

RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Pela Gandong local wisdom as multicultural education model after the Ambon Conflict

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Received: 24 March, 2022, Accepted: 14 April, 2022, Published: 16 April, 2022

### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to describe how Pela Gandong as a model of multicultural education has been implemented between the State Junior High School (SMPN) 9 Ambon City and the State Junior High School (SMPN) 4 Salahutu Liang, Central Maluku Regency. The Ambon conflict became a very valuable lesson for the Indonesian people, especially the Ambonese-Maluku people. That the diversity that has been bestowed must be managed properly and is a reality of life. The Ambon conflict is the largest civil conflict based on ethnicity, religion, race and ethnicity (SARA) after the fall of the Suharto government on May 21, 1998. After the Ambon conflict ended, various parties began to think about how to do peacebuilding so that similar conflicts did not happen again. One of them is implementing multicultural education based on the local wisdom values of Pela Gandong. During the Ambon conflict resolution, Pela Gandong's local wisdom became the medium. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with a case study approach. Data was collected by means of literature study, interviews, observation, and document analysis. The results show that Pela Gandong contains multicultural values that have been built by the ancestors of the Maluku people, and is currently uniting Muslim and Christian students with a local cultural approach. The implementation is done by transforming Pela Gandong values in schools and teacher exchanges. Then jointly held; scouting activities, camping, Christmas, iftar, Sports and Arts Week. Both schools were also part of the 2013 film Provocateur of Peace as a campaign for peace and the spread of multicultural values.

**Keywords:** Local wisdom; pela gandong; multicultural education; Ambon Conflict

### Introduction

The Ambon conflict is the largest ethnic, religious, racial and inter-ethnic (SARA) based civil conflict after the fall of President Suharto on May 21, 1998. This can be seen from the Ambon turmoil which resulted in more than 8-9 thousand deaths, 29 thousand houses burned, and 45 mosques, 47 churches, 719 shops, 38 government buildings, and 4 banks were destroyed. The range of conflicts that occurred was also quite long, namely 4 years (Aziz SR, 2019). The Ambon conflict is only one of many conflicts that occur in Indonesia. For example, the Sambas conflict, the Poso conflict, the Sampit conflict, the Bloody Wamena and others, but the Ambon conflict is the biggest and most destructive.

Diversity is a gift that has been given by God and is grateful for (Dietrich, 2018; Burke & McDowell, 2021). But at the same time, if there is no management of diversity management, then the gift turns into a bloody conflict, and a terrible event; never thought it would happen. Diversity can be a source of conflict if humans are selfish and feel the most right (Martin et al., 2016; Kopnina et al., 2018; Gilbert, 2021). Conflict is a phenomenon that most often arises because conflict has always been a social and political part of human life and has become a driving force in socio-political dynamics and changes.

So that conflicts will always arise when community groups have certain goals and mutually impose their resources (Wiradhika, 2018). Indonesia is a large country with thousands of islands, from Miangas to Rote, and from Sabang to Merauke. The 2010 Population Census stated that there were 1,331 ethnic groups in Indonesia (BPS, 2015). The category is a code for the name of a tribe, another name/alias of a tribe, the name of a sub-tribe, even the name of a sub of a sub-tribe. Regarding the number of languages in Indonesia, the Language Development and Development Agency of the Ministry of Education and Culture or the Language Agency has mapped and verified 801 different regional languages. This amount was obtained from the verification process from 1991-2019. However, this number may continue to change over time.

Taking into account these data, it cannot be denied that Indonesia is a very multicultural country. The question is whether we can accept it or choose to reject it. If the choice is rejected, then we have disappointed The Founding Fathers who have worked hard, and sacrificed so much for the realization of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). However, if we want to continue to maintain the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, then we cannot accept and understand the occurrence of horizontal conflicts, especially those that cause many casualties.

Therefore, multicultural education is very important to be taught to the next generation of this nation (Yılmaz, 2016;

Asowayan et al., 2017; Khaedir & Wahab, 2020). The aim is to equip and prepare a generation that has the knowledge, attitudes and skills that support peace and a harmonious life. In essence, the Indonesian nation is a nation that highly upholds the values of tolerance, peace, diversity and unity. If you look at the history of the Indonesian nation, it can be concluded that this nation was born and exists today. Because, there is a common destiny, vision and desire to live together and determine the fate of the nation in the future.

Today, the political choices of citizens in general elections, whether for regional heads, members of the legislature, and even the President and Vice President, can be a source of conflict that leads to the division of the Indonesian nation (Iswandi & Abdullah, 2020; Lee, 2021). This proves that we are not yet mature in democracy. The inability to accept differences in political choices can divide the Indonesian nation. Especially the inability to accept differences that even concern human rights such as the right to embrace religion, the right to worship, and the right to express one's culture. Multicultural-based education encourages students to respect each other's origins and differences in real life in society (Sukardi & Subandowo, 2014). The context after the Ambon conflict, that there are still negative prejudices and segregation or separation of regions based on religion, namely, Islam and Christianity. The education sector is also experiencing segregation (Hasudungan, 2020).

SMPN 9 Ambon City with the address at Wolter Monginsidi Lateri III Street, RT 1, RW 1, Lateri Village, Baguala District, Ambon City which has 1431 students, and 99% of them are Christian/Catholic. Meanwhile, SMPN 4 Liang is located at Waihula Street, Liang Village, Salahutu District, Central Maluku Regency, and has 414 students and 100% of them are Muslim. To remove negative prejudices and desegregation efforts that occur among the people in Ambon-Maluku city. Thus, the two schools have started and implemented multicultural education based on local wisdom *Pela Gandong* since 2013. Therefore, this study aims to describe the implementation of multicultural education at SMPN 9 Ambon City and SMPN 4 Salahutu Liang based on the local wisdom of *Pela Gandong*.

## **Research Methods**

This research uses descriptive qualitative method with multiple case study approach. Descriptive method is a method in examining the status of a group of people, an object, a condition, a system of thought, or a class of events in the present. The purpose of this descriptive research is to reveal events or facts, circumstances, phenomena, and circumstances that occurred during the research by presenting what actually happened (Bradshaw et al., 2017). The case study approach, according to Yin (2009) is used by considering (a) the focus of the research is to answer the "how" and "why" questions; (b) author cannot manipulate the behavior of those involved in the research; (c) author want to cover contextual conditions

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because they believe they are relevant to what is being studied; (d) unclear boundaries between phenomena and contexts. The case study design according to Yin (2003) and Prihatsanti et al. (2018) relates data to propositions, for example by pattern matching. Based on the fact that Yin views the purpose of case study research, among other things, as theory development. Thus, theoretical propositions are the starting point (and not the outcome) of case study analysis. Therefore, this case study aims to generalize analytically as if it were an experiment. Construction, internal and external validity and reliability are prerequisites (evaluation standards) for conducting case study research.

Single case studies only allow author to understand one unique case, while in multiple case studies, author can examine several cases to find out similarities or differences between cases. Author chose two cases at SMPN 9 Ambon City and SMPN 4 Salahutu Liang, with different characteristics, such as religious adherents, government administration and the quantity of students. Collecting data using literature study, observation (initial observations and participatory observations), unstructured in-depth interviews, documentation studies sourced from village monograph data, the Central Statistics Agency, and schools. Data analysis was carried out by adopting interactive data analysis from Miles & Huberman (1994). The stages of data analysis are data collection and data reduction. The purpose of data reduction is to make it easier for author to collect further data and provide a clearer picture. Consists of presenting data and drawing conclusions.

## **Results and Discussion**

*Pela Gandong* is a traditional system formed from an alliance between two or more villages regardless of their religion, mainly responsible for inter-religious harmony for which the area was famous until 1998. They have formed student bonds to help each other in times of crisis and in carrying out large community projects, such as the construction of churches, mosques and schools, and to share food whenever needed (Bräuchler, 2009).

When the Ambon conflict occurred, the local wisdom of *Pela Gandong* was transformed into a media for Ambon conflict resolution (Jati, 2013; Malisngor, 2017; Hartimah et al., 2021). Then, after a peace agreement was reached through the Malino II Agreement on February 12, 2002, the local wisdom of *Pela Gandong* was again transformed into peace education (Amirrachman, 2012). In addition, there are multicultural values contained in the local wisdom of *Pela Gandong*, namely:

- 1.The concept of brotherhood without distinction of religion.
- 2.The *Pela Gandong* culture is a unifying frame for the Maluku people and has been around for a long time.
- 3.Creating a sense of togetherness and harmony.

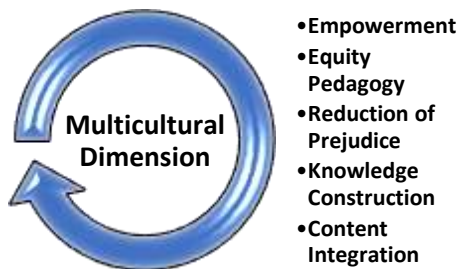
4. Social institutions that develop as an adhesive for social relations between one country and another, both Muslim and Christian countries.
5. Function in regulating the social interaction system of indigenous peoples that transcends various fields with certain mutually agreed rights and obligations.
6. The concept of brotherhood in Pela Gandong positions the highest and most honorable social structure beyond the biological sibling relationship.
7. Pela Gandong has a cultural advantage which is mentioned there is also a culture of harmony or peace based on kinship in the concept of local wisdom which purely emerged and was initiated from the intelligence of the ancestors of the Maluku people.
8. The dialogue in Pela Gandong is carried out elegantly without any barriers. One is willing to be reprimanded, without having to answer harshly. Ready to be scolded, without having a grudge. This kind of dialogue is carried out without fear and suspicion. An atmosphere of open dialogue because of the value of the basudara (brotherhood) itself.

**Implementation of Multicultural Education Based on Local Wisdom Pela Gandong**

This is the reason, that multicultural education is an important thing that must be given to all students who are the successors of the Indonesian nation (Baihaqi, 2021). Starting from the earliest education levels such as kindergarten, elementary school, junior high school, final high school, to higher education.

This multicultural education is given with the aim of explaining the importance of maintaining the values of diversity that exist in Indonesia and upholding an attitude of tolerance. Not only that, there are several other multicultural education goals that provide special benefits for all students in Indonesia.

Multicultural education is an educational reform movement that seeks to reform schools in a way that will provide all learners with equal opportunities to learn. It describes teaching strategies that empower all learners and give them a voice. Multicultural education is an ongoing process. One of its main aims is to create within schools and communities democratic ideals (J. A. Banks, 1995; C. A. M. Banks & Banks, 1995).



**Figure 1.** Multicultural Dimension  
**Source:** (J. A. Banks, 1992)

Content integration relates to the extent to which teachers use examples, data, and information from various cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalizations, and theories within their field of study or discipline. When the knowledge construction process is implemented in the classroom, the teacher helps students to understand how knowledge is created and how it is influenced by the racial, ethnic, and social class positions of individuals and groups. The dimension of prejudice reduction in multicultural education describes the characteristics of students' racial attitudes and strategies that can be used to help students develop more democratic attitudes and values. Equity pedagogy exists when teachers use techniques and methods that facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social class groups. Equity pedagogy is a modification of the teaching process by incorporating appropriate learning materials and strategies for all students. The concept of an empowering school culture and social structure is used to describe the process of restructuring school culture and organization so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social class groups will experience educational equality and cultural empowerment.

Multicultural education is a cross-border discourse that explores issues regarding social justice, deliberation, and human rights, political, moral, educational and religious issues (Tilaar, 2004). Tilaar further mentioned three sources to achieve a multicultural education curriculum, namely the concept of the needs of students, the concept of community needs, and the concept of the role and status of the subjects to be delivered. From these three concepts, the formulation of a multicultural education curriculum will be formed.



**Figure 2.** Both schools held Panas Pela of Education on January 29, 2018.  
**Source:** Personal Documentation

Currently, the local wisdom of Pela Gandong has become an important instrument to maintain peace. In addition, the novelty that the author found is that the values of Pela Gandong can also be used as a model of local-based multicultural education. Panas pela is an effort to warm (Panas) the brotherly relationship (Pela) between SMPN 9 Ambon City and SMPN 4 Salahutu Liang which has been built since 2013. The implementation of Pela Gandong-based multicultural education is related to efforts to build

peace. Building peace is essentially the same as peace keeping. This needs to be done not only because there are still potential peace vulnerabilities. But also the strengthening of identity politics and populism before, during, and after the 2014 and 2019 Indonesian Presidential and Vice-Presidential elections (Dewi, 2020; Wicaksana & Wardhana, 2021; Widian et al., 2022).

As a result, the Indonesian people were divided into two major groups due to differences in views and political choices. Racial and religious issues have become a campaign material to attract support and at the same time destroy the character of political enemies (Miichi, 2014; Bouchier, 2019; Afrimadona, 2021). Broken ties of kinship, friendship, quarrels with co-workers and even entering the realm of places of worship make identity politics a new threat that can disturb the peace and tranquility of the Indonesian nation.

Education as a strategic field and schools as institutions that spearhead the intellectual life of the nation must integrate culture-based multicultural education into the school environment and subjects. Culture is the root of multiculturalism (J. A. Banks, 1977). Referring to Banks' statement, it is important to have multicultural education based on local wisdom. This also repeats the success of Pela Gandong's local wisdom as a medium for conflict resolution and peace education. Culturally relevant teaching is also an important aspect of multicultural education (Gay, 2002). This teaching is intended to establish a relationship with the cultural background of these students (Pang, 2001).

Materials that are close, contextual, relevant to the lives of students will be the key to the success of how the teaching and learning of multicultural education takes place (Watson & Leicester, 1991; Parker, 2019). The material developed in learning should prioritize regional advantages and needs, in the form of location, economic, social, political, historical and cultural advantages. For example, learning social sciences which is integrated with multicultural education based on local wisdom Pela Gandong. This was done considering that the Ambon-Maluku conflict not only resulted in hundreds of thousands of casualties but also broke inter-religious harmony, personality changes between individuals and groups, the economy was paralyzed, and the current polarization among the Ambon-Maluku community. Conflict does not only affect groups but also individuals, including students.

Contextualization of learning is directed at developing environmental awareness, understanding the potential advantages of a region, getting to know local and national culture, understanding problems from the point of weakness or limitations (Hadzigeorgiou & Skoumios, 2013; Ardoin et al., 2020; Edsand & Broich, 2020). Learners become motivated and play an active role in solving problems, both through ideas, ideas and actions (behavior). Thus, students are expected to become heirs of a strong, responsible, creative, innovative, competitive, and Indonesian cultured nation.

That multicultural education based on local wisdom has an important role in providing understanding, learning, awareness for students regarding matters relating to the values of the local culture of the region (Hanifah, 2017; Suradi, 2018; Julianto & Subroto, 2019). It does not stop at this function, in fact multicultural education based on local wisdom also plays an active and important role in an action to implement values to others, society, environment, religion, and to God (Siriat & Nurbayani, 2018).

The implementation of multicultural education values based on Pela Gandong local wisdom between SMPN 9 Ambon City and SMPN 4 Salahutu Liang, Central Maluku Regency is as follows:

1. The transformation of Pela values continues to be carried out, namely adopting Pela education as Pela education between SMPN 9 Ambon City where 99% of the students and teachers are Christian, and SMPN 4 Salahutu Liang where 100% of the students and teachers are Muslim

2. Teacher exchange

3. Scout Activities

4. Camping, Christmas and iftar together

Good relations between students and teachers in both schools are harmonious and increasingly harmonious. Almost every year, these two schools hold a reunion which in customary terms is called Panas Pela. As for Panas Pela, which was marked by eating betel nut by the Principal of SMPN 9 Ambon, E. Harmusial, accompanied by OSIS Chair Jack Dea and Principal of SMPN 4 Salahutu Liang, Hilia Pary and OSIS Chairperson, Dimara Dinasti Laga.

5. Apart from Panas Pela, they often organize joint activities for students, including Sports and Arts Week.

6. Activities of Intra-School Student Organizations (OSIS) together.

7. The two schools were also part of the 2013 film *Provocateur of Peace* as a form of campaign for peace and multicultural values.

Practically, in the field of education, the implementation of Pela Gandong-based multicultural education between SMPN 9 Ambon City and SMPN 4 Salahutu Liang, Central Maluku has an impact on improving the cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects of students. Besides that, it is also a role model for other schools in Maluku Province to immediately overcome segregation, the negative prejudice that still exists. Apart from being in class, various cultural attractions were also performed by the students of the two schools, both through dance, song and poetry, all of which lead and invite students to live a life of love for each other despite their different religions.



**Figure 3.** Students from Both Schools Perform Dances  
**Source:** Personal Documentation

The Pela Gandong relationship between the two schools has been built since 2013 by carrying out a number of joint activities including, sports and art week competitions, scouts, joint iftar, joint Christmas, joint student council activities to teacher exchanges to teach at the two schools. Thus, multicultural education that integrates local wisdom values such as Pela Gandong belonging to the Maluku people has been able to become a typical multicultural education model. In the field of government and politics, Pela Gandong's multicultural education has been included in the Ambon City Government's program in the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) for 2011-2016 (Fikri & Hasudungan, 2021).

It is hoped that the Maluku Provincial Government will continue to preserve Pela Gandong's local wisdom in the form of programs and policies as a reference for development in Maluku. And also the government pays great attention to schools and teachers and students who are still traumatized by the Ambon conflict and immediately overcomes the segregation that still exists. Schools are expected to be able to facilitate teachers to prepare learning tools that integrate multicultural education based on Pela Gandong's local wisdom in learning through training or the like.

Teachers as actors in teaching peace and multicultural pedagogy to students (Bartlett, 2009; Navarro-Castro & Nario-Galace, 2010; Szelei et al., 2019). A local approach that is close to the environment where students are located can make it easier for students to understand the meaning of peace and diversity. The teachers reported that the students were very responsive to the given value activities and became fond of discussing and applying the values of multiculturalism and peace. The teachers also noted that the students became more self-confident, more respectful of others and demonstrated an increase in positive, cooperative and peace-loving social and personal skills.

The bitterness and cruelty of the conflict and still continuing to fight so that the hard-won peace is maintained. Of course, we all want to form a generation that upholds the nation's cultural values. Students as the next generation of Maluku are expected to be able to take Pela Gandong-based multicultural education seriously and with discipline. It is hoped that students will have the knowledge, skills and attitudes regarding peace and diversity. Peace is an eternal work that cannot be stopped

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(Gleditsch et al., 2014; Hartwell, 2019; Millar, 2021). Because, students are also actors in the present and in the future in maintaining the peace of Ambon City and Maluku Province. The current Ambon-Maluku peace must be maintained by students as the next generation.

## Conclusion

Diversity is a gift that God has given and has become a reality of life that must be accepted by everyone. However, diversity is often the trigger for bloody conflicts such as the Ambon conflict in 1999-2002. This is due to a lack of understanding that humans are born with many differences from one another starting from physical, race, ethnicity, religion and even nation and state. This reality cannot be accepted so that it becomes a trigger for conflict. Therefore, multicultural education has become an educational reform movement that tries to reform schools and disciplines. As well as discussing issues regarding social justice, deliberation, and human rights, political, moral, educational and religious issues. Efforts at SMPN 9 Ambon City and SMPN 4 Salahutu Liang, Central Maluku Regency to apply multicultural education based on Pela Gandong local wisdom to maintain and build peace that has been painstakingly realized. The form is like a cultural attraction that is displayed by students from both schools through dance, song and poetry, all of which lead and invite students to live in love with each other despite different religions, ethnicities and groups. Of course, this can be realized when students have no negative prejudice and segregation. The Pela Gandong relationship between the two schools has been built since 2013 by carrying out a number of joint activities including, Sports and Arts Week competitions, scouts, joint iftar, joint Christmas, joint student council activities to teacher exchanges to teach at the two schools. Based on these conclusions, the authors provide two recommendations as follows: 1) Prepare learning tools used by teachers to integrate multicultural education based on local wisdom Pela Gandong. 2) Conducted research in other provinces regarding the potential of local wisdom as a model of multicultural education that can be applied in schools. Considering the potential for conflict that continues to threaten the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, especially the strengthening of polarization in society, identity politics and populism in Indonesian politics today.

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