

THE INFLUENCE OF LANGUAGE EDUCATION POLICY ON MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

Language education policies play an important role in establishing an inclusive education system and supporting cultural diversity. This research aims to analyze the influence of language education policies on multicultural education through a literature review approach (library research). This study examines various previous research and policies implemented in various countries in managing language education to support cultural diversity. The research results show that language education policies that support bilingualism and multilingualism contribute to increasing educational inclusivity, preserving cultural identity, and increasing accessibility and academic achievement of students from various backgrounds. Apart from that, effective implementation of language education policies also depends on the role of teachers, curriculum design that is responsive to diversity, and evidence-based policy support. However, challenges such as limited resources, social resistance, and the dominance of one language in the education system are still obstacles in implementing inclusive language education policies. This research provides recommendations for the government and educational institutions to develop more flexible and adaptive policies, by balancing the use of national languages, regional languages and international languages in education. Thus, language education policy can function as an effective tool in building a multicultural education system that is more inclusive, equal and just.

Keywords: language education policy, multicultural education, bilingualism, inclusivity, cultural identity

INTRODUCTION

In the increasingly growing era of globalization, language education policies have a very important role in maintaining cultural diversity and building social harmony. Language not only functions as a communication tool, but also as a medium for conveying cultural values and building national and local identity. In many countries, language education policies are one of the main instruments in forming an inclusive and multicultural society (Pilus & Nguyen, 2023). Well-designed language education can support cultural

diversity and ensure that every ethnic and linguistic group can receive an equal education (Nurhayati et al., 2024).

The diversity of languages in a country often reflects the cultural richness of its people. However, without appropriate policies, minority languages can experience pressure or even be threatened with extinction due to the dominance of the majority language (Jabeen, 2023). In this context, language education policy has a great responsibility to preserve local languages and ensure that every community group has access to education in their own language. This is important to maintain cultural continuity and prevent the marginalization of certain groups in the education system.

In addition, language education policies play a role in forming individual and collective identities in a multicultural society. Language is not just a means of communication, but also a symbol of history, traditions and values held by a social group. When a language education policy does not pay attention to the needs of minority groups, this can lead to a loss of cultural identity and a reduction in individuals' connection to their cultural heritage (Syukur & Arief, 2023). Therefore, language education policies that support multiculturalism must be able to accommodate diversity and ensure that all groups have equal opportunities to learn and develop in an inclusive environment.

On the other hand, language education policies also have a significant impact on social integration in society. Countries that have inclusive language policies tend to be able to build stronger social cohesion between different groups. Language education that encourages bilingualism or multilingualism can be a bridge in strengthening intercultural relations and creating better understanding between diverse societal groups (Erdocia et al., 2022). Thus, language education policies not only play a role in the academic aspect, but also in building a harmonious and tolerant society.

In the context of multicultural education, language education policies have a major influence in determining how students interact with and understand other cultures. A curriculum designed to reflect cultural and linguistic diversity can help students develop critical thinking skills and increase their awareness of social issues related to cultural identity (Hutchison, 2022). With this approach, education not only functions to transfer knowledge, but also to build students' character to be more open to differences and appreciate diversity.

However, in practice, there are still many challenges faced in implementing language education policies to support multicultural education. Several countries still implement monolingual policies that only prioritize one

national language, so that regional or minority languages receive less attention in the education system (Prinsloo, 2023). This can lead to unequal access to education for groups who do not use the national language as their main language. Therefore, a policy strategy is needed that can balance national needs and the rights of minority groups in obtaining education that is appropriate to their cultural background.

In various studies, it has been found that language education policies based on multiculturalism can provide many benefits, both in academic and social aspects. Students who receive education in more than one language tend to have better cognitive skills, such as analytical thinking abilities, flexibility in problem solving, and the ability to adapt in diverse environments (Vanbuel & Branden, 2022). In addition, an educational approach that respects linguistic diversity can also help in building a more inclusive and democratic society, where every individual feels recognized and valued in their social environment.

Thus, it is important for policy makers to design language education policies that do not only focus on linguistic aspects, but also consider their impact on multicultural education. Policies that support bilingualism, for example, can help students maintain their cultural identity while increasing global competence. In an increasingly connected world, education based on multiculturalism is a necessity that cannot be ignored, and appropriate language policies can be one of the main keys to achieving this.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this study is a literature review (library research), which aims to analyze various previous research related to language education policy and multicultural education. The literature review was chosen because it allows researchers to identify, compare, and synthesize various findings from previous research in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between language policy and multicultural education. Through this approach, research will examine various theories, concepts and practices of language education policies that have been implemented in various countries and their impact on cultural diversity in the education system.

The data used in this research comes from academic journals, books, policy reports and official government documents that discuss language education policies and their relationship to multicultural education. The data analysis technique used is content analysis, where the research will examine

the contents of various documents to identify patterns, trends and main findings related to language education policy. Apart from that, this research also applies a synthesis of findings from various previous studies to obtain more comprehensive conclusions regarding the impact of language policies on multicultural education. With this approach, it is hoped that research can provide evidence-based recommendations that are relevant for policy makers and educational practitioners (Earley, M.A. 2014; Snyder, H. 2019).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Language Education Policy in a Multicultural Context

Language education policies have a significant impact on multicultural education systems in various countries. Several countries have implemented policies that support linguistic diversity to strengthen cultural identity and increase educational accessibility for minority groups. For example, in Canada, official bilingualism policies are implemented to support the use of English and French in education and public services (Tenorio, 2022). This allows students from different backgrounds to receive an education in their native language, while increasing intercultural understanding.

In Finland, language education policy also supports multiculturalism by giving Swedish and Sami-speaking communities the right to receive education in their own languages. The Finnish government even implements a flexible education system to accommodate students from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Fraschini & Lundberg, 2024). Meanwhile, in countries such as India and South Africa, multilingual policies are implemented to maintain linguistic diversity and allow students to study in their regional languages before switching to national or international languages.

The successful implementation of language education policies in a multicultural system can be seen from the increased involvement of students in the learning process and the increased sense of belonging to their own culture. Countries that implement bilingual or multilingual education systems tend to have students with better literacy levels, as well as higher critical thinking skills (Dołowy-Rybińska, 2023). This is due to the cognitive flexibility that develops through the use of more than one language in everyday life.

However, behind this success, there are various challenges in implementing language education policies. One of them is limited resources, both in terms of competent teaching staff and teaching materials that support a multilingual education system. In some developing countries, limited funding and educational infrastructure make it difficult to implement policies that

accommodate regional or minority languages (Yang, 2024). As a result, many students from minority groups are forced to adapt to a majority language they do not yet master well, which ultimately impacts their academic results.

Another challenge faced in implementing language education policies is social and political resistance. Some countries still have a tendency to prioritize one national language as a unifying tool, which in turn can ignore the importance of linguistic diversity in education. In Indonesia, for example, language education policies still emphasize the use of Indonesian as the main language of instruction in formal education, while regional languages are only taught on a limited basis. This can cause a decline in the number of regional language speakers over time (Ubaidillah, 2022).

Apart from that, the implementation of language education policies must also pay attention to the balance between global and local needs. With the increasing demands of globalization, many countries have begun to encourage the use of international languages such as English in their education systems. Although this can increase students' international competitiveness, this kind of policy risks excluding mother tongues or local languages which also have an important role in building identity and social integration in society (Park & Kang, 2023). Therefore, a balanced policy strategy is needed between supporting global competence and maintaining local cultural diversity.

To overcome these challenges, countries with successful multicultural education systems tend to adopt flexible approaches, such as transitional bilingualism-based education systems or educational models that allow students to study in their mother tongue before switching to a national or international language. With a more inclusive approach and based on community needs, language education policy can be an effective tool in supporting multicultural education, increasing equality of access to education, and strengthening social integration in diverse societies (Chaika, 2022).

The Impact of Language Education Policy on Multicultural Education

Language education policies have a significant impact on inclusiveness in education, especially in ethnically and culturally diverse communities. Education based on multilingualism or bilingualism allows students from various backgrounds to access education without language barriers (Sun-mi, 2022). In an inclusive education system, language is used as a tool to ensure that all students feel welcome and have equal opportunities to develop. On the other hand, language policies that only focus on one dominant language

can cause inequality in the education system, where students from minority groups experience difficulties in understanding learning material, thereby risking falling behind academically.

In addition to creating an inclusive educational environment, language education policies also play a role in shaping students' cultural identity and participation. Language is part of a person's identity, and when students are given the opportunity to learn in their native language, they are better able to maintain a connection to their cultural heritage. Countries that implement language education policies that support diversity tend to have societies that are more open to cultural differences and more active in maintaining local traditions. On the other hand, educational policies that do not accommodate minority languages can cause a loss of cultural identity in the younger generation, because they are forced to adapt to the majority language used in the education system (Gaspard, 2023).

From an academic perspective, language education policies also have a direct impact on student achievement. Studies show that students who receive education in their native language tend to have a better understanding of academic concepts compared to those who are forced to study in a second or third language that they have not fully mastered. The use of mother tongue as the language of instruction in basic education helps students develop critical and analytical thinking skills, which ultimately improves their academic results (Do et al., 2022). In contrast, students who face language barriers in their education are more likely to experience learning difficulties, which can lead to lower levels of academic achievement and increased school dropout rates.

Another impact of language education policies on multicultural education is increasing the accessibility of education for previously marginalized groups. In societies that have many ethnic and linguistic groups, inclusive language policies ensure that all individuals have equal opportunities to obtain quality education (Haswani et al., 2023). For example, in several countries with a bilingual or multilingual education system, the participation rate of students from minority groups is higher compared to countries that only rely on one national language as the language of instruction in education. This shows that appropriate language education policies can reduce social and economic disparities in the education system.

However, in some cases, poorly managed language education policies can also create new inequalities in educational access. For example, in countries that place too much emphasis on mastering a foreign language such

as English, students from lower economic backgrounds often have difficulty catching up due to a lack of access to additional learning resources such as language courses or foreign language books. As a result, education becomes more exclusive for those who are able to adapt to the language policies implemented, while disadvantaged groups are increasingly marginalized in the education system (Terry, 2022).

Apart from that, language education policies also have an influence on social interaction patterns in the school environment. When the education system allows the use of more than one language in the learning process, students from various cultural backgrounds can more easily communicate and interact with each other. This helps build mutual respect and reduces the potential for conflict between groups. On the other hand, in an education system that only accommodates one language, students from minority groups tend to feel isolated and have less opportunity to express their culture, which in the end can hinder social integration within schools and society (McIntosh, 2022).

Overall, language education policies play a very important role in establishing an inclusive, equitable and quality multicultural education system. With policies that support multilingualism and cultural diversity, education systems can create more adaptive learning environments and support the academic success of students from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, a policy approach is needed that considers the balance between national languages, regional languages and international languages so that all students get maximum benefits in an inclusive and just education system.

Strategy for Strengthening Language Education Policy to Support Multicultural Education

One of the main strategies in strengthening language education policies to support multicultural education is the implementation of bilingual and multilingual approaches in the education system. This approach allows students to study in their mother tongue first before switching to a national or international language. Educational models such as transitional bilingual education and maintenance bilingual education have proven effective in helping students develop academic skills while maintaining their cultural identity. Countries such as Canada and Finland have succeeded in implementing bilingual education systems which not only improve the quality of learning but also strengthen social integration amidst cultural diversity (Lee, 2023).

Apart from that, a multilingual education system can also be implemented in the form of community-based education, where schools are given flexibility in choosing the language of instruction based on the needs and background of their students. In some countries, this model is combined with second language programs that introduce students to national and international languages gradually (Godenhjelm, 2023). In this way, students do not feel forced to immediately adapt to a new language, but are given time to adjust to the learning process.

The role of teachers and curriculum are also key factors in supporting multicultural education based on language policy. Teachers must be equipped with pedagogical skills that enable them to teach in multilingual and multicultural environments (Dauzón-Ledesma & Izquierdo, 2023). Therefore, teacher training programs need to include bilingual teaching approaches, cultural understanding, and differentiation strategies in teaching. In this way, teachers can become effective facilitators in building a learning environment that is inclusive and respects linguistic diversity.

The curriculum must also be designed to reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity that exists in society. Teaching materials should include broad cultural references so that students can understand and appreciate different cultural perspectives (Despaigne, 2024). Additionally, the integration of subjects such as cultural studies, multicultural literature, and local history can help students understand their own cultural roots while respecting other cultures. A more flexible curriculum model is also needed to adapt to the needs of diverse communities, for example by providing learning options in multiple languages.

Based on the literature review, there are several evidence-based policy recommendations that can be implemented to strengthen language education in multicultural contexts. First, the government needs to adopt education policies that support multilingualism by providing support for education in regional and minority languages. Second, increased investment is needed in the development of teaching materials and educational technology that supports learning in various languages, including the use of digital media and interactive learning applications (Howe, 2022).

Third, language education policies must be designed inclusively by involving local communities, academics and educational practitioners in the decision-making process. This participatory approach will ensure that policies are made in accordance with community needs and do not harm certain groups. Fourth, the language policy evaluation and monitoring system also

needs to be strengthened to measure the effectiveness of policy implementation and identify challenges that may arise in the field (Munezane, 2023).

By implementing these strategies, language education policies can become an effective tool in building an inclusive and multicultural education system. Bilingual and multilingual approaches, support for teachers and curricula, and evidence-based policy recommendations can ensure that every student has access to fair and quality education, without having to lose their cultural and linguistic identity. In this way, education can function as a bridge for diverse communities to live side by side in harmony and respect each other's differences.

CONCLUSION

Based on the literature review carried out, it can be concluded that language education policy has a significant role in supporting multicultural education. Bilingual and multilingual approaches have been proven to increase educational inclusivity, maintain students' cultural identity, and increase their accessibility and academic achievement. Studies from various countries show that language education policies that support diversity can create a more equitable and harmonious learning environment, while policies that focus too much on one dominant language tend to inhibit the participation of minority groups in the education system. Apart from that, the role of teachers and a curriculum that is oriented towards multiculturalism is also a key factor in ensuring that language education truly functions as a tool for building cross-cultural understanding.

The implications of these findings include academic and practical aspects. From an academic perspective, this research emphasizes the importance of strengthening evidence-based language education policies to support a more inclusive education system. From a practical side, the results of this research provide recommendations for policy makers and educational practitioners to develop a more flexible education system, by supporting learning in various languages and ensuring that the curriculum reflects cultural diversity. By implementing a more inclusive language education policy, it is hoped that multicultural education can further develop, so that it can create a society that is more harmonious and respects each other's differences.

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