

The Multicultural Values of the Huma Betang Philosophy as a Foundation for Character Building in Elementary School Students

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Abstract:

Life within *Huma Betang* teaches the importance of accepting and respecting differences, maintaining harmony, and prioritizing the common good over personal interests. Elementary education, as the foundation of character building, plays a strategic role in instilling the multicultural values embodied in the *Huma Betang* philosophy. The limited literature and scholarly studies discussing the implementation of multicultural values based on local culture in elementary school settings, particularly those focusing on *Huma Betang*, represent a gap that needs to be addressed through research and curriculum development. This study was conducted using a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method to observe the cognitive and character changes experienced by students through their interactions with learning components explored in their natural form. The findings of this study indicate that the multicultural values of the *Huma Betang* philosophy, such as tolerance, togetherness, mutual cooperation, and mutual respect, have been effectively implemented in shaping the character of students at SDN 6 Bukit Tunggal, Palangka Raya. These values are not only applied in non-academic activities like mutual cooperation but also in students' daily interactions, creating a harmonious atmosphere amid cultural diversity.

Keywords: *Huma betang*, character, elementary school

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Introduction

Indonesia is a country rich in cultural, ethnic, religious, and traditional diversity. Amid this diversity, education plays a crucial role in shaping the character of students based on the values of unity in diversity and tolerance. One of the cultural values that is highly relevant to developing multicultural character is the *Huma Betang* philosophy, which originates from the Dayak community in Central Kalimantan.

Huma Betang is a concept of communal living that emphasizes principles such as togetherness, tolerance, cooperation, and mutual respect for differences. In Dayak society, the *betang* house serves as a concrete symbol of collective life, where various families from different backgrounds live together under one roof. Life within *Huma Betang* teaches the importance of accepting and respecting differences, maintaining harmony, and prioritizing the common good over personal interests.

The values of *Huma Betang* encompass peace-loving principles that reject violence and prioritize *Handep Hapakat* (deliberation by consensus) as a method for resolving conflicts. These values continue to evolve and must be preserved in the process of social interaction and integration (Karliani and Triyani 2021). Central Kalimantan is one of the provinces characterized by a multicultural community structure. In social life, diversity can foster a mutually beneficial relationship among various components of society, especially within its social framework. However, it is undeniable that this diversity also holds the potential for conflicts, particularly between the elements that contribute to its multicultural nature.

The philosophy of *Huma Betang* represents a subjective reality of the Dayak community's way of life, embodying values of unity, mutual assistance, egalitarianism, kinship, consensus, and cultural coexistence within society. The rich cultural values embedded in the *Huma Betang* philosophy can serve as a guide or framework for policymakers, particularly the National Unity and Political Agency (Kesbangpol), in preserving the dynamics of inter-ethnic relations and developing adaptation strategies to foster harmony in Central Kalimantan (Karliani and Triyani 2021).

Elementary education, as the foundation for character building, is highly strategic in instilling the multicultural values embedded in the *Huma Betang* philosophy. These values are essential to be taught to students from an early age, given the challenges of globalization and social change that demand the younger generation to be open-minded, inclusive, and able to collaborate in diverse environments. Education that focuses on the development of multicultural character not only supports the achievement of national curriculum goals but also contributes to the creation of a harmonious and tolerant society.

However, in practice, the challenges faced in character education at the elementary school level remain significant, particularly in integrating local cultural values, such as the *Huma Betang* philosophy, into formal learning. The limited literature and scholarly studies discussing the implementation of multicultural values based on local culture in elementary schools, especially those focusing on *Huma Betang*, represent a gap that needs to be addressed through research and relevant curriculum development.

The core principle of education is to foster knowledge (cognitive), skills (psychomotor), and attitudes along with positive values (affective) to cultivate the students' character, enabling them to grow into intelligent, skilled, and spiritually grounded individuals (Sion and Affandi 2018). Education is not solely about the process and provision of resources aimed at knowledge acquisition; it also plays a crucial role in fostering character development (Suciati et al. 2023). The statement above confirms that the ultimate goal of educational activities is to nurture individuals with positive values that align with the culture they come from.

Furthermore, these characters are manifested in real actions, such as behaving with kindness, honesty, responsibility, and respect towards others (Imron Haris et al. 2022). This opinion was agreed to other research concluded that in principle, the values of character education are the development of Indonesian ideology” (Marini et al. 2019).

Therefore, this study aims to explore the multicultural values within the *Huma Betang* philosophy and how these values can be applied as a foundation for character building in elementary school students. Through this approach, it is hoped that elementary education can better internalize local values that support the development of individuals who respect differences, uphold tolerance, and live harmoniously amidst diversity.

Methods

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method. This choice of method is based on the research focus, which is closely related to social phenomena concerning individuals' mindsets, perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors within society. (Creswell 2013). Furthermore, the selection of this method emphasizes an in-depth study of the implementation process of mother-tongue-based literacy education, particularly regarding the services and technical aspects of implementing the *Huma Betang* philosophy in character development for students.

On the other hand, this study also observes the process of cognitive and character changes experienced by students through their interactions with learning components explored in their natural context (Affandi, 2020). The instruments used in this study include interviews, observations, and documentation review. The data analysis techniques employed involve data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. (Suharsimi 2013).

This study was carried out through data collection activities related to the implementation of learning activities at SDN 6 Bukit Tunggul, Palangka Raya City, Central Kalimantan Province. In addition to conducting observations at the research site with students, the researcher also interviewed several relevant parties, including the school principal, educators, and parents.

Results and Discussion

This study was conducted at SDN 6 Bukit Tunggul, Palangka Raya City, to identify the application of multicultural values within the *Huma Betang* philosophy as a foundation for character building in students. Data were collected through observations, interviews with teachers, and analysis of documents related to the character education program at the school. The following are the research findings and discussion based on field observations:

1. Understanding and Integration of the *Huma Betang* Philosophy Values by Teachers

From interviews with the teachers, it was found that the majority of them have understood the meaning and values contained in the *Huma Betang* philosophy. Values such as tolerance, togetherness, mutual respect, and cooperation are considered relevant for character building in elementary school students. One teacher mentioned that the *Huma Betang* philosophy is often used as a foundation in discussions about diversity in the classroom.

However, the level of integration of these values into teaching varies. Teachers with a Dayak cultural background tend to be more intensive in linking the *Huma Betang* philosophy with daily learning materials, such as in Civics and Citizenship Education (PPKn) and Religious Education. In contrast, teachers from other cultural

backgrounds require further training and guidance to effectively internalize these values in their teaching activities.

2. Implementation of *Huma Betang* Values in School Activities

School activities at SDN 6 Bukit Tunggal widely incorporate the values of *Huma Betang*. For example, activities such as communal work, which involves students in maintaining the cleanliness of the school environment, and flag ceremonies, which emphasize the importance of discipline and togetherness, reflect these values. Additionally, character-building programs like "Seatmate from a Different Ethnic Group" encourage students to interact with peers from different ethnic or religious backgrounds.

Observations show that these activities successfully foster a climate of mutual respect and appreciation among students. In group discussions, students from various ethnicities are often placed together, allowing them to collaborate and value each other's perspectives. This reflects the *Huma Betang* values in a modern context, where differences are acknowledged but do not hinder the pursuit of common goals.

3. Students' Acceptance of the Multicultural Values of *Huma Betang*

Students generally accept the values of *Huma Betang* well. Interview results with several students indicate that they understand the importance of tolerance and mutual respect amidst diversity. They also mentioned that communal activities and group discussions help them better understand how to live together in diversity, as taught by the *Huma Betang* philosophy.

Some students noted that they frequently hear about *Huma Betang* from their families or local communities, so the application of these values in school reinforces their understanding of the philosophy. However, students from outside Kalimantan tend to require further explanation regarding the meaning and relevance of *Huma Betang* in their daily lives.

4. Challenges in Implementing the Values of *Huma Betang*

Although the values of *Huma Betang* are well accepted, several challenges have been identified in their implementation. One major challenge is the lack of teaching materials that explicitly link *Huma Betang* with the curriculum. Teachers feel limited in developing teaching resources that support the application of this philosophy, especially in subjects not directly related to character education, such as Mathematics or Science.

Additionally, there are challenges in instilling a deep understanding among students who do not have a Dayak cultural background. While they are able to appreciate the values of tolerance and togetherness, a more inclusive and universal approach is needed so that the values of *Huma Betang* can be embraced by all students, regardless of their cultural background.

5. Impact on Student Character Development

From the field findings, it can be concluded that the values of *Huma Betang* positively contribute to the character development of students at SDN 6 Bukit Tunggal. Students show improvements in mutual respect, teamwork, and maintaining unity amidst differences. Observations also indicate that students engaged in activities based on *Huma Betang* values are more likely to exhibit tolerance and openness to others' viewpoints.

The character development of students through the application of the *Huma Betang* philosophy at SDN 6 Bukit Tunggal not only enhances their social skills but also instills a love for local cultural values. This supports the development of individuals who are not only academically intelligent but also possess a strong character grounded in local wisdom.

6. Recommendations for Strengthening the Implementation of *Huma Betang* Values

To strengthen the implementation of the *Huma Betang* philosophy in character development, several strategic steps are needed, including: (1) Teacher training: Teachers should receive intensive training on how to integrate *Huma Betang* values into various subjects, not just those related to character education; (2) Development of teaching materials: There is a need for the development of teaching materials that explicitly link *Huma Betang* values with classroom learning, including in science and technology subjects; and (3) Strengthening school collaboration with local communities: Schools could establish partnerships with cultural leaders or local Dayak communities to provide a deeper understanding of the *Huma Betang* philosophy to students and teachers from outside the region.

Overall, the multicultural values in the *Huma Betang* philosophy have made a significant contribution to shaping student character at SDN 6 Bukit Tunggal, although there is still room for further development.

Analysis

In this study, data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis from SDN 6 Bukit Tunggal, Palangka Raya City. The data were analyzed to examine how the multicultural values of the *Huma Betang* philosophy are integrated into student character development. The following is the data analysis based on the research findings:

1. Teachers' Understanding of *Huma Betang* Values

The interviews with teachers reveal that their understanding of the *Huma Betang* philosophy is quite good. Most teachers recognize that the core values of *Huma Betang* include: (1) Tolerance: Living peacefully alongside others despite cultural, religious, or ethnic differences; (2) Togetherness: Maintaining harmony among different communities or groups; (3) Mutual Cooperation: Working together to achieve common goals; and (4) Mutual Respect: Valuing others' views and practices.

However, the level of understanding varies, particularly among teachers from outside Kalimantan. The analysis shows that teachers with a Dayak cultural background find it easier to relate this philosophy to daily teaching compared to teachers from other regions. This suggests a need for more equitable training to enhance all teachers' ability to integrate these local values into character education.

2. Implementation of *Huma Betang* Values in Teaching

Observations revealed that some *Huma Betang* values have been implemented in school activities, such as: (1) Mutual cooperation: Evident in activities like cleaning the school environment, where students from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds work together; (2) Togetherness: Manifested in group activities during class discussions, where students are encouraged to listen to and respect each other's opinions; and (3) Tolerance: Observed in daily interactions among students from various backgrounds, particularly in groupings deliberately arranged by teachers to promote cross-cultural cooperation.

The analysis of these observations shows that the implementation of *Huma Betang* values has encouraged students to exhibit more tolerant and inclusive behavior. However, this implementation is still more commonly observed in non-academic activities (e.g., mutual cooperation and group work) rather than in formal subject matter. This indicates the need for a more systematic strategy to integrate these values into every aspect of the curriculum.

3. Students' Response to *Huma Betang* Values

The data obtained from interviews with students indicate that they generally understand the basic concepts of the *Huma Betang* philosophy, particularly the values of togetherness and mutual cooperation. Many students reported feeling comfortable interacting with peers from different backgrounds and recognize the importance of mutual respect.

However, students from outside Kalimantan exhibited a more limited understanding of the *Huma Betang* philosophy compared to those from Dayak communities. Some non-Dayak students perceive these values as more relevant to their Dayak peers, although they also apply them in their daily interactions. This analysis suggests the need for a more inclusive approach to introducing *Huma Betang* values so that they can be embraced by all students, regardless of their cultural background.

4. Challenges in Implementing *Huma Betang*

From interviews with teachers, several challenges in implementing the *Huma Betang* philosophy were identified: (1) Limited teaching materials: The lack of educational resources that explicitly connect *Huma Betang* values with the school curriculum is a major obstacle. This results in suboptimal integration of multicultural values into formal subjects; (2) Cultural background differences: Teachers without a Dayak cultural background often struggle to convey *Huma Betang* values contextually to students who also do not come from Kalimantan. They require additional training to effectively teach these values to all students; and (3) Awareness among non-Dayak students: Some non-Dayak students tend to view *Huma Betang* values as part of local culture that is not entirely relevant to them, leading to limited awareness of the importance of these values.

This analysis highlights the challenges in making the *Huma Betang* philosophy a universal multicultural value within the school. Additional efforts are needed to ensure that these values are accepted and applied by all students, regardless of their cultural background.

5. Impact of Implementing *Huma Betang* Values on Student Character Development

From the data analysis, it is evident that the implementation of *Huma Betang* values has a positive impact on student character development, particularly in the following areas: (1) Tolerance: Students demonstrate a greater openness to differences, including cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity; (2) Togetherness: Students are better able to collaborate in diverse groups, showing mutual respect and contributing to achieving common goals; and (3) Social discipline: Through activities such as mutual assistance and group work, students learn to fulfill their social responsibilities within a larger community context.

However, this impact needs to be strengthened by broader application in various formal learning activities. If these values are more consistently integrated across all subjects, the positive impact on student character could become more widespread.

6. Recommendations for Strengthening Implementation

Based on the analysis results, several recommendations can be made to strengthen the implementation of *Huma Betang* values at SDN 6 Bukit Tunggal: (1) Development of teaching materials: There is a need to develop instructional materials that connect the *Huma Betang* philosophy with various subjects, not only in character education but also in other subjects such as Science, Social Studies, and Mathematics; (2) Teacher training: Teachers should receive more intensive training on how to integrate *Huma Betang* values in a more inclusive multicultural context, so that the values are relevant not only for Dayak students but also for students from outside Kalimantan; and (3) Inclusive approach for non-Dayak students: The school needs to

implement an approach that ensures all students, regardless of their cultural background, feel that the values of *Huma Betang* are relevant and applicable to their daily lives.

Thus, this data analysis indicates that the application of *Huma Betang* values has positively impacted student character development, but further efforts are needed to ensure these values are systematically integrated and accepted by the entire school community.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study indicates that the multicultural values of the *Huma Betang* philosophy, such as tolerance, togetherness, mutual cooperation, and mutual respect, have been effectively applied in shaping student character at SDN 6 Bukit Tunggal, Palangka Raya City. These values are not only implemented in non-academic activities like communal work but also in students' daily interactions, fostering a harmonious environment amidst cultural diversity. Students have shown improvements in cross-cultural tolerance and cooperation, reflecting the successful application of the *Huma Betang* philosophy in character education. However, there are still challenges in integrating these values into the formal curriculum, especially for teachers from outside the Dayak culture. Further training and the development of more inclusive teaching materials are needed to ensure that all students, regardless of their cultural background, can experience the relevance and benefits of the *Huma Betang* philosophy in their character development. Overall, the *Huma Betang* philosophy makes a significant contribution to creating students with strong character who are able to live harmoniously in a multicultural environment.

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