
James A. Banks' Multicultural Approach to Social Studies Learning at SMP Negeri 2 Kotagajah

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Abstract. Social Studies (IPS) learning plays a strategic role in instilling multicultural values in students. Multicultural values such as empathy, tolerance, and appreciation for differences are important to instill from an early age so that students can later live harmoniously amid diversity. This study aims to describe multicultural values in IPS learning through James A. Banks' four multicultural approaches at SMP Negeri 2 Kotagajah, as well as to identify supporting and inhibiting factors in its implementation. This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach, with data collection techniques including interviews, observations, and documentation. The research subjects are IPS teachers, the principal, and students, with sampling techniques using snowball sampling, and data analysis techniques employing the interactive analysis model of Miles & Huberman. The research results indicate that social studies teachers have gradually implemented a multicultural approach, beginning with the inclusion of figures or heroes from various regions in the learning materials, the use of innovative film media, cross-cultural discussions, as well as positive social activities. Supporting factors include adequate facilities, school programs based on diversity, and collaboration between teachers, parents or guardians, and the community, whereas inhibiting factors are the limitations of some teachers in utilizing learning technologies.

Keywords: Multicultural, Social Studies Learning, James A. Banks

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country rich in diversity, where within it there are various ethnic groups, languages, cultural traditions, customs, and religions. (Munir, 2021). The existence of this diversity produces a form of social dynamics, in which individuals live interdependently with one another and continuously engage in ongoing social interactions. This interaction process does not occur only in the personal realm, but also extends to economic, educational, social, and spiritual activities, which ultimately form a social unity in which differences exist yet remain harmonious. (Ahmad Arif Fadilah, Nabilah Qanitah, 2025).

However, behind all this existing diversity, there is certainly also the potential to create conflict if the differences are not properly managed. Throughout the nation's history, issues related to religious, ethnic, and cultural differences have often been triggers for conflicts that significantly impact the nation's social stability. This indicates that diversity, if not managed with the proper mindset, can become one of the causes of disintegration. Therefore, there is a need for an effective strategy to maintain harmony amid the diversity in Indonesia. One strategy that can be implemented is multicultural education.

Zakiyyudin Baidhawi states that multicultural education is a method in the field of education and social life with the aim of instilling and teaching the meaning of diversity. (Rustam Ibrahim, 2015) Multiculturalism plays an important role in shaping the character of the younger generation, which later enables these generations to live together peacefully, uphold tolerance, and respect each other in the midst of a diverse life (Dhanial Aulia Vega et al., 2025).

One of the crucial subjects in schools for instilling multicultural values is Social Studies (IPS). IPS is a simplification of social sciences and humanities disciplines presented scientifically for educational purposes. (Musyarofah et al., 2021). *National Council for the Social Studies* (NCCS) in November 1992, social studies was defined as a subject that combines social sciences and humanities to enhance competence in diversity. (Nashrullah, 2022).

Social Studies learning offers a great opportunity for the integration of multicultural values in education. Almost all Social Studies topics contain values of tolerance, equality, and social ethics; for example, in local history material, it presents an introduction to various cultural and customary backgrounds in a particular region. (Rahmawati, 2020).

In the strategy of managing diversity by instilling multicultural values within the educational sphere, various approaches have been developed by experts. One of them is James A. Banks, a prominent specialist from the United States in the field of multiculturalism. He proposed four approaches that offer systematic ways to integrate a multicultural perspective into the learning curriculum, namely the *Contributions Approach, Additive Approach, Transformation Approach, and Social Action Approach*. (Nuraini, 2017)

The implementation of James A. Banks' four multicultural approaches is highly relevant to be studied in the field of education, one of which is their application at SMP Negeri 2 Kotagajah. The contribution approach is evident when teachers include the names of figures/heroes from various regions in social studies lessons. Furthermore, the additive approach is visible in learning activities that use film media with themes of struggle and social issues to foster a high sense of empathy among students. The transformation approach is applied when lessons that raise social issues lead students to engage in discussions that bring out perspectives from various cultural viewpoints. Meanwhile, the social action approach is reflected in community service activities through the creation of environmental care programs involving all students, regardless of their backgrounds.

Based on the observations that have been made, data shows that the number of students at SMP Negeri 2 Kotagajah is 1,049, with backgrounds of Javanese (76.08%), Lampung (11.53%), Sundanese (2.95%), Balinese (2.95%), and the rest are a mix of Javanese-Lampung, Lampung-Sundanese, Javanese-Padang, Javanese-Betawi, and others. Data on religious diversity was also obtained, dominated by Islam (96.00%), Catholicism (1.62%), Christianity (1.24%), Hinduism (0.67%), and Buddhism (0.48%). The presence of students from various ethnicities and religions shows that this school has a multicultural learning environment, where students live together harmoniously while respecting the existing differences.

Based on initial observations, social studies teachers have begun integrating multicultural values both inside and outside the classroom. However, the extent to which James A. Banks' multicultural approach is applied in learning is not yet known. Therefore, further research is needed to determine how the multicultural approach is implemented in social studies learning activities. From the initial observation, it is known that the attitude of tolerance towards diversity at SMP Negeri 2 Kotagajah has not been optimally applied. Many students still interact only with groups that share the same background. This condition indicates that the instillation of multicultural values in social studies learning has not been maximized. This is based on students' limited learning experiences regarding the introduction of diversity in general, so many students have not yet understood the values of tolerance, empathy, and different social perspectives. (Dalia et al., 2024)

Therefore, the existing diversity needs to be supported by a learning process that can instill mutual respect among students. Social Studies (IPS) learning itself plays an important role in helping students understand the values of tolerance and appreciating differences. IPS teachers need to implement learning that is more open, active, and participatory, oriented towards diversity. In this regard, this study is important to carry out to understand how the implementation of James A. Banks' multicultural values in IPS learning at SMP Negeri 2 Kotagajah takes place. This research is expected to contribute to the development of learning practices that are more open and appreciative of diversity in the educational environment.

METHOD

This study is a type of research that uses a qualitative approach in a descriptive form (Umar Sidiq, 2019). This type of approach was chosen to obtain a deep interpretation regarding the implementation of multicultural values in Social Studies (IPS) learning through the four multicultural approaches of James A. Banks, namely the Contribution Approach, Additive Approach, Transformation Approach, and Social Action Approach. The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Kotagajah, which has a student population from various ethnic and religious backgrounds.

The subjects in this study include social studies teachers, school principals, and students. The determination of research subjects was carried out using the snowball sampling technique, which is a method

of sampling conducted gradually, where the initial informants then recommend the next informants, and so on. (Lenaini, 2021).

The data collection techniques in this study were conducted using three main techniques in the qualitative approach, namely interviews, observation, and documentation. The technique used to ensure the validity of the data is triangulation, which includes source and technique triangulation, aimed at verifying the accuracy of the research by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. (Soesana et al., 2023).

Data analysis uses the interactive analysis model of Miles & Huberman, consisting of data collection, data reduction, data display, and continuous conclusion drawing until an understanding is obtained regarding the implementation of James A. Banks' multicultural approach in social studies learning, along with its supporting and inhibiting factors. (Fadli, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

A review of the implementation of a multicultural approach in social studies learning at SMP Negeri 2 Kotagajah indicates that schools with diverse ethnicities, cultures, and religions provide significant opportunities to instill values of tolerance toward differences. Based on interviews with teachers, the principal, and students, reinforced by observations and documentation, the results show that the social studies learning process has gradually and diversely integrated multicultural values. Teachers strive to apply the four multicultural approaches proposed by James A. Banks, namely the Contributions Approach, Additive Approach, Transformation Approach, and Social Action Approach. (Wijoyo et al., 2020). These four approaches are implemented through various learning activities both inside and outside the classroom that reflect attitudes of mutual respect and appreciation of differences.

The contribution approach is an effort to introduce elements of historical figures or events from various ethnic backgrounds into learning without altering the core curriculum. The implementation of this approach is carried out by teachers by introducing heroic figures in history materials from different tribal and cultural backgrounds. In addition, in economics lessons, students are invited to produce traditional foods from their respective regions. Through these activities, students are not only provided with knowledge about historical figures from different backgrounds but also learn to respect cultural differences through concrete actions such as introducing regional traditional foods.

Next, the additive approach is an approach where educators add materials, themes, or learning media that reflect cultural diversity without altering the curriculum structure. The implementation carried out by the social studies teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Kotagajah was by utilizing film media to support value-based multicultural learning. The film used was "Laskar Pelangi," which provides students with concrete examples of the importance of respecting diversity and building solidarity amidst differences. (Rosmawati et al., 2024)

The transformation approach is an advanced stage in the implementation of multicultural education, in which teachers not only add certain elements or figures to the learning process but also help students understand various social and cultural issues from diverse perspectives. Social Studies teachers explain that the implementation of this approach is carried out by encouraging students to analyze social issues from a cultural viewpoint. Through this, teachers aim to instill critical and reflective thinking in students by examining social problems from multiple different perspectives.

Meanwhile, the social action approach represents the highest stage of implementing multicultural education according to James A. Banks' perspective. At this stage, students are not only encouraged to understand and analyze social issues and diversity, but also motivated to take concrete actions that reflect empathy, values of tolerance, and social sensitivity. In this school, teachers actively involve students in social activities, specifically sharing with the surrounding residents who are considered less fortunate. This activity is carried out by collecting funds every Friday, which are then spent on basic necessities, and student representatives distribute them to the local residents.

The successful implementation of the four multicultural approaches of James A. Banks is supported by various factors, including the availability of facilities and infrastructure such as projectors, LCD, computers, and other digital learning media that help teachers present learning materials more attractively. Furthermore, school policies in creating programs that support the strengthening of diversity values, such as wearing traditional clothing on certain days, cultural activities, as well as arts extracurricular activities, also contribute to strengthening the implementation of multicultural education. Support also comes from collaboration between teachers, parents or guardians, and the community who work together to instill the values of tolerance and diversity in daily life.

However, it cannot be denied that there are still minor obstacles in the implementation of this multicultural approach, namely that some teachers are less capable of operating technology effectively in learning in this modern era. This may be due to the age factor of teachers who are no longer young. Nevertheless, this obstacle does not have a significant impact, as the school continuously conducts training to improve teachers' competencies. From the research that has been conducted, overall, the implementation of the multicultural approach at SMP Negeri 2 Kotagajah is running well and shows positive effects. The diversity within the school environment actually creates positive energy that enables learning to become more inclusive, thereby fostering students who are empathetic, tolerant, and possess a high social awareness.

Discussion

Based on the research results regarding the implementation of James A. Banks' four multicultural approaches at SMP Negeri 2 Kotagajah, it is known that social studies teachers have made efforts to align multicultural values in learning through various strategies tailored to the characteristics of each approach.

At the initial stage, the contribution approach was known to have been integrated by social studies teachers through history lessons where students were introduced to heroes from different cultural backgrounds. Through these activities, teachers sought to instill values of tolerance and nationalism, while also fostering awareness that the nation's struggle is the result of contributions from various ethnic groups (Maulidan et al., 2024). This activity is also aimed at enabling students to understand that every character has an important role regardless of their cultural background, religion, or region (Ata et al., 2024). This approach helps students realize that diversity is a strength that unites rather than divides, as each figure brings different experiences and values yet still plays a role in the nation's history. Another application can be seen in economic subjects, where students are invited to engage in production activities by making traditional foods from their respective regions, as this creates a classroom atmosphere that respects differences. These findings are in line with Nadila's research, which states that learning activities that present cultural diversity can shape students' characters to be tolerant and appreciative of differences (Nadila Wanti et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the additive approach is integrated by the Social Studies teacher through learning by utilizing film media, which makes students more excited and enthusiastic about learning. The film shown during the lesson is titled 'Laskar Pelangi'. Through this screening, students are invited to analyze the content of the film by extracting the values contained within it, such as cooperation, tolerance, and empathy, which are demonstrated by the characters in the film. (Murdhiani, 2024). The results of the study are in line with Hidayat's opinion in his research, that the use of film media in teaching and learning activities can serve as a competent means to instill positive social values in shaping students' character. (Hidayat, 2019)

The research results indicate that social studies teachers have implemented a transformative approach by actively involving students in understanding and analyzing various social issues from different cultural perspectives. In social studies learning, students are invited to discuss social problems such as crime occurring in society, by presenting the causes and solutions from each student's cultural viewpoint. Through this activity, students are encouraged to view an issue not only from one perspective but also from the perspective of other groups with different cultural backgrounds.

This is in line with Suryani's research, which states that the transformational approach aims to develop students' ability to critically understand social structures, evaluate social reality from various perspectives and cultural assumptions (Suryani, 2020). With this approach, students are encouraged to be more active in understanding social issues and sensitive to what is happening in their environment.

Meanwhile, the social action approach is carried out by involving students in various social activities, thereby fostering a sense of empathy, responsibility, and care for the environment (Handayani, 2025). In this approach, learners are encouraged not to focus solely on theoretical understanding, but are also guided to be able to apply social values in concrete actions. According to Susanto, the social action approach aims to develop learners' ability to actively participate in social actions that reflect human values and moral responsibility. (Susanto, 2019). The implementation of social actions at SMP Negeri 2 Kotagajah has shown positive results; social activities carried out, such as sharing with the surrounding community, have successfully become a place for students to instill values of empathy, tolerance, and solidarity among students regardless of their customary or cultural backgrounds.

The successful implementation of James A. Banks' four multicultural approaches cannot be separated from the support of a conducive school environment. The availability of learning facilities such as digital learning devices (projectors, LCDs, and other digital media) supports learning activities, enabling diversity-based learning to be delivered more clearly and attractively. This aligns with the research of Achmad Asyaari, which states that the availability of digital facilities plays an important role in improving the quality of learning

in schools.(Asyaari, 2025). In addition, the existence of school programs oriented towards multicultural values also serves as a supporting factor for the success of the multicultural approach. For example, organizing activities that involve wearing traditional clothes from each student's ethnic group can foster mutual respect and expand students' understanding of the richness of ethnicities in this country. Further support also comes from the collaboration between teachers, parents or guardians, and the surrounding community. The synergy among these three parties forms the continuity of multicultural values, which can help students understand the meaning of diversity in their daily lives, both at school and outside of school

As for the inhibiting factors, they were found but were not very significant for the implementation of the multicultural approach. There is a limitation of teachers in using learning technology due to their age, which is no longer young. According to James A. Banks, this condition suggests that the success of multiculturalism is not only determined by the curriculum content but also by the readiness of teachers to manage strategies and learning media that are relevant to the development of students. (Banks, n.d.). The school continues to strive to overcome these obstacles by conducting training for teachers to be able to adapt to the existing technological developments.

CONCLUSIONS

The teaching of Social Studies (IPS) conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Kotagajah has integrated multicultural values through the four multicultural education approaches of James A. Banks, namely the Contribution Approach, Additive Approach, Transformation Approach, and Social Action Approach, which are gradually implemented in both the learning process and the implementation of school programs.

The application of these approaches is reflected in the presentation of figures and cultures from various regions, the use of teaching media and additional learning resources, the involvement of students in multi-perspective discussions, as well as direct participation in social activities that foster social sensitivity and tolerance, so that Social Studies education is not only beneficial as a space to acquire knowledge but also capable of shaping the social attitudes of students.

The success of implementing this multicultural approach is supported by the availability of facilities and infrastructure, school programs oriented towards multicultural values, as well as collaboration between teachers, parents, and the community, while the existing obstacle relates to the limitations of senior teachers in utilizing learning technology, thus there is a need to strengthen teacher competence so that multicultural-based social studies learning can be presented optimally and more innovatively.

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