

Multicultural Education Based Instruction For Mental Revolution In Teaching Intercultural Communication: Indonesian University Students' Perspectives

Widya Karmila Sari Achmad
widyakarmilasari@gmail.com

Wasir Talib
wasirtalib@unm.ac.id

Muhammad Basri*
muhammadbasri@unm.ac.id

Universitas Negeri Makassar

Abstract

Recently conflict among university students has become common phenomenon at higher education around Indonesia. Makassar is considered one of the prone conflict areas which can destroy campus academic life as scientific institution where students are expected to be able to become more educative, more human, more democratic and more harmonious people around the society. This study aims at exploring the causes of the conflict happened at the university students in South Sulawesi, the efforts done by the tertiary institution in overcoming students conflict, the potential of applying multicultural education, and finding out the model of students resolution conflict based on multicultural education approach. This research applied qualitative approach by using likert-scale questionnaire, in-depth interview and Focus Group Discussion (FGD), observation, documentation and videoing to get data. The obtained data are analyzed qualitatively and percentage based on the likert scale; data display, data reduction, data interpretation, and data conclusion. The result of the study demonstrated that most of the students' conflicts are dealing with inequality, lack of intercultural understanding, and a very limited space for ethnic and individual expressions as part of academic society. This leads to potentially open a space for applying multicultural education as an alternative model for mental revolution in teaching Intercultural Communication to university students.

Keywords: multicultural education, mental revolution, intercultural communication

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, from Sabang to Merauke, is known as a multicultural nation with different ethnic groups, religions, races, and social structures. This is a treasure that we should be proud of. However, within the diversity, there is a potency for conflicts that is sensitive and risky with the probable result of the disintegration of our nation.

The diversity in Indonesia is rooted from the existence of the various ethnic groups that we have. In the history, ethnic groups exist because of many factors, such as the social groups within a certain area that is not in touch with another area, the creation of its own culture is as a personal characteristic, the creation of zones acclaiming as its own based on the folk tales (myths, tales, legends). "From there, it is hoped to lead to the multiculturalism or multicultural community.

Minimum knowledge and understanding of a certain Indonesian community on an area's of multiculturalism can often cause problems. The misunderstanding of the local contexts can result in conflicts. According Rudito (2008) Indonesia is rich in culture but most of the time it is read as exoticism only. Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (Unity in Diversity) is understood as a Cinderella's story, we should see the core of it with its values. Therefore, understanding the core values, it can unite Indonesia from several islands such as: Java, Sumatera, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Nusa Tenggara and Papua.

In South Sulawesi, research has revealed that there were 35 students' conflicts occurred among the four biggest universities in Makassar since 1990 to 2008 (Akil, et al, 2009). The attitudes of students opposite the academic principles and values of democracy where students should be an agent of social changes and problem solver, but not problem makers. The violent attitude values and identities are seen as social phenomena that are inseparable from human's lives, especially in the multicultural community. To solve these is how to control and overcome the conflicts wisely so they will not result in the disintegration of the nation.

Attitudes, values and identities are not fixed and static phenomena. They change and need to be oriented in harmony with the new local and global environment. Education can provide the innovative means whereby every citizen, whether female or male, can participate and contribute to the building of a more meaningful and coherent future. This can only be through the mobilization of civil society which forms the base and the branches of the tree of life.

In addition, Rudito (2008) emphasizes on the importance of multiculturalism that is to understand how several cultures can live and interact side by side. According to Bambang, multicultural education that is integrated into the educational institutions is one strategic step to provide knowledge and understanding to the community to some extent on the context of multiculturalism, to be applied in the day to day life. "From the differences, we respect the unity. This paper will address the above issue by taking multicultural education as a strategic instruction for mental revolution in teaching Intercultural Communication to the university students in particular the students in the State University of Makassar, South Sulawesi.

Concept Underpinning the Study

Multiculturalists explicitly value diversity and agree that the specific content, structures, and practices employed in achieving multicultural education will differ depending on the setting. Therefore, it is useful for educators to develop their own definitions of multicultural education, within the general boundaries outlined above, to fit their specific needs, rather than imposing a universal structure to implement multicultural education (Gay 2008). In addition, Bennet (1990) states that multicultural education is an approach to teaching and learning based upon democratic values that foster cultural pluralism; in its most comprehensive form, it is a commitment to achieving educational equality, developing curricula that builds understanding about ethnic groups, and combatting oppressive practices.

The actions taken in schools to adopt multicultural education should reflect the race, language, ethnicity, habits, and customs of ethnic groups throughout the global community. In order to promote a comprehensive understanding of cultural groups, we must use a variety of methods and a composite of various areas of scholarship, including the humanities, arts, social sciences, history, politics, and sciences.

According to Shutun (2005) that conflict can be a competitive or opposing action of incompatibles, an antagonistic state or action, and the oppositions of persons or forces that give rise to the dramatic actions or fight.

Conflict and Multiculturalism

A dispute or conflict in an intercultural setting appears to have come from different cultural backgrounds or communities. The conflict occurs analytically to speak of a social setting characterized by inequality and a highly racialized discourse of cultural identities as a culture of racism.

Some research suggested that multicultural differences among the parties or communities, and that therefore culture will have no significant impact on the "processing" of the dispute or resolution are not totally true. However, according to the research by Avruch (2003) that multicultural differences exist and they impact the contours of the dispute and the processes of resolution.

Alternatively, that there are significant cultural differences between the parties to the conflict or dispute and that therefore culture will have a significant impact on dispute processing and resolution as it is shown below.

Cultural Impacts	Actual Extent of Cultural Impacts	
	Cultural Impacts “High” or “Strong”	Cultural Impacts “Low” or “Weak”
No Significant Cultural Impacts on Conflict or Dispute	Type I Error (“Tin Ear”)	Appropriate Decision
Significant Cultural Impacts on Conflict or Dispute	Appropriate Decision	Type-II Error (“Hearing Voices”)

Table 1: A Heuristic for Cultural Analysis and Conflict Resolution (Avruch, 2003)

Type I Errors undervalue culture, underestimating its significance in a conflict or dispute. A Type I Error means that you are “culturally insensitive.” Type II Errors overvalue culture, overestimating its impact on a conflict or dispute. Since the general cultural turn in conflict resolution, there is a growing literature of the cautionary type warning against Type I Errors, especially for intercultural negotiation. There has been much less said about Type II Errors. One can begin by saying that Type II Errors by third parties will probably occur under at least these two conditions:

- a. Where the conflict or dispute involves parties from self-evidently different identity groups, that is the conflict is self-evidently inter-ethnic or inter-racial;
- b. In a social setting with an institutional bias or emphasis on multiculturalism as a legal prescription and/or a valued ideal (Avruch, 2003).

Resolving Multicultural Conflicts

The resolution of cross-cultural conflict begins with identifying whether cultural issues are involved. There are three ways of cross-cultural conflict resolution, as Williams (1994) proposal as follows: first: Probing for the multicultural dimension. The resolution process should start from the parties' acknowledgment that their conflict contains a cultural dimension. Next, there should be willingness on all sides to deal with all conflict dimensions including the cultural one. Third, systematic phased work on the conflict is needed. Williams identified four phases: (1) the parties describe what they find offensive in each other's behavior; (2) they get an understanding of the other party's cultural perceptions; (3) they learn how the problem would be handled in the culture of the opponent; (4) they develop conflict solutions. Resolution of the conflict is particularly complicated if the conflict arose not just out of misunderstanding of the other's behavior, but because of incompatible values.

The second, Learning about other cultures. People can prevent cross-cultural conflicts by learning about cultures that they come in contact with. This knowledge can be obtained through training programs, general reading, talking to people from different cultures, and learning from past experiences. Important aspects of cultural education are understanding your own culture and developing cultural awareness by acquiring a broad knowledge of values and beliefs of other cultures, rather than looking at them through the prism of cultural stereotypes.

The third is altering organizational practices and procedures. Often the organizational structure reflects the norms of just one culture and inherits the cultural conflict. In such cases, structural change becomes necessary to make the system more sensitive to cultural norms of other people (Williams, 1994; pp. 2-6).

METHOD

A case study employed as the tool for this study because case study is a study of a phenomenon in its context (Yin 1994; Gall et al 2005). Thus, the scope of the case study can be either a single unit or multiple sites depending on what is defined as unit of analysis (Yin 1994). In this study, the unit of analysis is multicultural education strategies at tertiary education in Indonesia.

The data collected from 4 universities in South Sulawesi, two of them represented public government institutions, while the two of them represented the Muslim cultures and values. For this report, we collected the data from 40 students representing their four universities

The data were collected through questionnaire design which is Likert scale format. Burns (1991, pp. 277-278) points out that Likert method 'has very little clear meaning, but it 'gives greater ease of preparation and based on empirical data rather than subjective opinions of judges'. The questionnaire survey is used to obtain general information of the implementation of the new curriculum and its impacts on teacher culture. To ensure the reliability of the questionnaires, they have an introduction that describes the purpose of study (Williamson et al. 1977, cited in Jazadi 2003, p. 75). They begins with few interesting, 'non-threatening' question because it may reduce the likelihood of the subject completing the questionnaire (Burns 1991, pp. 293-294). The questionnaires should be easy to understand and straightforward (McKernan 1996. p. 127; Wellington 2000, p. 105). The questionnaire design would be pre-testing to minimize potential misunderstanding and to ensure reliability (Anderson 1990, pp. 215-216; Burns 1991, p. 299). The questionnaire will be pre tested to the two students at the university.

Semi structured interview is more controlled by interviewer, flexible, and not completely pre-determined (Wellington 2000, p. 75). Semi structured interview is used to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' culture in relation to the implementation of the new curriculum. Theorists define triangulation as the use of "two or more methods to collect data about the same phenomenon in order to enhance the soundness of the findings" (Gall et al. 2005, p. 312; Yin 1994, p. 91; Burns 1991, p. 248). The data were analyzed by using systemic representational analysis (see Gall, et al. 2005).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Profile of the Respondents

Most of the respondents in the research have studied at the university for more than two years. Only a few very of them are very senior students. While the number of females' students less than the number of males, which shows the number of females' activists participation in the students unions, as more detail background of the respondents below (table 2).

No	Questions (n = 40)	Answers and percentage
Q1	How long have you become a student?	a. Less than 2 years (16/40%) b. Between 2 and 5 years (18/45%) c. More than 5 years (6/15%)
Q2	What is your sex?	a. Male (26/65%) b. Female (14/35%)
Q3	What subject do you study?	a. Language and humanity (12/30%) b. Natural sciences (12/30 %) c. Social sciences (16/40 %)

Q4	How many times do you go to college/do you teach in a week)	a. Everyday (14/35%) b. 4 times a week (16/40%) c. 3 times (6/15%) d. Two or Less (4/10%)
Q5	What is your general understanding of the students' conflict?	a. Can be solved (30/75%) b. Cannot be solved (2/5%) c. It's complicated (8/20%)
Q6	What is your last education?	a. High schools - SMA (16/40%) - SMK (12/30%) - Islamic high schools (12/30%) b. Higher Education

Table 2: Background of the respondents

They come from different course majors as most of them come from social sciences and both of language and humanity are equal in number. Students regularly attend the college even though a small number of them visit the campus for twice or less. It shows that they are still active students at the university. Most of the respondents graduated from public high schools; on the other hand, there were equal number of students graduated from both Islamic and vocational high schools.

It is interesting to note that the students' conflicts at the university level in South Sulawesi province is not a very difficult problem to solve, because the majority of the students believes that the conflicts are manageable and resolvable.

2. Students' Perceptions of the Factors that Cause Conflict at Tertiary Level

There were a number of different factors causing students' conflicts at the university level ranging from discriminative policy, unequal treatment, less understanding of other cultures, unable to produce polite language, maintain the values, to less academic activities and lecturing, as more detail information shown in table 3 below.

A	There is a discriminative policy from government and university	1 (0%)	2 (0%)	3 (2/5%)	4 (20/75%)	5 (8/20%)
B	Unequal services to students	1 (4/10%)	2 (0%)	3 (4/10%)	4 (22/55%)	5 (14/25%)
C	Less understanding of other 's culture and tradition	1 (0%)	2 (0%)	3 (4/10%)	4 (14/25%)	5 (26/65%)
D	Students' don't know how to speak the language politely	1 (4/10%)	2 (4/10%)	3 (14/25%)	4 (18/45%)	5 (4/10%)
E	Very senior students want maintain their pride tradition	1 (4/10%)	2 (0%)	3 (0%)	4 (14/25%)	5 (26/65%)

F	Less academic activities such as lecturing.	1 (2/5%)	2 (2/5%)	3 (8/20%)	4 (18/45%)	5 (14/25%)
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(1 = don't know, 2 = strongly disagree; 3 = disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree, n=46)

Table 3: Factors causing

students conflicts

The discriminative policy as one of the students said that:

Sebagai contoh kebijakan yang diskriminatif dalam pandangan kami ialah kebijakan kenaikan Bahan Bakar Minyak (BBM) dan kebijakan yang terbaru-Undang-Undang Badan Hukum Perguruan Tinggi. Letak diskriminasi kebijakan tersebut ialah bagi rakyat yang miskin dan mahasiswa yang miskin tentunya sangat sulit bagi mereka untuk hidup dan bahkan untuk membiayai anaknya sehingga kuliah diperguruan tinggi.	(...One of the examples of discriminative policy is the policy to raise the oils (kerosene & petrol prices) and the policy to implement state own university. Those policy will lead to the poor people unable to buy and poor students unable to continue their study at the university)
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The students started with calm demonstrations and ended with violence not only with the police officers but also with the community. They were not very patient when the authority can not accommodate their opinions and protests. Another interesting point that some simple language that seems to be negative to the students from other faculties or programs even universities can cause conflict in large scale and even get into ethnic conflicts.

3. The Efforts Done by the University to Resolve Student's Conflict

There were a lot of things that have been done by the university to overcome conflict at the university level. Some university have established early learning contract prior to the commencement of their studies at that institutions. They have also set up very strict academic rules by having monitoring activities during the lecturing. The most striking policy that the university established was that none of students can stay overnight in campus to prevent the raise of the conflicts. More detail can be shown in the table 4 below:

A	Strict Academic policy and lecturing	1 (0%)	2 (0%)	3 (10%)	4 (20%)	5 (70%)
B	Prohibit students staying in campus at all night	1 (0%)	2 (0%)	3 (0%)	4 (10%)	5 (90%)
C	Programs to learn other culture, tradition and values	1 (10%)	2 (60%)	3 (30%)	4 (0%)	5 (0%)
D	Gathering activities to raise the university solidarity	1 (0%)	2 (40%)	3 (30%)	4 (0%)	5 (20%)

E	Facilitate meeting between the two parties to create win-win solution	1 (0%)	2 (0%)	3 (20%)	4 (60%)	5 (20%)
F	Mediating a sustainable dialog	1 (0%)	2 (0%)	3 (35%)	4 (40%)	5 (15%)

N= 40. (1 =strongly agree ; 2 = disagree 3 = neutral; 4 = agree, 5= strongly agree)
Table 4: The efforts by university to overcome conflicts

The universities in the research have done a lot in terms of promoting students to learn other cultures, ethnics and even religions. In addition, most institutions haven't yet initiated a sustainable program to resolve and transform conflict into peace, harmony, respecting diversity and acknowledging the similarities.

4. The Potential for Implementing Multicultural Education

The need of implementing multicultural education as one way to mediate learning other culture, tradition, and respecting the differences is shown detail in table 5 below:

A	Systemic program for intercultural understanding	1 (0%)	2 (10%)	3 (30%)	4 (60%)	5 (0%)
B	Raise the attitude of respecting the differences	1 (0%)	2 (10%)	3 (20%)	4 (40%)	5 (20%)
C	Mastery of etiquette and appropriate attitudes	1 (0%)	2 (15%)	3 (20%)	4 (45%)	5 (30%)
D	Mastery of polite and standard language and expressions	1 (0%)	2 (25%)	3 (30%)	4 (45%)	5 (0%)
E	Systemic program for promoting peace and harmony in a multicultural settings	1 (0%)	2 (0%)	3 (15%)	4 (65%)	5 (20%)

(1 = strongly not necessary 2 = not necessary; 3 = neutral 4 = necessary; 5= strongly necessary)

Table 5: The need for multicultural education

The diversity of backgrounds such as family, races, gender, religion, economic backgrounds, needs to be accommodated as part of multicultural Indonesia. It can be denied that these pluralistic students need to put into a program where they can learn other

cultures and traditions to avoid misunderstanding which cause conflicts. The table above shows the importance of students understand the appropriate language to utter and appropriate behavior to accept. Some students said that many of them even do not respect their lecturers by uttering bad language and unacceptable attitudes. To accommodate these facts that it is important to put multicultural education as a program, or a subject or special unit to be taught at tertiary level.

5. The Model of Conflict Resolutions

Based on the factors causing the university students conflict above, we can propose the model of conflict resolution which is based on multicultural approach:

Discriminative policy and unequal services

To solve conflict caused by the discriminative policy, unequal services can be done through a step proposed below:

- Competing: at some points the university needs to push with strict rules to students to obey the rules and regulations that have been agreed prior to the commencement of their studies. the policy for example: prohibiting students to stay over night in campus.

- b. **Accommodating:** at some points where the two parties involved in the conflicts need to sit together and talk over the conflict. In this process, there is a need to yield one party into another party. The example of this is that when one university in the research move one faculty to other location in order to prevent the conflict, even though it cost a huge a number of expenditures.
- c. **Avoiding:** at some points, if the university has established the strict regulation of the use of facilities and equipments in campus, we should ignore the conflicts occur. Or the conflicts want to gain popularity; we should ignore these things, because it will be over without any effort. The example of this is that, when some students from one faculty proposed to create their own problems and they fight against each other and other faculties, the university should let it cool down and not accommodating the issue.
- d. **Compromising:** at some points where, two parties involved, there is a need to compromise the interest in order to gain the solutions.
- e. **Collaborating:** the most common type of strategies that have been done by the university in the research is that the parties or people involved in the conflict seeking the win-win solution by framing common goals and pooling off individual and ethnic interests.

Less understanding other culture, ethnic, and tradition

As mentioned earlier elsewhere in the article, the conflict cause by less understanding cultural values and other traditions can not be solved immediately. It takes a series of programs to prevent and resolve this type of conflict because there are underpinning values need to be uncovered, so that they understand one in another.

Impolite languages and inappropriate behavior

To resolve these problems, the university has to put a subject or a unit that contains knowledge where students learn how to speak politely and behave appropriately. As Avruch (2003) explained that these issues are not part university sensitivity because lack of understanding of the way other people communicate, may seem impolite to one ethnic or culture.

Based on conflict factors above, it is necessary to implement model of multicultural education as a type of education that is concerned with various groups in society that are victims and prone to be discriminated and assaults because of their unique cultural characteristics (ethnic, racial, linguistic, gender, etc.); it includes studying such key concepts as prejudice, identity, conflicts, and alienation, and modifying school practices and policies to reflect an appreciation for ethnic diversity in the United States (Banks, 2006)

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that most of the students' conflicts are dealing with inequality, lack of intercultural understanding, and a very limited space for ethnic and individual expressions as part of academic society. This leads to potentially open a space for applying multicultural education as an alternative model for mental revolution in teaching Intercultural Communication to university students.

Unity in Diversity (Bhineka Tunggal Ika) can only be maintained if diversity, human rights, social justice, and alternative lifestyles for all people, it is necessary for a quality education and includes all efforts to make the full range of cultures available to students; it views a culturally pluralistic society as a positive force and welcomes differences as vehicles for better understanding the global society are done systematically not only in formally but also informally.

The implications of the research are:

- a. The university has to place the multicultural education as one of the special unit, a program or even a subject as a means to alienate the conflicts.
- b. The university should establish a multicultural council that functions as mediator to resolve conflicts when they happens.
- c. The university needs to be aware that conflicts are prone problems that can occur any times at any places with any focuses if we do not prepare the means to overcome them.

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