding. The teacher's duty in this approach is to help the students from different races, English learners, students with disadvantaged economical condition, and students from minority groups to adjust and to achieve a norm of dominant groups. **Secondly**, it is "human relations" approach. This approach aims to improve feeling and communication in the classroom and in the school as a whole through interpersonal relation and prejudice reduction. Through reducing prejudice each other, the harmony of human relation is expected to result.

**Thirdly**, it is single group studies. It is the shift from the "*teaching the exceptional and culturally different*" approach to a more in-depth study on a group of culture or single identity. The focus of this approach is to improve social conditions of certain society groups. Fourthly, it is multicultural education approach. This approach is based on to primary principles: right equality and cultural pluralism. In this approach, teacher explains personal power and right in the classroom to remove hegemony. Teacher explains injustice and ensures the presence of equality in acquiring

education for all students with certain objective.

**Fourthly**, education approach is multicultural education and social reconstructionist one. This approach aims to prepare the students to help construct a world without the presence of oppression. It is a world fulfils the different need in the term of humanity. This approach requires the presence of a democratic schooling education process.

Multiculturalism is the cultural foundation related to the achievement of civility, essential to realize the civilized democracy and democratic civilization (Azra, 2006)". Thus, multiculturalism is the wisdom to see culture as a fundamental reality in living within society". Wisdom will grow if an individual open him/herself to undertake collective life by considering plural reality as the given life certainty. Wisdom can grow either in the life as a multidimensional individual and in a more complex society life. Thus, some awareness arises that diversity in life dynamic reality is a well-established certainty. Through multiculturalism education will bring about civilization within society, so that a national solidarity power is created.

### **3. Social skill in Multicultural Education to Impart Diversity Values**

Unity in diversity is a slogan symbolizes the condition of Indonesian nation and state. The essence of slogan is the awareness of diversity that is manifested into appreciating and respecting each other, tolerant, egalitarian, pluralist and inclusive behavior. As suggested by Sujanto (2009), Unity in Diversity is a sentence (*motto*) is defined as ethnic, religion, custom, local language, culture and other diversities manifested into a unity of homeland, one nation, and one language, Indonesia. Diversity as a conferral can be defined as the God's bless given to Indonesian nation to be the asset and the means of improving life quality. Sujanto (2009: 90) argued that the slogan *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) defined as fraternity that should be socialized to all people, through the preexisting institution such as government institution, social, religious, and

youth institution to build concord, peaceful, safe, and tolerant life, respect, cooperation, and mutual-cooperation in the frame of nation unity and integrity.

The awareness of diversity is very necessary to mitigate the horizontal conflicts triggered with social envy, local ego, ethnic ego, religious ego, and etc. as suggested by Will Kymlicka (2002: 289) a society based on a very broad diversity is difficult to keep uniting unless the member of society appreciates the diversity itself, and wants to live in a country with diverse form of cultural and political affiliation. Durkheim (in Ritzer, 2012:136-137) stated that something the human being always wants is "to have more and more". Such the willingness exerts adverse effect, because in fulfilling the need for the more sometimes tend to contravene with what others have.

In creating an individual's moral behavior, learning process plays an important role. The effect of environment as the place to conduct learning process highly affects modal development. For that reason, a multicultural education is needed as the means of imparting equality and commonality values. Cooperative and collaborative learning models will habituate the students to interact with other groups with difference. This condition forces an individual to understand more other groups or other individuals in order to achieve the objective well. This way will result in a positive interactive behavior. This behavior included appreciating others, willingness to cooperate mutually, not judging others, empathy, and etc.

Imparting moral values in diversity through education is not easy. To impart moral values in understanding religion, the following should be done: (1) reducing prejudice, by identifying the presence of diversity and learning to asses and to appreciate fundamental differences; (2) reducing stereotype use; (3) minimizing miscommunication with others having difference, by practicing communication skill; (4) building relationship with others having difference. Furthermore, these measures are realized into building positive relationship with others. Thus, an individual's social skill will support the process of learning and accepting diversity values. The

strategy can be implemented through multicultural education. Meanwhile, the school is a central institution in the implementation of multicultural education.

### C. Conclusion

Multiculturalism concept is very important to develop and to internalize in the process of transforming these society and nation's diverse values. It is because the basic principles of multiculturalism is to recognize and to appreciate the diversity of community groups including ethnic, race, culture, gender, social stratum, religion, the difference of interest, will, vision, belief and tradition that will helpful to changing the format of conducive and very promising social behavior in plural society and nation life. Education in multicultural society and global society environment should equip the students to have cognitive ability and interpersonal skill in order to learn and to work, and to live with others, coming from different race, religion, language and cultural background.

Education that can develop social skill is the multicultural one. The best and strategic means of building and socializing multiculturalism concept in order to bring about conducive social behavior, "social wisdom", "cultural wisdom", and "moral wisdom" or noble character is "multiculturalism education". Ideally, multicultural education can be implemented at School because the school has provided the room enabling to reinforce the students' knowledge basis and life experience to appreciate difference and plurality.

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