

## MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN FORMING ATTITUDE TOLERANCE OF DIVERSITY IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

**Nasywa Nathania<sup>1</sup>, Iva Sarifah<sup>2</sup>, Chrisnaji Banindra Yudha<sup>3</sup>**

Elementary School Teacher Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and  
Education, Jakarta State University  
Jakarta – Indonesia

[nasnat200381@gmail.com](mailto:nasnat200381@gmail.com)

Article Info	Abstract
<p><b>Article History:</b></p> <p>Accepted March 2024</p> <p>Revised February 2024</p> <p>Approved January 2024</p>	<p>Education is a progressive approach that continues to move towards change in the world of education. It is an inseparable aspect of the education system, which makes multicultural education inseparable from tolerance because both are part of the national education system. Tolerance is a person's ability to respect and treat other people with a complete understanding of all existing differences. This research aims to describe how multicultural education plays a role in instilling an attitude of tolerance in elementary school students based on theory. This article also discusses the components and objectives of multicultural education and strategies for implementing multicultural education in elementary schools. Researchers used the literature study method or library research, which collected relevant data about multicultural education and its relationship with tolerance. This data was then studied to find new scientific facts.</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Multicultural Education; Tolerance; Elementary School</p>

### **A. Introduction**

Indonesia is one of the countries with the most incredible diversity globally. The truth of this statement can be proven by the geographical and sociocultural conditions, which are so broad and varied. From this diversity, open competition often arises and has the potential to cause conflict. Implementing multicultural education in education can be an effective solution to overcome conflicts. Multicultural education is vital in reducing and preventing conflict in several regions. According to researchers, the ideal phase is at the elementary school level because students are developing their basic abilities in this phase.

Multicultural education is an idea, a movement of change, and a process that aims to change the structure of educational institutions so that female and male students, participants from different races, ethnicities, languages, cultures, and religious groups will have the same opportunity to receive academics at school (Banks, 2015). Multicultural education provides equal opportunities for all children, regardless of diverse sociocultural backgrounds, to obtain an education. The government has also guaranteed this through the Republic of Indonesia Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Educational System, explained in article 4, which reads: "Education is carried out democratically and fairly and non-discriminatory by upholding human rights, religious values, cultural values and national diversity."

Education in elementary schools is about receiving knowledge from teachers and forming students' character through applying norms, values, and attitudes, such as tolerance towards ethnic, cultural, and religious differences. Tolerance is a person's attitude or personality that supports the creation of harmony. Tolerance can be an action where a person respects and accepts differences in ethnicity, religion, race, gender, and opinion (Jun 2016). This tolerance attitude acts as a means for students to develop awareness of diversity in national and state life. Students' curious character about the diversity around them increases their understanding of the importance of learning tolerance from an early age. The role of educators is crucial in developing this attitude of tolerance because education can

form awareness of the importance of tolerance in the diversity of Indonesian society.

Ethnic diversity in Indonesia presents challenges in multicultural life, so awareness of multicultural issues is necessary. Understanding multiculturalism since elementary education is critical because this is the beginning of instilling concepts, values, and understanding in students regarding multiculturalism.

The existence of diversity can also potentially trigger conflict, so character values such as tolerance, democracy, social care, love of peace, national spirit, and diversity need to be instilled from an early age to shape national character through multicultural education (Rohman & Ningsih, 2018). Based on the urgency of forming these attitudes through multicultural education, the researcher wants to discuss the importance of multicultural education in forming attitudes of tolerance and diversity at the basic education level.

Based on the explanation of the multicultural education concept above, multicultural education is influential in forming attitudes of mutual respect and respect between individuals. It aligns with the concept of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, which recognizes humans as individuals and different creatures (Awiria & Jamaluddin, 2020). This concept recognizes that each individual has characteristics that influence the sociocultural environment. However, the concept of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* also recognizes pluralism, which means a willingness to accept diversity (plurality). It means that individuals with different cultural characteristics must live tolerantly in a society with different ethnicities, groups, religions, customs, and views of life.

## **B. Methods**

The method applied in this research is a literature study. Literature study can be interpreted as a series of research activities closely related to collecting library data sources and then managing them critically, systematically, and objectively regarding the concept and implementation of multicultural education in learning in Indonesia (Sugiyono, 2019).

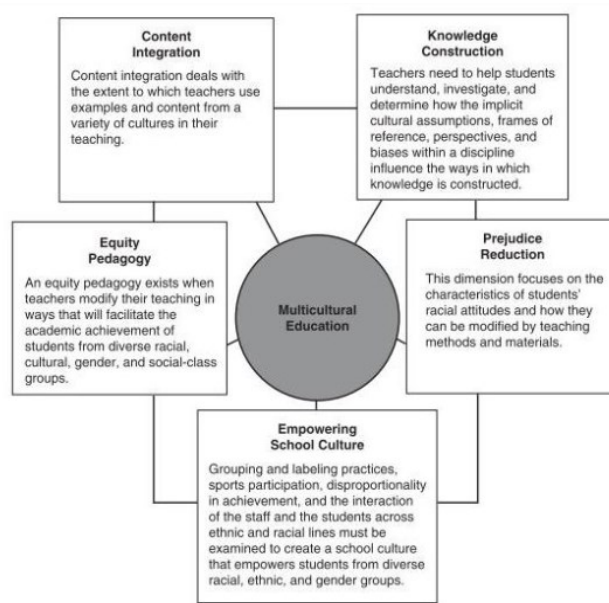
Literature studies are the same as other research; what differentiates this literature study is the data collection method obtained from books and research reading sources first (Widiasanti et al., 2023). Literature study research aims to carry out in-depth analysis to achieve optimal results. The data collected and analyzed in this study can be considered a secondary source.

The technique used in this research is analytical techniques (content analysis). The analysis systematically searches and compiles the data to be easily understood and shared with others (Sugiyono, 2019). This technique is carried out by analyzing research data from the most relevant, relevant to least relevant, by looking at the most reliable research year, namely the most recent research, and going back to previous research years. The results of this research were obtained from the suitability of the problems that will later be solved in this research.

### **C. Results and Discussion**

The diversity of Indonesian society as a pluralistic society, with various ethnicities, cultures, customs, and differences in religion, race, and culture, makes Indonesia a multicultural country (Febrianty & Nugrahanta, 2021). Uniting Indonesian society into a strong entity amidst these differences and diversity is challenging. One solution that can be implemented is multicultural education from an early age, which teaches students to appreciate and understand differences in their daily lives. Muh. Amin stated that multicultural education includes all students without distinguishing between groups, such as gender, ethnicity, race, culture, social strata, and religion (Amin, 2018). Teachers have an essential responsibility to provide this education to students so that they can see differences wisely (Jamaludin et al., 2022). Multicultural education also plays an essential role as an alternative means of resolving conflict, aiming to minimize and prevent conflict. Maemunah believes Multicultural education focuses on forming an attitude of mutual respect, sincerity, and tolerance towards diversity in a diverse society (Maemunah & Darmiyanti, 2023). Through this education, it is hoped that students will not forget their cultural roots and maintain their national identity. Especially in the context of democracy, multicultural education is very relevant in the face of the

era of globalization so that students do not negatively influence their national identity. In this way, multicultural education can lead Indonesian society towards a harmonious multicultural life where people can live peacefully amidst the differences that exist in everyday life.



**Figure 1. Dimensions of Multicultural Education according to James A. Banks (2015)**

James Bank explains that multicultural education has several interconnected dimensions, namely: 1) Content integration, namely bringing together various cultures and groups to explain basic concepts, generalizations, and theories in various subjects or scientific disciplines. 2) The knowledge construction process, namely, brings students to understand a subject's cultural implications. 3) An equitable pedagogy, namely adapting teaching methods to the way students learn to facilitate the academic achievement of diverse students in terms of race, culture, and social aspects. 4) Prejudice reduction, namely identifying students' racial characteristics and determining their teaching methods. Then, train groups to participate in sports activities and interact with all staff and students of different ethnicities and races to create a tolerant and inclusive academic culture. 5) Empowering school culture highlights the importance of creating a school environment that allows all individuals, regardless of ethnic, racial, cultural, or

other background, to feel supported, valued, and have the power to reach their full potential (Banks, 2015)

Multicultural education has interrelated dimensions, including the integration of cultural content in the curriculum, a knowledge construction process that takes cultural implications into account, the use of equitable pedagogy to support student diversity, the reduction of prejudice by promoting interracial interactions, and the importance of creating an empowering school culture, where all individuals can feel supported and valued in achieving their full potential.

Apart from that, the results of multicultural education could have been more optimal, as evidenced by obstacles arising from students, teachers, and schools. One of them is social obstacles in the school environment, namely discrimination, exclusion, and isolation regarding children's rights. Discrimination and violence can be seen from data collected by the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) and the Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions (FSGI) in 2023. Bullying cases are still a threat to children in the school environment. The types of bullying often experienced by victims are listed in the following table:

**Table 1**  
**Data of Bullying Cases from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI)**

Year	Number of Cases
2020	119
2021	53
2022	226
2023	3800

The types of bullying most often experienced by victims are physical bullying (55.5%), verbal bullying (29.3%), and psychological bullying (15.2%). Based on education level, elementary school students are the group most frequently victims (26%), followed by junior high school students (25%) and high school students (18.75%). From the data in Table 1, it can be concluded that bullying cases included in non-multicultural attitudes have increased significantly from year to year.

Some obstacles to implementing multicultural education in research (Pane et al., 2024) include: 1) The existing curriculum may need to be more inclusive or accommodate cultural diversity. Many curricula still focus on the dominant culture

and do not provide space for minority cultures. 2) Limited resources, such as adequate teaching materials, teacher training, and supporting facilities, can hinder the implementation of multicultural education. Often, schools need access to materials that reflect cultural diversity. 3) Lack of Teacher Training. It leaves them less equipped to deal with the dynamics that arise from cultural diversity in the classroom (Arfa & Laisaba, 2022).

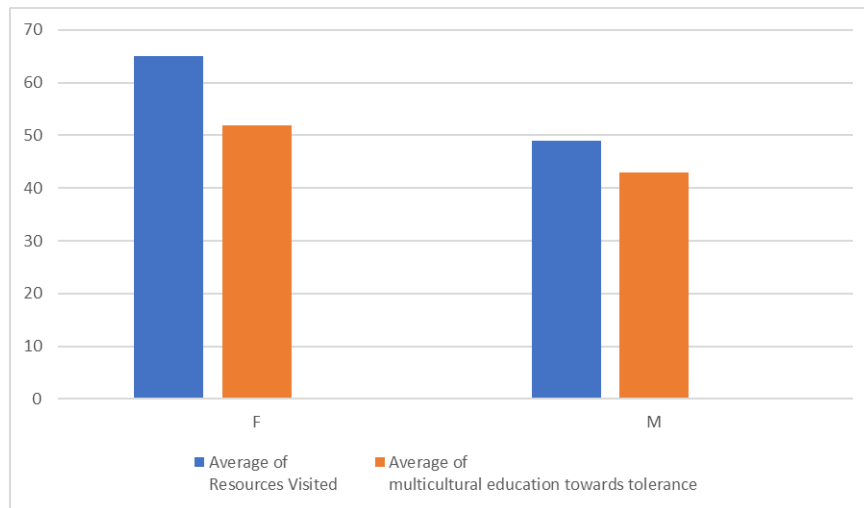
In line with the Hasanah committee stated that these obstacles must be overcome first by creating strategies for implementing multicultural education; the most important thing is to foster a sense of tolerance for diversity in both students and teachers because this attitude can eradicate society's non-multicultural attitude for other strategies such as aligning multicultural education with the curriculum, teaching strategies, learning methods, teaching materials, learning media, and norms that exist in the school environment. (Hasanah & Nurqori'ah, 2022) Multicultural education in elementary schools can be integrated through each subject's curriculum and is not limited to just one or two particular subjects. Teachers can provide examples and relate material in a subject to forms of diversity in students, especially students with special needs. For example, differences in academic and physical abilities. The integration of this material is, of course, inseparable from the concept of the material being taught (Rahmawati & Fatmawati, 2020). Another strategy that can be used is project-based learning, where students can explore various aspects of culture through collaborative projects. (Wijaya et al., 2023) Educators must continue to innovate and adapt to changes in the educational environment to create relevant and meaningful learning experiences for all students (Proborini et al., 2023).

During a review of the literature on multicultural education in elementary schools, several significant findings regarding the teaching of multicultural education were revealed, including 1) Teaching from an early age (Erviana & Fatmawati, 2019) the attitude of tolerance contained in multicultural education must be taught to children from an early age so that they understand and practice differences. 2) Integrating various subjects (Proborini et al., 2023) in multicultural education must align with the school curriculum. It does not imply the need for

separate multicultural subjects but rather that multicultural education can be integrated into every subject. 3) Applying learning strategies and models (Proborini et al., 2023) in implementing multicultural education as a medium for cultivating attitudes of tolerance in elementary school students requires learning strategies and models that follow the characteristics of multicultural education so the implementation can run well, too. 4) The role of the teacher as an instructor is the spearhead of success in multicultural education (Susiloningsih, 2020) because students tend to imitate the example the teacher gives. 5) The new findings in this research support and complement previous research in the field of multicultural education when compared with other theories and research. There are obstacles found in multicultural education, including the need for teacher training regarding multicultural education-based teaching and the role of parents in the diversity process (Pratiwi et al., 2018). Another obstacle is the discovery of elements of pluralism, including ethnic, religious, and ethnic differences, so many challenges arise (Maemunah & Darmiyanti, 2023).

Therefore, it is essential to compare research conducted by previous researchers with questionnaire survey data filled out by teachers, students, and parents. It aims to obtain information regarding the experiences of students and parents in implementing multicultural education, the advantages and the challenges they find in using it, and their responses to the application of multicultural education in fostering attitudes of tolerance. This research analyses the factors influencing student participation in the learning process. The data used to cover a variety of genders, including gender, nationality, place length, school level, subject, semester, class, section, and relationship with parents/guardians, as well the number of students receiving multicultural education classes, number of announcements views, the number of resources visited, and participation in discussions. The first step is data description, which involves explaining the variables present. Next, data preprocessing was done to deal with missing values and code variable categories and normalize the data if necessary. Descriptive analysis was also carried out to obtain an overview of the data. The average number of students receiving multicultural education in the class is X, with a median of Y.





**Figure 2. Histogram data of Variable Distribution of Multicultural Education**

Depicting the data with a histogram shows that the distribution of this variable is conical to the normal level. Correlation analysis is then carried out between the independent and dependent variables. The research results showed that there was a significant positive correlation between the presence of multicultural students in class and the number of resources visited ( $r = 0.6$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and participation in discussions ( $r = 0.5$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In regression analysis, linear regression predicts the number of multicultural students based on other variables. The results show that the independent variables have a significant influence on the number of multicultural students, with the most significant contribution from the number of resources visited ( $\beta = 0.3$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and the relationship with the parents/guardians ( $\beta = 0.3$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Comparative analysis revealed that female students had a higher average of multiculturalism than male students ( $p < 0.05$ ).

This research shows essential findings regarding the application of multicultural education to attitudes of tolerance and the challenges in managing it. These findings help understand the factors that influence student interactions and provide implications and recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of multicultural education in encouraging attitudes of tolerance (Abustang et al., 2023). This research contributes to improving the quality of students by understanding the role of multicultural education in the educational context. Through the analysis, this research emphasizes the importance of effective data

management to optimize students' potential for tolerance in dealing with diversity. The implications of this research can guide policymakers in designing better strategies and policies for using multicultural education and developing attitudes of tolerance and diversity.

#### **D. Conclusion**

Multicultural education is essential in uniting diverse Indonesian society into a strong and harmonious entity. It is done by teaching students to appreciate and understand differences and integrating the values of tolerance in education from an early age. Teachers have a crucial role in providing multicultural education to students. In addition, multicultural education has several critical dimensions, including the integration of cultural content, the process of constructing knowledge that expresses culture, the use of equitable pedagogy, the reduction of prejudice, and the creation of an empowering school culture. Multicultural education can be involved in the curriculum and teaching strategies at the elementary school level.

It is hoped that each school can reduce the negative impacts of diversity in the school environment. To achieve this goal, the school's contributions are needed to support multicultural education and the active role of teachers as educators. Teachers must consider essential aspects of diversity, such as cultural differences, race, socio-economic status, and religion. All these differences must be addressed through tolerance, mutual respect, and fair behaviour toward students. Apart from that, teachers also need to use learning strategies that can encourage students to increase unity in diversity to create prosperity among students in the school environment. In writing this article, the researcher rarely found research that discussed multicultural education for inclusive students, and the researcher hopes that in the future, researchers can research multicultural education in inclusive schools.

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