

THE ROLE OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION: BUILDING TOLERANCE, REDUCING DISCRIMINATION, AND STRENGTHENING CHARACTER AND NATIONAL IDENTITY THROUGH A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse the role of multicultural education in building tolerance, reducing discrimination, and strengthening national character and identity in the era of globalisation. The research approach used is qualitative with a literature review method, which examines various scientific sources on the theory, practice, and policy of multicultural education. The results of the study show that multicultural education plays an important role as a means of forming mutual respect between individuals and groups with different social, cultural, and religious backgrounds. Through the implementation of an inclusive curriculum and a learning environment that respects diversity, multicultural education has proven to be effective in fostering values of tolerance and equality, as well as preventing discriminatory attitudes in society. In addition, multicultural values integrated with the principles of Pancasila and national culture contribute to strengthening character, morality, and a sense of nationality among students. Therefore, multicultural education needs to be positioned as a key strategy in shaping a generation with superior personalities, a nationalistic spirit, and the ability to adapt constructively in the midst of globalisation.

Keywords: multicultural education, globalisation, tolerance, discrimination, character, national identity.

Introduction

Globalisation has had a major impact on various aspects of human life, especially in the social and cultural contexts. This process is characterised by the increasing openness of borders between countries through advances in technology, communication, and human mobility. The flow of information, culture, and global values spreads rapidly, resulting in increasingly intense cross-cultural interactions. Although globalisation encourages progress and openness, this phenomenon also poses serious challenges to the preservation of local values, national identity, and social cohesion in various countries, including Indonesia.

In the context of Indonesia, which is known as a multicultural society, globalisation brings quite complex dilemmas. On the one hand, cultural openness can enrich social experiences and broaden people's understanding of universal values such as tolerance, democracy, and human rights (Judijanto & Aslan, 2024); (Sugiardi & Aslan,

2025). However, on the other hand, the rapid flow of global culture can erode national identity and weaken the values of diversity that have become the hallmark of the nation. Differences in religion, ethnicity, language, race, and customs, which were originally the nation's wealth, have the potential to cause social friction if not managed wisely through an adaptive education system (Aslan, 2019).

Education plays a strategic role in maintaining social integrity amid these global changes. As an institution that shapes character, education not only functions as a means of transferring knowledge, but also as a medium for internalising moral, social and cultural values. In this case, multicultural education is a relevant approach to strengthening tolerance, appreciating differences and instilling a sense of justice among students. Through multicultural-based learning, the younger generation is encouraged to understand differences not as a threat, but as a collective strength that enriches national life (Suroso et al., 2021); (Aslan & Shiong, 2023).

Multicultural education not only emphasises knowledge about diversity, but also leads to the formation of attitudes and social behaviours that reflect universal human values. This approach teaches the importance of accepting cultural, religious and lifestyle differences, as well as developing social empathy towards other groups. Its consistent application in educational environments is believed to be capable of encouraging the emergence of an inclusive, democratic, and socially just society that is able to withstand the waves of intolerance and discrimination that are increasingly prevalent in the modern era (Aslan, Hifza, et al., 2020); (Amin et al., 2025).

In an increasingly competitive global dynamic, efforts to strengthen national identity are becoming more urgent. Multicultural education can play a role in building collective awareness of the importance of Pancasila values, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, and the spirit of nationalism that unites Indonesia's diversity. This process is closely related to the formation of a strong national character rooted in cultural values without closing oneself off to global developments. Thus, the implementation of multicultural education is not an attempt to isolate oneself from globalisation, but rather a filtering mechanism to preserve the nation's identity. (Yazidiy, 2025).

Social reality shows that there are still high rates of intolerance, discrimination, and bullying based on identity differences in educational environments. This phenomenon indicates that multicultural values have not been firmly embedded in the learning system. Some students are still unable to understand the positive meaning of diversity, resulting in exclusive attitudes towards other groups (Setiawan, 2024). This situation calls for new learning strategies that are not only cognitive but also affective and contextual, using real-life examples that teach harmony in diversity (Idawati, 2024).

Amidst the tide of globalisation that tends to standardise values, multicultural education offers a contrasting paradigm: affirming locality within universality. Local values, such as mutual cooperation, tolerance, and deliberation, need to be revived in the context of multicultural learning so that students can balance global openness with

the preservation of national culture. The process of internalising these values is important for building strong character that is not easily swayed by external influences (Ladson-Billings, 2014) .

Historically, the Indonesian nation was formed through a long process involving various ethnic groups, religions, and cultures. This social capital has become a strong foundation for the development of multicultural education. In the context of national historiography, education that instils a spirit of plurality has been embedded in the fundamental spirit of the nation since the Youth Pledge of 1928 to the Proclamation of Independence in 1945. Pancasila, which embodies the values of divinity, humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice, is a reflection of this spirit (Sotiropoulou & McClellan, 2019) . Therefore, multicultural education is not a new concept, but rather a revitalisation of values that are already inherent in the nation's ideology.

The implementation of multicultural education also requires policy support that is oriented towards inclusivity. The government, educational institutions, and society need to collaborate in creating an educational environment that is free from discrimination. The curriculum needs to be designed to include content that fosters appreciation for differences, such as through the integration of local cultural material, interfaith learning, and the instilling of universal human values(Cuga, 2018) . Teachers, as the spearhead of education, also need to be equipped with multicultural competencies so that they can become effective facilitators of diversity(Sitopu et al., 2024) ' (Aslan, Silvia, et al., 2020) .

The presence of digital media and information technology has accelerated the process of globalisation, while also adding to the complexity of multicultural education. On the one hand, digital media can be an effective means of introducing various world cultures and enhancing intercultural understanding. However, on the other hand, the spread of unfiltered information can reinforce stereotypes and social prejudices. Therefore, multicultural education needs to integrate digital literacy as part of learning so that the younger generation is able to distinguish between information that is constructive and destructive to social cohesion(et al., 2021) ; (Tuhuteru et al., 2023) .

From a socio-psychological perspective, multicultural education provides space for students to build a positive and adaptive identity. Through interaction with various cultures, students learn to appreciate their uniqueness while accepting the existence of others. A strong national identity is formed when individuals have a harmonious collective awareness of national pride and recognition of diversity. Multicultural education, therefore, becomes a key pillar in building human resources with integrity and quality.(, 2018) .

Thus, given all the challenges and opportunities presented by globalisation, multicultural education needs to be positioned as a key strategy for national character building. By strengthening the values of tolerance, justice and humanity, education can become a driving force for peaceful and sustainable social change. This effort not only

produces knowledgeable individuals, but also noble-minded people who respect differences and actively participate in maintaining national unity in the midst of a changing world.

Research Methods

The research method used in this study is qualitative research with a literature review approach (library research). This approach was conducted by analysing various scientific sources such as textbooks, national and international journals, research reports, and relevant education policy documents on the concept and practice of multicultural education in the era of globalisation. The data obtained was collected through a systematic review of literature discussing the role of education in building tolerance, reducing discrimination, and strengthening national character and identity (Eliyah & Aslan, 2025) . Data analysis was conducted descriptively through content analysis techniques to identify key themes, patterns of thought, and the relevance of findings between studies. The results of this analysis were then synthesised into theoretical conclusions that describe the contribution of multicultural education to the formation of an inclusive society with national character and personality amid the tide of globalisation (Baumeister & Leary, 2020) .

Results and Discussion

Multicultural Education as a Means of Building Tolerance and Reducing Discrimination

Multicultural education is an educational approach that focuses on appreciating cultural, religious, ethnic, and social identity diversity in the teaching and learning process. This concept stems from the awareness that modern societies consist of groups with different backgrounds, so the education system must be able to accommodate and accommodate this diversity. In the context of Indonesia, which has a high degree of plurality, multicultural education is an important instrument for instilling the value of tolerance in students from an early age as a foundation for harmonious community life(Priwati, 2021) .

In practice, multicultural education is not limited to introducing different cultures, but also teaches universal values such as empathy, justice, and respect for human rights. Strengthening these values through educational institutions can help students understand that every individual has an equal standing in society, regardless of their ethnic background, religion, or social status. Thus, multicultural education becomes an effective means of suppressing discriminatory attitudes, stereotypes, and social prejudices (Banks, 1993) .

Tolerance as one of the main objectives of multicultural education is rooted in the principle of recognition and acceptance of diversity. Through interactive and socially-based learning processes , students are encouraged to view differences not as threats, but as opportunities to complement one another. In an inclusive classroom

environment, teachers act as facilitators who foster awareness that cultural diversity can be a source of moral and intellectual wealth for national development(Karacsony et al., 2022) .

The multicultural learning process also serves as a means of internalising social values that can strengthen cohesion among members of society. A curriculum that integrates elements of local culture, national history, and humanitarian teachings can serve as a strong foundation for building collective awareness of the importance of coexisting in diversity. In this way, education can play a role not only in academic aspects, but also in the creation of a peaceful and civilised social order (Banks, 2015) .

One concrete form of successful multicultural education is the implementation of a cross-cultural collaborative learning model. Through group activities involving students from various backgrounds, they practise communicating, working together, and resolving conflicts constructively. Experiences such as these can foster mutual respect and eliminate social barriers between individuals with different views or cultures. It is these positive social interactions that progressively erode intolerant attitudes (Sumarna, 2021) .

In addition, multicultural education serves as a means of preventing structural discrimination in the school environment. Discrimination arises not only from individual attitudes, but also from unfair systems in the distribution of learning opportunities, cultural representation in the curriculum, and school policies. Therefore, multicultural education promotes the principle of equality in every aspect of learning—whether in the selection of materials, assessment methods, or extracurricular activities—so that no group feels marginalised (Lonto & Umbase, 2020) .

In an institutional context, the implementation of multicultural education requires commitment from all school components. School principals and teachers must have a strong understanding of the principles of multiculturalism so that educational policies can reflect the spirit of inclusivity. The implementation of teacher training programmes on cultural sensitivity is crucial to developing educators who are capable of managing diversity in the classroom with an empathetic and fair approach (Sleeter, 2017) .

A common challenge is resistance to a more open educational paradigm. Some people still believe that explicit discussion of cultural or religious diversity can cause ideological friction. In fact, by avoiding such discussions, students do not gain a deep understanding of the importance of tolerance and respect for differences. Therefore, educational institutions need to create an open dialogue space that fosters a culture of discussion and critical thinking (Gatimu, 2008) .

Modern learning media also has great potential to strengthen the value of tolerance through a multicultural approach. The use of digital media, documentaries, and social simulations can help students understand the reality of diversity and the impact of discrimination. By combining technology and a humanistic approach,

multicultural education can be actualised in a more interesting and relevant way to students' daily lives in the digital age (Wahyono, 2022) .

The concept of multicultural education also has a strong moral dimension. Through values education, students are guided to adjust their behaviour to social norms that uphold justice and humanity. Teachers act as role models in demonstrating mutual respect and a willingness to listen to different views. This role modelling is more effective than simply imparting theory, as students tend to imitate the real behaviour they see in the learning environment (Nieto, 2018) .

On a broader scale, multicultural education can be an instrument of social reconciliation for communities that have experienced horizontal conflict. Through education that emphasises the values of peace, respect for differences, and solidarity among citizens, the younger generation can become agents of change who promote dialogue over violence. Inter-regional student exchange programmes or cross-ethnic activities can be strategic means of strengthening cross-cultural brotherhood at the national level (Kusuma & Fauzia Putri, 2024) .

The implementation of multicultural education in Indonesia has deep relevance to the concept of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*. This principle is not only a motto, but must be realised in the practical implementation of education that respects all elements of the nation without discrimination. The values of multiculturalism instilled in schools will shape a generation that is not easily provoked by issues of difference, but is able to become a social glue in the midst of the diversity of the " " society .

Theoretically, the implementation of multicultural education is rooted in humanism and social justice theory, which emphasises the importance of equality in obtaining educational rights. Education is not a homogeneous space that only promotes a particular cultural group, but rather a forum that provides space for the expression, contribution, and uniqueness of each culture. Based on this theory, educators are expected to create an education system that is adaptive to the needs of learners from diverse backgrounds (D'hondt, 2021) .

Finally, multicultural education serves not only to build tolerance and reduce discrimination, but also to shape an intelligent and civilised society. Through education that values plurality, the Indonesian nation can maintain social integrity amid the rapid pace of globalisation. Consistent implementation will produce a generation with strong character, open-mindedness, and moral awareness to live peacefully in diversity, while maintaining national harmony, which is the foundation of national life.

The Role of Multicultural Education in Strengthening Character and National Identity

Multicultural education not only aims to foster tolerance and eliminate discrimination, but also plays a strategic role in strengthening national character and identity. Amidst the rapid pace of globalisation, which brings with it foreign cultural influences, education is the main bastion for preserving national values. National

identity must be continuously nurtured through an educational process that combines an understanding of diversity with the reinforcement of fundamental national values such as Pancasila, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, the 1945 Constitution, and the spirit of nationalism that unites various differences(et al., 2024) .

National identity is the result of social and cultural constructs formed through the collective experiences of a nation. Education plays an important role in this process, as it is through educational institutions that national values are systematically transferred to future generations. Multicultural education is an effective way to introduce students to the nation's cultural wealth while internalising a sense of pride in Indonesian identity (D'hondt, 2021) . In this context, strengthening national identity is not done by rejecting global culture, but by placing local identity on an equal footing with universal values.

Increasing globalisation often weakens national identity. The influx of foreign mass media and popular culture can change the way young people think, as they tend to imitate foreign cultures without critically filtering them. Multicultural education aims to balance this influence by instilling an awareness that openness to the world must be accompanied by pride in one's own cultural heritage. Local values such as mutual cooperation, politeness, solidarity, and respect for differences must be made an integral part of the national education process (Aslan & Ningtyas, 2025) .

Character education is a core aspect of multicultural education in building national identity. Through learning that fosters the values of honesty, responsibility, hard work, and social awareness, students are equipped with the moral foundation to behave in accordance with the character of the nation. These values are not only taught theoretically, but are integrated into daily learning activities through direct practices such as group work, social activities, and the instilling of ethical values in the school environment. Thus, multicultural education serves as a forum for shaping the character of the nation based on morals and noble culture (D'hondt, 2021) .

In the context of nationality, multicultural education plays a role in strengthening unity by emphasising common human values above differences in identity. Each student is encouraged to see themselves as part of a larger community, namely the Indonesian nation. Through this approach, a collective awareness is formed that diversity is part of the national identity that must be preserved, not eliminated. This awareness will strengthen social cohesion and prevent the emergence of horizontal conflicts based on ethnicity or religion(Hartinah, 2023) .

The integration of local cultural elements into the national curriculum is an effective strategy for strengthening national character. For example, learning materials can feature folk tales, regional traditions, or local cultural practices that have high moral value. This approach not only enriches cultural awareness but also instils pride in ancestral heritage. By learning about their own culture, students will be better able to appreciate other cultures and foster a love for their homeland (Gay, 2018) .

Teachers play a central role in implementing multicultural education that focuses on strengthening character and national identity. As agents of change, teachers not only act as educators, but also as role models in demonstrating an open and inclusive attitude towards nationalism. Through classroom interactions, teachers can help students connect multicultural values with everyday national experiences, such as respecting national symbols, maintaining the school environment, or participating in social activities that reflect the spirit of mutual cooperation (Sampe & Aslan, 2025) ;(Mudzakir & Aslan, 2025) .

Multicultural education also emphasises the importance of historical awareness and the nation's heritage of struggle. Learning about history that highlights the cross-ethnic and interfaith struggle in building Indonesia can strengthen national solidarity. Students need to understand that the nation's independence and integrity are not the result of the struggle of a particular group, but rather the joint work of all elements of society. This historical awareness becomes the emotional basis that fosters loyalty and pride as Indonesian citizens (Gay, 2018) .

A strong national identity cannot be separated from the mastery of universal moral values. Multicultural education teaches students that being a good citizen also means being a person who respects humanity globally. Thus, openness to the world does not weaken nationalism, but rather enriches the experience of nationality. A strong national identity is one that is able to adapt to changing times without losing its cultural roots (Banks, 2001) .

In the context of policy, the implementation of multicultural education must be supported by a curriculum design that emphasises a balance between nationalism and global openness. The government needs to ensure that national education policy provides sufficient space for instilling national values through a cross-cultural approach. Extracurricular programmes such as cultural arts activities, student exchanges, or multicultural-based independent campuses can be effective instruments in shaping national character(Saepurokhman & Ali, 2025) . In addition, multicultural education needs to strengthen students' reflective aspects through activities that encourage them to think critically about national identity. Students must be trained to analyse local and global cultural values , compare them, and determine their attitudes in accordance with the nation's fundamental values. This reflective approach is important so that students not only have knowledge about nationality but are also able to apply it in real life (Banks, 2010) .

Multicultural education also helps foster awareness that national identity is dynamic. As times change, the expression of national identity may evolve, but its core values remain the same: unity in diversity. Through this understanding, students are encouraged to become critical citizens who are open to innovation while remaining firmly rooted in their own cultural values. This forms the basis for a resilient, adaptive, and globally competitive society.(Yazidiy, 2025) .

Consistently applied multicultural values can create a young generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also emotionally and socially mature. A strong national character is formed from the habits of respecting differences, working together, and placing common interests above personal interests. Through an education system oriented towards these values, Indonesia can produce solid citizens who have a moral responsibility towards the future of the nation (Setiawan, 2024).

Overall, multicultural education serves as the foundation for the formation of an inclusive, dynamic, and noble national identity. By strengthening character and national values, education can become a vehicle for social reconstruction that preserves cultural sovereignty amid global influences. The generation born from a multicultural education system will be a generation that is proud to be Indonesian, respects differences, and is able to bring the values of Pancasila into civilised global practices.

Conclusion

Multicultural education plays a strategic role in addressing various social challenges that arise in the era of globalisation. Education that recognises and respects cultural diversity serves as an effective means of instilling values of tolerance, justice and humanity. Through an inclusive learning process, students not only learn to understand differences, but also develop the ability to live harmoniously with a heterogeneous society. The values of tolerance instilled from an early age become an important social capital for building a peaceful and just society.

Multicultural education also plays a major role in preventing and reducing discrimination, both in educational settings and in wider social life. An equitable and inclusive approach to learning helps to eliminate stereotypes and prejudices between groups. By creating spaces for dialogue, strengthening cross-cultural interactions, and equalising learning opportunities for all groups, multicultural education can create a social order that respects the rights of every individual regardless of their religious, racial or cultural background. This process contributes directly to the creation of a peaceful and non-discriminatory social climate.

In addition, multicultural education plays an important role in strengthening national character and identity amid the tide of globalisation. Through the integration of national values, local culture, and the spirit of Pancasila into the education system, students can develop a sense of pride in their national identity without losing their openness to the outside world. Multicultural education thus becomes a bridge between local and global values, shaping a young generation with strong character, noble personality, and commitment to national unity. This multicultural awareness becomes the main foundation for the development of a civilised, inclusive, and competitive society in an ever-evolving global era.

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