

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN INDONESIA'S "MERDEKA" CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT

Aim. Using James A. Banks' (2003) four approaches, this study is aimed at exploring how multicultural education content is integrated in Indonesia's "Merdeka" (Emancipated) Curriculum, officially launched in 2022 as a new school curriculum. This examines how the Indonesian government consistently develops multicultural education in the curriculum as a continuous response to the increasing diversity of its society.

Methods. This study employs a qualitative content analysis method, selecting the Learning Outcomes document and Textbooks of Pancasila Education and Religious Education subjects as samples. It selects information from the published documents based on several keywords and strategies.

Results. The new curriculum variably contains multicultural education. Pancasila and Catholic education use the social action approach to challenge students to think of actions that may be employed to solve diversity-related social problems, while other subject curricula remain focused on developing multicultural qualities in students or using the transformation approach. There is no indication that the curriculum uses the contributions and additive approaches.

Conclusion. Banks's (2003) approaches to the integration of multicultural content in curriculum can be traced in the new Merdeka Curriculum in a various degree in every subject being studied in this research. The curriculum needs further improvements to incorporate a more critical approach towards the social reality of diversity and provides firm guidelines for students to learn and take social actions. This study, however, is limited to see multicultural education in several related subjects, not as a whole-school educational process on which future studies should be focused.

Keywords: multicultural education, Merdeka Curriculum, Indonesia, religious education, tolerance

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is well known for its diverse society. Consisting of more than 270 million people, according to the census in 2019 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021), this populous country is characterised by diversity in terms of religions, traditional beliefs, ethnicities, cultures, and languages. Although most of its populations adheres to Islam, those from other religions shape this country's multireligious features and their contribution to the country's creative process is by no means trivial. Furthermore, thanks to the development of technology and means of mobility, Indonesian society has been increasingly diverse, exposing its members to substantial differences and diversity. Voluntary migrations because of job demands, studies, and other factors have mounted quite significantly in the last decades in which around 10 million people became in-migrants in 2010 to seek better lives (Sukamdi & Mujahid, 2015). This movement provides an opportunity for people to experience more differences and learn to develop appropriate attitudes to this reality.

School is undoubtedly a society in miniature. The construction of school population likely resembles that of society (Bezzina, 2018; Gollnick & Chinn, 2009). In other words, the population of teachers and pupils represents the diversity of community where the school exists. Considering the increasing diversity of Indonesian society, one can predict the same trend in school populations; students experience differences

more intensely than before (Hoon, 2013). Technological development characterised by more intensive and massive use of the Internet leads to a situation in which people interact with those previously unimaginable to communicate with. They now build communication with others from different backgrounds. As evident in research, school children and teenagers use the technology intensively for both learning and social purposes (Kumi-Yeboah, 2018; Merry, 2003). This opens a great opportunity for them to learn new things and new people who come from different backgrounds.

While natural exposures to differences can support students' learning process to understand diversity and develop positive attitudes, more explicit and deliberate programmes and strategies of multicultural education become increasingly important (Raihani, 2014). Schools in this context are faced with the urgency to develop programmes that will equip students with multicultural understanding, beliefs, values, and attitudes to enable them to become actively contributing citizens. According to Sabrina Zirkel (2008), schools and colleges play a significant role in dealing with prejudice, discrimination, and injustice that might be naturally experienced by students. Therefore, it is important for schools to create conditions for improved student learning and academic outcomes across all groups (Banks, 2010, 2011). Also, schools are venues where intergroup interactions can be encouraged and promoted in a careful way. In short, although students may learn diversity naturally, all that they learn is not necessarily positive. Hence, deliberate multicultural education through curriculum and the school process remains important to help students deal with diversity in a positive manner.

This research, therefore, is aimed at investigating whether and how multicultural education is contained in the new curriculum. This new curriculum is referred to 'Merdeka' (Independent) Curriculum, launched officially in 2022 (Randall et al., 2022). This research is important because multicultural education in Indonesia is mandatory according to the 2003 Education Law (Kementrian Pendidikan Nasional, 2003), but still needs improvement to create schools for positive multicultural mixing among students. Indonesia has educational policies that promote multiculturalism, but which cannot be effectively translated in reality (Hoon, 2013; Raihani, 2018b). Principals and teachers have not sufficiently understood how multicultural education should be developed and implemented. Multicultural education has also used a partial approach by inserting information of diversity and multiculturalism in several chosen subjects such as religions and Pancasila (the nation's philosophy consisting of five principles) and citizenship education (Nakaya, 2018; Parker, 2018). In these subjects, students were taught to understand diversity as a reality and encouraged to develop positive attitudes accordingly.

This research is significant in providing information of the new curriculum reform and its concerns with educating children for multicultural citizenship in the context of Indonesia. Previous research shows that multicultural education in this country has been part of the government's attention indicated in various policies and curricula, but its practice in schools remains sporadic and very much dependent on individual schools, principals and teachers (Parker, 2018; Raihani, 2014). This research can also

provide an important addition to the discourse of diversity in the context of a religious country like Indonesia where religious teachings may support or otherwise the enactment of multicultural education.

INDONESIA'S NEW SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Since its independence in 1945, Indonesia has issued a number of school curricula, namely: 1947 Curriculum, 1964 Curriculum, 1968 Curriculum, 1975 Curriculum, 1984 Curriculum, 1994 Curriculum, 2006 Curriculum, 2013 Curriculum, and now 2022 Curriculum named as Merdeka (Independent) Curriculum (Abdullah, 2007; Alhamuddin, 2014). Some experts denounce that every new minister of education changes school curriculum, and the most notable change is from 1994 curriculum to 2006 curriculum because at this point teachers experienced a dramatic shift from merely curriculum implementers to curriculum developers, following the political and education decentralisation starting from the 1998 reformation movement (Bjork, 2003; Raihani, 2007). In 2013, the Indonesian government issued '2013 Curriculum', which is based on student competencies. It, however, turned out to be more complicated for teachers because of its heavy administrative requirements (Gunawan, 2017). It was more instructive than the previous curriculum undermining the liberty of teachers in developing their own subject curriculum.

In 2022, the government introduced "*Merdeka Curriculum*" (lit. Independent Curriculum) as part of the Education Minister's larger ambition of "*Merdeka Belajar*" (lit. Independent Learning) (Randall et al., 2022). This new curriculum places a greater emphasis on student-centred approach, differentiated learning based on student diagnostic assessment, and the nurture of students' characters based on Pancasila values through *Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (P5 or Project for Strengthening Pancasila-based Student Profiles). P5, an integral part of the curriculum, is a project-based learning and should be conducted outside the classroom (Badan Standar Kurikulum dan Asesmen Pendidikan [BSKAP], 2023b). This curriculum promises a lot, although some ideas look repetitive of the previous curricula, but emerge in new terms and packages. Based on a larger unpublished study conducted internally by the education ministry, teachers have started adapting to the new curriculum in various ways. Urban teachers seem to have a wider access to information and knowledge of the curriculum implementation than rural educators (Pusat Standar Kebijakan Pendidikan [PSKP], 2023).

PANCASILA AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN INDONESIA

In Indonesian education, Pancasila and Religious Education are two subjects that have been used to inculcate students with certain beliefs, values, and tenets. These two subjects are compulsory in all streams and levels (Raihani, 2014). In the previous

curriculum, Pancasila is incorporated with Citizenship, so it becomes a subject of Pancasila and Citizenship. Now, it is named only Pancasila Education. Religion subjects remain the same in terms of names such as Islamic Religion and Character Education (BSKAP, 2023a). In the case of Pancasila, the omission of Citizenship in the subject's name has not in fact changed the contents because citizenship education remains significantly evident in the subject. The naming of Character Education in the religion subjects seems to imply an explicit aspiration to see the impacts of religious education into character building in students. There has been criticism of the ineffectiveness of religious education in shaping students' behaviour (Mu'ti, 2023).

The Indonesian government, particularly after the alleged 1965 communist *coup d'état*, has substantiated Pancasila as a means to internalise national beliefs and values into Indonesian people (Nishimura, 1995). In education, the New Order government developed a subject called *Pendidikan Moral Pancasila* (Pancasila Moral Education) which contained elaborated teachings of Pancasila values in the aspects of both moral and citizenship based on its interpretation. Similarly, the post-reform governments have considered Pancasila as a unifying ideology for diverse Indonesian communities, and more particularly the current Joko Widodo administration following the New Order regime has essentialised Pancasila in political, social, and educational spheres. As a consequence of consistent treatment of this nation's ideology, many believe that Pancasila has been quite instrumentally successful in shaping the Indonesian people's character through its massive campaigns in society and education at school (Benawa et al., 2023; Fitriyani et al., 2020).

As a compulsory subject, religious (Islamic, Catholic, Protestant, etc.) education in Indonesia is considered strategically important in shaping people's morality, overcoming moral problems, and nurturing multicultural behaviour (Mu'ti, 2023). In Indonesia, religious education in school is a state requirement, and it is state's responsibility to direct religious education for the benefit of all its people. Following Michael Grimmitt's (1987) categorisation of religious teaching, Indonesia's religious education is largely confessional or teaching religion, although in some parts of the subject teaching about religions is introduced. Several studies suggest that religious education in this country is heavily oriented to understanding and commitment to religious rituals, but its teaching practices quite rarely expose students to different perspectives and challenge their critical thinking ability (Mu'ti, 2023; Parker, 2018; Raihani, 2014). Moreover, some religious education curricula such as Islamic Religion Education was overloaded (Mu'ti, 2023; Raihani, 2010, 2018a). This situation could not produce an ideal practice of religious education in the context of multicultural Indonesia.

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION APPROACHES

By definition, 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 all have an equal chance to achieve academically in school” (Smith, 2009, p. 45). This definition places a great emphasis on schools being a venue where every individual student from any background is equally treated and given opportunity to gain success. Multicultural education has been of interest to both education practitioners and researchers in response to the increasing diversity of society. It is considered as an appropriate way to deal with the complexity of societal construction, changes, and interests to produce education that caters for the needs of all students (Banks, 2011).

There are several approaches to multicultural education. One of them is focused on the creation of school and its environment as a place for students from various backgrounds to experience equally good quality education. This approach works on all school components to move together towards achieving multicultural goals and objectives (Lynch, 1986; Raihani, 2014). It is relevant with James A. Banks’s (1986) definition of multicultural education, that is, “an inclusive concept used to describe a wide variety of school practices, programmes and materials designed to help children from diverse groups to experience educational quality” (p.222). This idea of whole-school approach to multicultural education responds to its complexity, which not only involves the development of students’ understanding of diversity, but also wants to internalise beliefs, values, and attitudes of multicultural citizens.

With regard to the school curriculum, there are specific approaches such as Christine E. Sleeter and Carl A. Grant’s (2007) five approaches and Banks’s (2003) four approaches. Yet, for the purpose of this article, the later seems more appropriate to use as an angle to look at the new Indonesian curriculum. Banks set out four levels of integration of a multicultural curriculum, namely: the contributions approach, the additive approach, the transformation approach, and the social action approach. The contributions approach deals with promoting cultural elements, events, or individuals that are often neglected in the mainstream curriculum. This seeks to show the contributions of other elements towards the construction of society in the curriculum, although in Banks’ opinion, this approach often fails to understand the roles played by heroes/heroines in the overall context of the US society (Banks, 2003). The additive approach refers to a curricular activity to add content, concepts, themes, and perspectives to the existing curriculum without changing its structure. Banks explains that this can be done in the forms of book, unit, or course additions to inform students of the reality of diversity.

While the previous two approaches use a minor infusion to the curriculum and see differences from the lens of the dominant groups, the transformation approach moves beyond to see diversity from diverse points of view. It tries to invite students to see differences from more than one perspective. Through this, students will be able to expand their understanding of the nature, development, and complexity of society. The social action approach moves beyond the transformation approach by incorporat-

ing social actions involving students to make decisions and take appropriate actions relevant to the lessons presented in the learning unit. By this approach, students learn to understand how to participate in social change after they develop social criticism and ability to analyse social realities and ideals. The social action approach consists of three components that must be incorporated in classroom teaching, namely: a decision problem or question, an inquiry that provides data related to the decision problem, and value inquiry and moral analysis (Banks, 2003). In short, this approach invites students to ponder upon diversity and its complex impacts and take actions to achieve social justice for all different groups.

METHODS

Content analysis is a method usually used in qualitative methodologies. It was originally used in communication studies through quantitative mechanism and developed in qualitative traditions to give a useful way to approach written data beyond counting numbers (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Content analysis is defined as “any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings” (Patton, 2002, p.453). This definition suggests that content analysis is an analytical method to understand or make meanings from a collection of documents. The documents can take the form of textbooks, curricula, essays, communication scripts, and so forth. In this study, as suggested in several books (Elo et al., 2014; Fraenkel et al., 2012), we conducted content analysis through the following steps, namely: defining the objectives, making decisions on samples, developing categories, anticipating keywords or themes, and drawing conclusions.

We took curriculum documents and textbooks of senior secondary schools in the subjects of Pancasila and Religious Education as samples. Both types of documents are available online (BSKAP, 2022, 2023a). We selected Pancasila and Religious Education because from the previous studies issues related to diversity are mostly presented in these subjects. We deliberately limited our search in these for practical purposes. In the Religious Education, there are separated subjects for each religion: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, but for practical reasons, we only selected textbooks on Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Hinduism. This does not mean that other two religions are not important, but the textbooks available online are not as complete as the selected ones. Also, such selection in our opinion would be able to represent religions followed by the majority and most of the minority populations in Indonesia.

From both curriculum documents and textbooks, we sought information of student learning outcomes and topics related to the categories of *religious diversity*, *cultural diversity*, *attitudes towards diversity*, and *social action* to overcome impacts of diversity. The construction of these categories reflects Banks’ (2003) four approaches

to multicultural education as previously explained. This categorisation enabled us to see if the new curriculum uses any of his approaches. During our search, we used keywords that fall commonly within the concept of multiculturalism (Brutherton, 2004; Parekh, 2006), namely: *keragaman* (diversity), *kemajemukan* (plurality), *hormat* (respect), *harmonis* (harmony), *toleransi* (tolerance), and *bekerja sama* (collaboration or working together). Using these words, we were able to locate relevant information in the documents, categorise, and interpret according to the above-mentioned approaches. However, in analysing textbooks, to make it easier for us to locate relevant information, we used table of contents of each book to select which textbooks we should give a closer investigation. We carefully read the information, make interpretation, and draw conclusions for this study.

RESULTS

In this section, we will present findings of this study in two parts, namely multicultural content in the curriculum documents of Pancasila and Religion Classes and multicultural content in the textbooks these subjects.

Multicultural content in the curriculum (learning outcomes) document

The learning outcomes document, designed and developed by the central government through the Body of Standard, Curriculum, and Education Assessment, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research & Technology (MoECRT) (BSKAP, 2023a), contains very generic guidelines of every subject from primary to secondary schools. By developing learning outcomes, MoECRT expects teachers to be responsible to develop the curriculum further for their classroom teaching such as lesson plans, strategies, materials, and evaluation. The ministry was trying to empower teachers to become more independent curriculum developers in the context of decentralised Indonesia.

The documents that we downloaded from the official online sources and analysed are as follows:

- Learning Outcomes of Pancasila Education for Primary (Grades 1–6), Junior Secondary (Grades 7–9), and Senior Secondary Schools (Grades 10–12) or Phases A – F
- Learning Outcomes of Islamic Religion and Character Education for Primary (Grades 1–6), Junior Secondary (Grades 7–9), and Senior Secondary Schools (Grades 10–12) or Phases A – F
- Learning Outcomes of Catholic Religion and Character Education for Primary (Grades 1–6), Junior Secondary (Grades 7–9), and Senior Secondary Schools (Grades 10–12) or Phases A – F

- Learning Outcomes of Protestant Religion and Character Education for Primary (Grades 1–6), Junior Secondary (Grades 7–9), and Senior Secondary Schools (Grades 10–12) or Phases A – F
- Learning Outcomes of Hindu Religion and Character Education for Primary (Grades 1–6), Junior Secondary (Grades 7–9), and Senior Secondary Schools (Grades 10–12) or Phases A – F
- Textbooks of Pancasila Education for Senior Secondary Schools (Grades 10–12) or Phases E & F
- Textbooks of Islamic Religion and Character Education for Senior Secondary Schools (Grades 10–12) or Phases E & F
- Textbooks of Catholic Religion and Character Education for Senior Secondary Schools (Grades 10–12) or Phases E & F
- Textbooks of Protestant Religion and Character Education for Senior Secondary Schools (Grades 10–12) or Phases E & F
- Textbooks of Hindu Religion and Character Education for Senior Secondary Schools (Grades 10–12) or Phases E & F

The curriculum document is structured in seven sections. The first section explains the term of learning outcomes which are spread into six phases, i.e., Phases A, B and C are for primary school (Grades 1 to 6), D for junior secondary school (Grades 7 to 9), E for senior secondary school (Grade 10), and F for senior secondary school (Grades 11 & 12). Learning Outcomes is a set of competencies students should achieve in learning, but it is not operationalised until teachers develop lesson plans. The second section describes the rationales of subject. Depending on the subject, the curriculum document explains its philosophy and reasoning so that teachers understand the subject they are teaching in a holistic way. The third section outlines the curriculum objectives of the subject followed by the fourth section which explains the characteristics of the subject. These characteristics are completed with elements contained in the subject, which inform teachers about its main content from primary to secondary levels. This part serves as signposts for teachers of their curriculum delivery targets. The fifth section continues to explain learning outcomes for each phase from A to F. This is different from the previous 2013 curriculum which has a separate document for each grade. Through integrating all the phases in one document, this curriculum facilitates an easier way for teachers to understand each subject curriculum, which consists of a series learning outcomes and objectives in a continuous manner. The sixth section outlines learning outcomes for each element of the subject curriculum. Finally, the seventh element of the curriculum asks teachers to make reflections on what they have understood from the list of learning outcomes and implications on classroom practices including support they will need for effective teaching.

The above standardised structure of the curriculum document helps teachers to understand the learning outcomes relatively easily, although they still need to adapt

to a new requirement for becoming more autonomous agents in the curriculum development process. This was unfortunately absent during the previous curriculum because of many administrative requirements that led them find shortcuts by copying or using readily available materials (Gunawan, 2017).

We present findings of multicultural content in the curriculum documents of the selected subjects, namely: Pancasila, Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Hinduism. We tabulate results of our analysis of the keyword occurrences in these subjects' curriculum as follows:

Table 1

Multicultural Content in the Curriculum Document (Learning Outcomes)

Subjects	Keywords					
	Keragaman (diversity)	Kemajemukan (plurality)	Hormat (respect)	Harmonis (harmony)	Toleransi (tolerance)	bekerja sama (collaboration)
Pancasila	16	0	4	1	1	0
Islam	2	0	8	0	11	2
Catholicism	2	1	7	1	1	0
Protestant- ism	1	21	0	4	6	0
Hinduism	0	0	2	4	3	0

Source. Own research.

From the above table, each of the selected curricula is concerned with multicultural realities that characterise Indonesia. Pancasila curriculum emphasises more on diversity as it essentialises *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (unity in diversity) as one element of the subject. In every phase, the curriculum maintains the focus on how students should internalise diversity-related values and competencies. In Phase F, which is for secondary level, it mentions “*Peserta didik mampu menganalisis potensi konflik dan memberi solusi di tengah keragaman dalam masyarakat; serta peserta didik berperan aktif mempromosikan Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*” (BSKAP, 2023, p.18). This means “students are able to analyse conflict potentials and offer solutions in such a diverse society; and take an active role to promote *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*”. Pancasila places more emphasis on diversity, which appears 16 times in the documents. Islam and Protestantism have different focuses in teaching students about multiculturalism. The former is focused on respecting others (8 times), nurturing tolerance (11 times) and working together (2 times), while the latter is on plurality (21 times) and tolerance (6 times). Both Pancasila and Protestantism are heavily concerned with the social realities of differences in Indonesia as they contain the words ‘diversity’ and ‘plurality’ respectively, which are closely related. Meanwhile, Catholicism places an emphasis on respecting differences (7 times), and surprisingly Hinduism does not show much concern with diversity, and only mentions harmony in four places and tolerance in three places.

It is surprising to see that only Islam mentions ‘bekerja sama’ (collaboration) twice in the curriculum document, while others are absent. Islam and Protestantism mention also tolerance more than any other listed religions.

Seeing the above data, we cannot yet draw any firm conclusion on which of the religions curricula contains more multicultural education and which one is not. Although each of the keywords we used to select information from the curriculum documents is distinctive to others, they are closely related. Therefore, if we calculated in total Protestantism has 32 mentions of such keywords, whilst Hinduism has only 9 mentions. From this figure, we learned that all the curriculum documents mention in varying degrees keywords of multicultural education, with Islam moves one step further to include ‘collaboration’ as one teaching focus.

Multicultural Education in the Textbooks

As explained before, we used table of contents to guide us to look for relevant information in the textbooks. The following table describes the proportion of multicultural content in the textbooks of each selected subject, which is manifested in how much each textbook spends to present and teach such content to students (range of pages).

Table 2
Multicultural Content in the Textbooks

Textbooks			
Pancasila	Grade X: 39–46; 148–157	18 of 240 pages	12%
	Grade XI: 71–79; 83–86; 88–91; 95–98	21 of 182 pages	
	Grade XII: 1–25; 139–155	42 of 238 pages	
Islam	Grade X:	0 of 328 pages	6%
	Grade XI: 175–210	36 of 356 pages	
	Grade XII: 165–191	27 of 354 pages	
Catholicism	Grade X:	0 of 266 pages	7.5%
	Grade XI:	0 of 232 pages	
	Grade XII: 121–134, 158–169, 193–222	56 of 252 pages	
Protestantism	Grade X: 165–178	14 of 236 pages	8.5%
	Grade XI:	0 of 152 pages	
	Grade XII: 113–132; 133–148	35 of 190 pages	
Hinduism	Grade X:	0 of 162 pages	0.5%
	Grade XI: 34–36	3 of 198 pages	
	Grade XII:	0 of 215 pages	

Source. Own research.

It is clear from the table that Pancasila contains a larger proportion of multicultural content compared to other subjects and has a more consistent approach to provide multicultural education for secondary school students in each grade. Protestantism places a great emphasis on multiculturalism by having a specific chapter dedicated to this topic beside other relevant topics in Grades 10 and 12 textbooks. Islam spends only 6% of its curriculum in all grades discussing multicultural issues due to many religious teachings it wants to cover as can be seen from the number of pages each book has. In Catholicism textbooks, multicultural education content is focused on in Grade 12, while in Hinduism, it is contained in Grade 11 textbook. The small proportion (0.5%) of multicultural education contained in the Hinduism textbook looks consistent with the finding in the curriculum document (learning outcomes) above.

Next, we categorised the information contained the subject textbooks into the above mentioned four categories – religious diversity, cultural diversity, attitudes towards diversity, and social action.

Religious Diversity

Religious diversity is one of the distinctive features of Indonesian society. All the textbooks but the Hindu textbook present a rationale portion of religious diversity that Indonesian society accepts as a reality. The Pancasila textbook places a great emphasis on building students' capacity to mitigate potential conflicts that might happen due to religious and other forms of diversity. In Grade 10 textbook, for example, the emphasis is on how to manage diversity to become a strong capital for Indonesian development. In the Islam textbooks, religious diversity is one of the important topics that students need to understand, although they are focused more on tolerance (Grade 11) and on religious moderation (Grade 12) to equip students with a balanced understanding between being pious or committed individuals and becoming citizens in multicultural Indonesia. Unfortunately, there is no detailed explanation about what and how religious diversity looks like in Indonesian society.

Protestantism discusses religious diversity in Grade 10 textbook and argues for its importance from a Christian theological basis. Again, this textbook encourages students to understand and accept the reality of religious diversity in Indonesia and it goes further to argue that diversity can even be found within Christianity in Indonesia. In Grade 12 textbooks, it exemplifies the establishment of Churches that are usually based on ethnic groups; every ethnic group of Christians erects a Church for its community, but they are open for other Christian groups to access their services. In Catholicism education, religious diversity is briefly mentioned in Grade 12 textbook. It emphasises the need to work together to create peace and harmony. The textbook encourages interfaith dialogues through the teachings of fundamental tenets of each religion to all people of different backgrounds.

In short, the textbooks of Pancasila and religion subjects briefly mention religious diversity as a strong feature of Indonesian society, and essentialise corresponding attitudes and actions to face it. However, such a lack of comprehensive description of religious diversity cannot possibly enable students to become multi-religious literates, respectful and tolerant individuals.

Cultural Diversity

The textbook of Pancasila presents only brief information about cultural diversity. The Pancasila, Grade 11 textbook displays a picture of different traditional attires, and students are required to name from which culture such clothing items come. The textbook reminds students of the national principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* and of developing appropriate attitudes towards diversity. In Grade 10 textbook of Protestantism, cultural diversity receives a larger attention. The textbook dedicates a section discussing diversity in race, ethnicity, culture, and religion. An example of cultural diversity content is highlighted in the excerpt below:

Saudara-saudara kita di Maluku, Minahasa, Papua, dan Minangkabau juga memang berbeda secara fisik, bahasa, adat istiadat, dan artefak budaya lainnya. Ini justru memperkaya kita sebagai suatu bangsa dan negara yang berdaulat, lepas dari campur tangan negara lain yang ingin menguasai Indonesia (Suleeman, 2021, p.168).

The above text translates as: “Our brothers and sisters in Molucca, Minahasa, Papua and Minangkabau are also different in terms of physical appearance, language, traditions, and other cultural artefacts. This in fact enriches us as independent state and nation, free from other nations intervention to occupy Indonesia”. Similar emphasis is found in the Catholicism textbook of Grade 12 in which cultural diversity is emphasised quite significantly to educate students’ awareness of the reality and richness of Indonesian society. It explains that from the end of Sumatra Island to the end of Papua, Indonesia enjoys the richness of cultural diversity. There are different races, ethnicities, and traditions. The textbook argues that such diversity is an inherent teaching of Catholicism, to which its people must pay respect. Islam and Hinduism textbooks, however, do not seem interested in discussing cultural diversity.

Attitudes Towards Diversity

As indicated previously, all the textbooks analysed in this study seem more interested in nurturing students’ attitudes and competences in dealing with the reality of diverse Indonesian society. Grade 10 Pancasila textbook specifies discussions on the topic of *gotong royong* (cooperation or collaboration) in the context of multicultural society as part of Pancasila’s inherent values. Dedicated in the chapter of *Bhinneka Tunggal*

Ika, this topic is directed to refer to *gotong royong* in the field of economy to achieve justice and prosperity for the people. It says:

Prinsip gotong royong (kooperasi) dalam sistem ekonomi Pancasila, perekonomian diletakkan dalam kerangka keadilan dan kesejahteraan sosial. Keadilan merupakan hal utama yang harus didahulukan tanpa menunggu datangnya kemakmuran. Tidak boleh ada diskriminasi dalam keadilan, semua orang memiliki kedudukan yang sama (Rochimudin, et al., 2021., pp.138–139).

Translated, this means that *gotong royong* in Pancasila's economic system is promoted to realise social justice and prosperity. Justice must come first before prosperity, and there must not be discrimination in justice; all people should be equal. In the textbook of Grades 11, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika remains the central point of a chapter, but it is focused on how to be involved in conflict mitigation. Students are encouraged to develop attitudes of being polite, honest, and keen in maintaining harmony and peace. Meanwhile, Grade 12 textbook repeats the theme of *gotong royong* with the emphasis on students' involvement in social activities they may find in their neighbourhood and school. They need to develop several qualities such as equality, mutual understanding, positive thinking, and tolerance. The textbook tries to convince students that in *gotong royong* they will find such values as togetherness, unity, sacrifice, and reciprocal help.

The Protestantism, Grade 12 textbook teaches students to develop positive attitudes towards differences in terms of race, ethnicity, and gender by following Bible teachings. As Christian teenagers, students are commanded in the textbook to develop anti-discriminative as well as loving attitudes. It tells students a story of Samaritans who always want to spread love and care to others without discrimination. In the next chapter, when it discusses multiculturalism, the textbook admits that Bibles do not specifically talk about it, but emphasise values and attitudes of love, good deeds, equality, and salvation. It stresses also that all differences are united in the spirit of Jesus Christ. Similarly, in Catholicism, students are required to develop attitudes and competences that work against disunity such as accepting differences as God's blessing, nurturing mutual respect and tolerance, contributing to a more just and prosperous society, and working on interreligious communication and understanding. Related to interreligious communication, the textbook dedicates a chapter to discuss interfaith dialogues to become communal awareness of Indonesian people. It exemplifies several events of interfaith communications between Islam and Catholicism such as exchange visits by each other's religious leaders and Catholic leaders studying at an Islamic university in Yogyakarta.

Meanwhile, the Islam, Grade 11 textbook chooses 'tolerance' as a focus of discussion in a dedicated chapter to teach students about strengthening harmony among people of diversity. In this textbook, students are encouraged to develop tolerant attitudes towards differences both within Islam and outside the Islamic community by showing the Islamic tenets of intra- and inter-religious tolerances. The textbook

also presents some histories of how Muslims practiced tolerance over time. However, like other religious teaching in Indonesia, the textbook wants to create an integral personality of Muslims who are committed to their religion as well as tolerant individuals. Some tolerant attitudes listed in the textbook include respecting different opinions, respecting friends who practice their religions, live together with people of other races, ethnicities, and religions, and help others for the sake of humanity. Completing the teaching of tolerance, in Grade 12 textbook, students are taught to be moderate Muslims who can demonstrate peaceful attitudes, uphold just values, maintain balances between two extremes, develop tolerance towards others, become more persistent in doing good deeds, and help to remove difficulties from people. Religious moderation as the textbook explains is intended to reduce extremism and violence based on religion. It must be promoted by leaders of every religion to support the creation of a more harmonious society.

Mengandung maksud pengurangan kekerasan; penghindaran ke-ekstrim-an dalam menjalankan ajaran agama. Kata moderasi selalu dilawankan dengan kata radikalisme dan ekstrimisme (Chozin & Untoro, 2022, p. 167).

Although it does not consider diversity as one topic of focus, Grade 11 Hindu textbook highlights a set of attitudes that support living together in peace and harmony. The attitudes include *asah*, *asih*, *asuh* towards others, which means mutual love, mutual share, and mutual respect. It further explains that in Hindusim, the *tat twam asi* concept is translated into that every member of society mutually feel sad and happy because each is part of the whole (Susila, 2021).

Social Actions

The Grade 10 textbook of Pancasila does not seem to be concerned with building students' competences in social actions to strengthen multicultural education. Even though it provides a special section called "*refleksi*" or reflection in the end of every chapter, it orients this section more to contain several questions to check whether students have understood the lesson or not (post-test). However, in Grade 11 textbook, students are taught to become more socially active by analysing social conflicts in society. They are invited to understand sources of conflicts and strategies in conflict resolutions. In the end of the chapter "*Harmoni and keberagaman*" or (Harmony and diversity), students are instructed to form groups and each group should analyse a conflict that happens in their surrounding by identifying reasons for the conflict, its complexity, and its solutions that students can think of. They are also asked to identify stakeholders that may be helpful in the conflict resolutions. The conflict they can identify is not only a large-scale societal conflict, but also conflict among students such bullying practices. In the Grade 12 textbook, social actions to strengthen multicultural understanding are taught to students through project-based learning by asking them

to work together with peers to create a waste management system. They plan, develop, and implement the system and promote it in the school neighbourhood.

Except for the Catholic subject, all the religions' textbooks do not seem to move beyond building students' understanding of diversity and developing their corresponding attitudes like what has been previously explained. The reflection section at the end of each chapter and only provides some questions for further comprehension of the lessons. The Catholicism, Grade 12 textbook allocates an opportunity during the lessons for students to think and discuss possible social activities in the context of social intolerance (p.161). It is mentioned that teachers are guided to invite students to search for intolerance cases that have occurred in Indonesia. Students discuss in groups and try to answer the following questions: a) What triggers inter-religious conflicts? b) What are the impacts of religious intolerance? c) What should community members do in the context of heterogeneous Indonesia? d) How would you as a Catholic student deal, faced with intolerant events and why? After group discussion, students are to report discussion results to the teacher who elaborates further issues being discussed. Although it is hardly extended to undertake real social actions, this method may open wide an opportunity to comprehend the social problems and think of various solutions.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this research confirm the previous findings that the Indonesian education authority consistently shows a great interest in implementing multicultural education in schools because of increasing contextual demands for places for students to learn diversity and how to live in and with it (Parker, 2018; Raihani, 2014). Beside the forgoing, multicultural education is mandatory in 2003 Education Law (Kementrian Pendidikan Nasional, 2003). The previous studies reveal that multicultural education has been directed to use curricular approach rather than whole-school approach (Lynch, 1986; Parker, 2018; Raihani, 2014). Nevertheless, this research reviews the newly introduced Merdeka Curriculum and relevant textbooks to understand how multicultural education is consistently designed and developed.

This research found that the new curriculum – represented by Pancasila and Religious Education subjects – contains multicultural teachings that can be categorised into religious diversity, cultural diversity, attitudes towards diversity, and social actions, although only Pancasila and Catholic Education provide an opportunity for students to think of social actions to be engaged in helping to develop multicultural society. Using Banks' (2003) four approaches, namely the contribution, the additive, the transformation, and the social actions, we cannot say that the new curriculum uses the contribution and additive approaches because none of the learning outcomes and textbooks of the subjects introduces contributions of people from the non-mainstream backgrounds and promotes the dominant perspective to see social diversity.

Our analysis started by looking at how the curriculum of the subjects uses the transformation approach as the new curriculum invites students to think of and see diversity by using various perspectives. In Pancasila, for example, all students are introduced to the concept of 'gotong royong' which should engage and benefit all community members regardless of their backgrounds. The textbooks provide an ample opportunity for students to learn and understand the complex realities of Indonesian society, which is constructed from different groups, and they should use different perspectives to see such a complexity. For teachers, they can engage students in a learning environment that helps to develop such qualities as tolerance, justice, equality, empathy, and respect. Like the findings of previous studies (Benawa et al., 2023; Fitriasisari et al., 2020; Nishimura, 1995), Pancasila as a subject remains to play a pivotal role in delivering multicultural education.

Religious education in the new curriculum remains compulsory and confessional. It is used as a means for nurturing students' faith and commitment to their own religions. In Grimmit's (1987) classification, religious teaching in Indonesian schools uses a model of teaching religion. This is fully confirmed in the new curriculum of secondary school, in which studies about other religions in general gain no attention. Religious diversity is mentioned as a characteristic of Indonesian society, but no further elaborations are made for students to understand every other religion. From the textbooks, the subject of Islamic Religion Education and Characters looks relatively heavily overloaded as each book contains more than 300 pages. This would in fact repeat a classic problem of the previous Islamic education curriculum, which contains more materials to deliver than time allocation (Mu'ti, 2023; Raihani, 2010, 2018a). Nonetheless, all the religious education subjects promote tolerance, respect, recognition, and peace to students so that they develop qualities relevant to their living in such a multicultural society. More or less, in these subjects, they are given an opportunity to see diversity from different perspectives. This is a type of the transformation approach that the curriculum uses (Banks, 2003).

As indicated before, the curriculum of Pancasila and Catholic education respectively has moved in some ways beyond the transformation approach to the social action approach. In Pancasila, as presented in the previous section, students are given an opportunity to conduct a conflict analysis and its resolution in an imaginary situation. They think of social activities they can be engaged as members of a multicultural society to play a role in a conflict resolution. Similarly, in the curriculum of Catholic Education and Characters, as suggested in Banks's (2003) social action approach, students are invited to answer challenging questions of issues around intolerant incidences and reflect on roles they can play as Catholic students and members of society. This way, according to Banks (2003) has stepped through the third stage of the social action approach, i.e., value inquiry and moral analysis. He says:

Students are given opportunities to examine, clarify, and reflect on their values, attitudes, beliefs, and feelings related to racial prejudice and discrim-

ination. The teacher can provide the students with case studies from various sources, such as newspapers and magazines. The case studies can be used to involve the students in discussions and role-playing situations that enable them to express and to examine their attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about prejudice and discrimination (Banks, 2003, p.254).

In conclusion, the new set of learning outcomes and textbooks of the selected subjects – Pancasila, Islamic, Catholic, Protestant, and Hindu education – continue being concerned with, and variably contain, multicultural education to develop positive attitudes and competencies towards multiculturalism. Banks's (2003) approaches to the integration of multicultural content in curriculum can be traced in the new Merdeka Curriculum to various degrees in every subject being studied in this research. Pancasila serves as a stronghold for guiding students to become tolerant and multicultural citizens. Religious education is in general concerned with seeding faith and religious commitment in students or teaching in religion (Grimmitt, 1987), while trying to substantiate teachings of multiculturalism. Using the transformation approach (Banks, 2003), all of the subjects have the objectives to develop multicultural attitudes and competencies in students to live in peace and harmony in Indonesia's diverse society, although in our observation teaching about other religions and cultures needs to have stronger emphasis. Meanwhile, the social action approach introduced by Banks (2003) suits students at senior secondary schools that this study is focused on. It challenges those students to apply a higher order of thinking skills to analyse social situations where they are going to apply theories taught in the classroom. Therefore, all the selected subjects should have used this approach to support the teaching of multiculturalism.

Analysing the curriculum and textbooks of the selected subjects, we believe that Indonesian education is now going to the right direction, although improvements are needed to incorporate more teaching about religious and cultural diversity and move one further step to challenge students to reflect on social actions to realise peace and harmony in society. As mentioned earlier, Merdeka Curriculum introduces P5 that uses a project-based learning approach to internalise Pancasila-based characters in students. It is explicit in the government's intention that the nature of this programme is to train students to create projects outside classroom that develop understanding of and internalise Pancasila-driven characters (BSKAP, 2023b). However, since it is a new flagship by the ministry of education, teachers need to adapt to this change. According to one study (PSKP, 2023), teachers are still not convinced if they understand well the concept of P5 and its implementation. How effective this programme will be to instil multicultural values in students remains unknown.

For future research, it would be an interesting endeavour to analyse the whole curriculum and textbooks across all levels of schooling, not only senior secondary school level. This is to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of how multicultural education is conceptualised and implemented across schooling levels and grades. Another research that would be significantly useful but has suffered from trivial atten-

tion by education policy makers and researchers is multicultural education in Indonesia's teacher education programmes. Research can be done to analyse the programme curriculum, student teachers' understanding of multiculturalism and multicultural education, and even university lecturers' understanding of the topics. Quality of schools cannot be divorced from quality of teacher education.

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