

## The Dilemma of Multicultural Education in Improving Quality: A Systematic Review

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### ABSTRACT

Multicultural education is an approach that integrates cultural diversity into the education system to create an inclusive and equitable learning environment. Multicultural education in improving quality is an effort to ensure that all students, regardless of cultural background, receive a high-quality education. This research aims to review several articles on multicultural education quality management, then generate appreciation and new ideas about the dilemmas or challenges that will be faced from the concepts of the analyzed articles. This research uses the article review method, which involves summarizing several published articles, comparing them, providing appreciation, and generating critiques and new ideas as a development of the scientific treasury. The result of this research is a review of several articles on the concept of multicultural quality education management as one approach to optimizing the function of education in accordance with the diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious conditions of Indonesian society. The study contributes positively to the field of management science, but the dilemma of it, also have some risks in creating a negative stigma about cultural diversity. If not implemented correctly, it would be better for multicultural education management to focus more on improving human resources with an approach rooted in Indonesian nationalism.

**Keywords:** *Dilemma; Multicultural Education; Quality*

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## INTRODUCTION

Multicultural education has become an important focus in efforts to improve the quality of education in various countries. In the context of rapid globalization, cultural diversity within classrooms and schools in the learning environment becomes both a challenge and an opportunity to create an inclusive and effective learning environment. Multicultural education quality management aims to ensure that all students, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, have equal opportunities to achieve high academic performance. Improving the quality of multicultural education is a very appropriate approach given the diverse cultural conditions of Indonesian society; however, it faces several challenges that have become current issues in multicultural education. According to Kompas, the first critical note on education in Indonesia in 2024 is the relatively low literacy rate, based on the education report where around 40% of students achieve minimum literacy competence. For that reason, efforts to

improve literacy have become one of the main focuses in the management of multicultural education quality. Another issue is violence in educational units, with indicators of school safety climate for junior and senior high school levels experiencing a decline. This indicates the need for more attention in creating a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students. The next issue is collaboration with stakeholders. Collaboration between the government, schools, parents, and the community becomes important to improve the quality of multicultural education. Programs that involve various parties can help create a more inclusive and effective learning environment (Kompas, 2024). The next issue is about the role of technology in multicultural education. According to Ikhsan in Kompasiana, the use of technology in multicultural education is increasing. Technology can help create a more inclusive learning environment and support cultural diversity (Ikhsan, 2024). The next issue is intolerance, so multicultural education in schools is very important to create an inclusive, tolerant, and harmonious society. The implementation of multicultural education helps to address the discrimination and intolerance that still occur in society (Arfa & Lasaiba, 2022).

There are many articles discussing multicultural education or related topics, but some of the latest scientific journals in 2024 that researchers have found include the journal titled *Pendidikan Multikultural: Membangun Kesatuan Dalam Keanekaragaman* (Multicultural Education: Building Unity in Diversity) written by Rahmad Nasution and Meyniar Albina, published by SCHOLARS: Journal of Social Humanities and Education, Vol. 2 No. 2. (2024). This research uses the literature study method, and the article explains the nature of multiculturalism, which is a natural state among students, and the urgency of multicultural education as a curriculum that can enhance educational output in the form of a civil society with Pancasila values (Nasution & Albina, 2024).

Next, the article in the scientific journal titled *Mengintegrasikan Pendidikan Multikultural dalam Upaya Resolusi Konflik Etnis* (Integrating Multicultural Education in Efforts to Resolve Ethnic Conflicts) written by Hairul Hadi, Suprpto, Warni Djuita, and Fathurrahman Muhtar, published by the Journal of Educational Profession, Volume 9, Number 1, Year 2024. This research uses the literature study method, and the journal mentions the importance of multicultural education in achieving quality education through an approach of harmony and the harmonization of a multicultural educational environment (Hadi et al., 2024).

Additionally, an article was also found in a scientific journal titled *Implementasi Pendidikan Multikultural dan Relevansinya dengan Kurikulum Merdeka di Sekolah Dasar* (Implementation of Multicultural Education and Its Relevance to the Independent Curriculum) written by Indah Kusuma Wardani, Aviandri Cahya Nugroho, Bambang Sumardjoko, and Endang Fauzi Ati, published by Didaktika: Jurnal Kependidikan, Volume 13, Number 2, 2024. This research uses field research methods, and the article mentions the importance of multicultural education systematically applied in a curriculum called the Merdeka Curriculum for elementary

school students, because instilling multicultural values from an early age will result in quality education in the field of tolerance (Wardani et al., 2024).

Research on multicultural education and its role in improving quality has shown that the right approach can enhance student engagement, strengthen intercultural relationships, and reduce educational gaps. However, the implementation of quality management strategies in a multicultural context often faces various obstacles, such as a lack of understanding of different cultural needs, limited resources, and resistance to change.

This review article aims to examine the existing literature on multicultural education in improving quality, identify best practices, and evaluate the challenges and opportunities faced in its implementation. By understanding various perspectives and findings from previous research, it is hoped that deeper insights and practical recommendations can be provided to improve the quality of multicultural education in the future.

## **METHOD**

This research uses the article review model, which involves re-examining several published articles with similar topics, and then attempting to present opinions based on analysis grounded in relevant theories or literature reviews related to the discussed topic. This review model is carried out through several methodological stages, including First, Summarizing, which involves reviewing published articles and rewriting them more concisely while still displaying the sources to draw conclusions. Second, Comparing, which involves examining published articles to find similarities and differences among several articles to draw conclusions. Third, providing a review, ideas, opinions, and even recommendations related to the topic, which is presented as a form of constructive scientific appreciation for the authors so that the topic continues to develop with more studies and comments.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Multicultural Education: Building Unity in Diversity**

This scientific journal is titled Pendidikan Multikultural: Membangun Kesatuan Dalam Keanekaragaman (Multicultural Education: Building Unity in Diversity), written by Rahmad Nasution and Meyniar Albina, published by SCHOLARS: Journal of Social Humanities and Education, Vol. 2 No. 2 (2024). The discussion in this article explains that the concept of multicultural education is still not fully clear and is still debated by many education experts. The definition of multicultural education often lacks any meaning at all. Multicultural education consists of two words, which mean the transfer of knowledge or the transfer of science. "Multi" means many, diverse, and various, and "cultural" comes from the word "culture," which refers to civilization, tradition, manners, or the preservation of cultural values. This definition is quoted from Rustam Ibrahim's article (Ibrahim, 2015).

Next, the discussion is about multicultural education in Indonesia, which explains that in the context of multicultural education, there are three key aspects: religion, ethnicity, race, and tolerance. Religion is an important aspect for Indonesian society, as everyone follows religious principles to regulate their lives within the community. However, there is still a lack of understanding about the importance of religion to others. Element is another important aspect of multicultural life, as it involves balancing various perspectives and risks. This balance can be influenced by cultural values, beliefs, and individual practices. Tolerance is a concept that aims to provide balance between various perspectives and actions, based on individual perspectives, this thought quotes the writings of someone named Muslimin in a seminar proceeding (Muslimin, 2012).

Next, as the main discussion, the urgency of multicultural education in improving the quality of learning outcomes for students is explained. Indonesian multicultural education is an important method for first addressing conflicts in society and for the younger generation to develop their cultural identity. It is based on the principles of Pancasila, which are central to the life, culture, and identity of the nation. Multicultural education is crucial for addressing various differences, such as social, cultural, and ideological differences. It helps students and society understand and overcome these differences, contributing to the diversity of Indonesian society. Both young generations do not abandon their cultural roots; efforts to address the erosion of traditions and culture in the era of globalization require active involvement from various parties, especially the government and society. The role of the government in preserving local culture is through policies and cultural performances at various events, such as Independence Day celebrations or regional cultural festivals. This can be done by incorporating education that teaches history, art, and traditions into the culture, which helps the younger generation understand and appreciate the diversity that benefits Indonesia (Vitry & Syamsir, 2024). Thirdly, improving quality through the development of the national education curriculum, multicultural education is very important for developing topics and content that align with the education system. This can be achieved through several steps: modifying the curriculum philosophy, defining the content, promoting social learning theory, implementing collaborative learning processes, and conducting comprehensive evaluations. These steps aim to create a more inclusive and responsive education based on cultural diversity (Suniti, 2014). Fourth, to build a multicultural Indonesian society that realizes a harmonious and inclusive community by promoting inclusive education, dialogue, and community participation. Promoting pluralism and tolerance is also very important. The Indonesian government must address various ethnic, cultural, and religious differences with good intentions, promoting tolerance, respect, and harmony among the nation's children (Marbun, 2023).

### **Integrating Multicultural Education in Efforts to Resolve Ethnic Conflicts**

This scientific journal is titled *Mengintegrasikan Pendidikan Multikultural dalam Upaya Resolusi Konflik Etnis* (Integrating Multicultural Education in Efforts to

Resolve Ethnic Conflicts) written by Hairul Hadi, Suprpto, Warni Djuita, and Fathurrahman Muhtar, published by the Journal of Educational Professional Sciences. Volume 9 Number 1 Year 2024. The discussion in this article explains, first, the importance of multicultural education. This helps students, both individually and as a community, to understand and respect different cultures, promote tolerance and cooperation, encourage dialogue, promote inclusive education, promote social inclusion, foster the development of positive identities, and build positive relationships with other cultures. By understanding and integrating these values, individuals and communities can contribute to peace, harmony, and the resolution of ethnic conflicts. The integration of multicultural education is crucial in addressing the root causes of ethnic conflicts, such as language, traditions, religion, and cultural differences. By promoting tolerance, cooperation, inclusion, and the development of positive identities, multicultural education can help individuals and communities work together more effectively and contribute to the resolution of ethnic conflicts. This article, among other things, quotes Muliadi's writings (Muliadi & Nasri, 2023).

Both concepts of ethnic conflict resolution are important to understand the causes and impacts on society. It focuses on factors such as cultural differences, political differences, historical conflicts, physical and material conflicts, ethnic conflicts, ethnic conflicts, ethnic conflicts, ethnic conflicts, ethnic conflicts, ethnic conflicts, and ethnic conflicts. Understanding these factors can help in identifying ways to effectively address and resolve ethnic conflicts. For example, understanding the causes of ethnic conflicts can help in identifying the factors that contribute to the occurrence of these conflicts and addressing them effectively.

Additionally, understanding the causes and impacts of ethnic conflicts can help in identifying ways to more effectively integrate multicultural education. By understanding these factors, researchers can better identify ways to address and resolve ethnic conflicts in their communities. This article, among others, cites Atsani's writings (Atsani & Nasri, 2021). This research aims to integrate multicultural education in resolving ethnic conflicts. This includes theories on cultural identity, dialectical dialogue, inclusive education, and other relevant theories. These theories focus on the importance of cultural identity, dialogue, inclusive education, conflict and prejudice, as well as social justice. The first theory emphasizes the importance of cultural identity, which encompasses elements such as language, culture, and group identity. It highlights the significance of inclusive education, which encourages students to understand and respect their cultural differences. The second theory emphasizes the importance of understanding the factors that can influence conflict and how these can be addressed within the education system. The third theory underscores the importance of creating a healthy and inclusive society, which can contribute to the resolution of ethnic conflicts and the development of a more inclusive community. This article cited by Nasri & Mulyohadi (2023). The fourth application of multicultural education, this research aims to develop a multicultural education approach by examining various educational contexts to integrate multicultural education. This will focus on various aspects such as the curriculum, teacher training, extracurricular

activities, multimedia materials, language learning, blended learning, collaborative learning, and promoting universal values. This research will also examine the impact of various countries and regions in implementing multicultural education, with a focus on specific implementations that help integrate different cultures and contribute to the educational environment.

The main aspects of multicultural education include a multicultural curriculum, teacher training, extracurricular activities, multimedia materials, language learning, blended learning, collaborative learning, and promoting universal values. This research will provide valuable insights into effective teaching practices and contribute to the development of multicultural education models. This article, among other things, cites Gaffar's writings (Gaffar et al., 2022). The Five Obstacles and Challenges of Multicultural Education, The research aims to identify the challenges and obstacles in integrating multicultural education, such as resistance from the community or issues in implementing the system. Some challenges include resistance from the community, lack of resources, political and ideological influences, lack of knowledge, and lack of evaluation. Evaluating the effectiveness of multicultural education in resolving cultural conflicts can be a challenge, as it requires valid indicators and relevant data.

Although the goal of multicultural education, achieving a balanced environment in education can be a challenge. The challenge of addressing conflicts among various cultural groups can be overcome through committees, social change, and the involvement of diverse stakeholders within the education system and society. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that considers the needs of all stakeholders and the diverse needs of the community. This article, among other things, quotes Suparman's writings (Suparman et al., 2023). Sixth, the implications of multicultural education policy. This research question aims to explore the implications of research that can promote the integration of multicultural education in resolving ethnic conflicts, thereby influencing the curriculum and government environment. This includes various aspects such as the curriculum, financial environment, teacher training, and structural changes. The main implications include revising the curriculum to incorporate diverse cultural perspectives, providing teacher training, offering financial resources, promoting cross-cultural collaboration, encouraging a culturally friendly environment, forming committees for the education sector, involving local communities and promoting community engagement, as well as supporting research and innovation in the field of multicultural education. The research questions also emphasize the importance of diverse perspectives, including the role of the government in promoting diversity and ensuring that all students have equal access to quality education. The research questions also highlight the need for a multidisciplinary approach in education, involving the government in the process. This article, among others, quotes Rasyidi's writings (Rasyidi & Nasri, 2023).

### **Implementation of Multicultural Education and Its Relevance to the Independent Curriculum**

The third scientific journal titled *Implementasi Pendidikan Multikultural dan Relevansinya dengan Kurikulum Merdeka (Implementation of Multicultural Education and Its Relevance to the Independent Curriculum)* written by Indah Kusuma Wardani, Aviandri Cahya Nugroho, Bambang Sumardjoko, and Endang Fauzi Ati, published by *Didaktika: Jurnal Kependidikan*, Volume 13, Number 2, 2024. The research, conducted using field research methods, was carried out at SDN Nglorog 3 located in Sragen District, Sragen Regency, Central Java. This journal discusses the implementation of multicultural education both in terms of concept and results in the research location.

The implementation of multicultural education is divided into three parts. First, directly in religious activities, extracurricular activities, and classroom learning activities. In addition, it is also implemented by correlating the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5/ *Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila*). The implementation of multicultural education at SDN Nglorog 3 consists of several programs and activities. This includes curriculum development and positive cultural activities such as the 5 S (*Senyum:smile, Salam:greeting, Sapa:hello, Sopan:polite, Santun:courtesy*). These programs help students understand and respect cultural differences in their environment. Additionally, extracurricular activities are also part of the multicultural education curriculum. These activities help students develop their potential and contribute to the social development of their community. The three multicultural education approaches implemented include the DBL and PjBL learning models (Wardani et al., 2024). Differential Based Learning (DBL) is an educational approach that adjusts teaching methods and learning materials to meet the needs, interests, and abilities of individual students. The main goal of DBL is to ensure that each student receives a learning experience that aligns with their developmental level and learning style, allowing them to reach their maximum potential. Additionally, it also implements Project Based Learning (PjBL), which focuses on using projects as a means to teach concepts and skills to students. In PjBL, students work in groups or individually to complete projects relevant to the real world, which require research, problem-solving, collaboration, and presentation (Danuri, 2023).

The DBL model is a universal approach in teaching aimed at enhancing students' learning experiences, motivation, and preferences. It consists of four main objectives: to assist all students in learning, to improve motivation and learning success, to create harmonious relationships between teachers and students, to make students independent learners, and to enhance the influence of teachers. The DBL model can be used in schools to address multicultural issues and the role of multicultural education. It emphasizes the importance of diversity in teaching methods, including the use of project-based learning (PjBL) and the creation of more interactive and contextual learning experiences. PjBL can also help students solve problems and develop solutions by optimizing their critical thinking. This is often used in the Pancasila Student Profile Development Project (P5), which aims to create a generation of young people who can

contribute to the development of global, inclusive, and respectful education. The global dimension of the Pancasila Profile is very important in the field of education, as it aims to promote a positive, inclusive, and intercultural environment. This can be applied in various fields, such as intra-curricular and extra-curricular education (Miftah et al., 2024).

### **Multicultural Dilemma in Improving the Quality of Education**

After analyzing the first journal article titled *Pendidikan Multikultural: Membangun Kesatuan Dalam Keanekaragaman* (Multicultural Education: Building Unity in Diversity), it can be understood that the article explains the nature of multiculturalism, the multiculturalism of students in Indonesia, and the importance of multicultural education. The article reinforces the opinion that multicultural education is a divine will difference that should be appreciated, and success is marked by a society that possesses knowledge, skills, and a tolerant attitude. Multicultural education needs to become an important part of curriculum development in schools and universities, serving as a reference for presenting topics and content appropriate to the educational level. However, the concept of multicultural education like this also faces quite a dilemma. First, *Cultural Identity Diversity*: Indonesia is a country with a very wide cultural diversity, including various ethnic groups, religions, and languages. Although this diversity is a national treasure, it can also become a source of conflict if not managed properly. Second, *Narrow Fanaticism*: Fanaticism towards certain cultural or religious identities can hinder efforts to create an inclusive and tolerant educational environment. This often leads to tensions and conflicts among different groups. Thirdly, *Weak Nationalism*: Multicultural education aims to strengthen a sense of unity and togetherness amidst diversity.

However, a lack of strong nationalism can hinder these efforts. Fourth, *Economic and Educational Disparities*: Uneven economic disparities among different cultural groups can affect access to and the quality of education. This poses a challenge in creating a fair and equitable education system. Fifth, the *Ambiguity of Educational Goals*: The lack of clarity in multicultural educational goals can lead to inconsistent and less effective implementation. This requires the formulation of clear objectives and appropriate strategies to achieve them. Sixth, the *Incompatible Curriculum*: The incompatibility of the curriculum with the needs of multicultural education can hinder efforts to create an inclusive learning environment that values diversity. Multicultural education requires role models as clear references to ensure the concept is not biased, for example, by adopting the multicultural education thought of Abdurrahman Wahid, which focuses on a humanistic approach (Al Auny & Arrohmatan, 2023).

In the second journal article titled *Mengintegrasikan Pendidikan Multikultural dalam Upaya Resolusi Konflik Etnis* (Integrating Multicultural Education in Efforts to Resolve Ethnic Conflicts). This research concludes that the integration of multicultural education is an important and relevant step in addressing the challenges of ethnic conflict by understanding and appreciating cultural, linguistic, religious, and traditional differences. Multicultural education promotes tolerance, cooperation, and deep



understanding among different ethnic groups. The implementation of multicultural education practices in the curriculum and teaching methods can build a positive identity in individuals from various cultural backgrounds. Multicultural education plays an important role in efforts to resolve ethnic conflicts, but it also faces various complex dilemmas. Here are some of the main dilemmas that often arise, including, first, Cultural Identity Awareness: Multicultural education aims to enhance awareness and appreciation of diverse cultural identities. However, in practice, this can cause tension if not managed well, especially if there are groups that feel their cultural identity is not valued or recognized. Second, Inclusive Learning: An inclusive curriculum must ensure equal representation for various ethnic groups.

However, creating a truly inclusive curriculum can be challenging, especially if there are differing views on what should be taught and how it should be taught. Thirdly, Intercultural Dialogue: Multicultural education encourages intercultural dialogue to enhance understanding and communication among ethnic groups. However, this dialogue can become difficult if there is distrust or prejudice among these groups. Fourth, Social Justice: Multicultural education aims to create a fair and equitable environment, reducing inequalities that can trigger conflicts. However, achieving social justice in education requires significant structural changes, which can face resistance from various parties. Fifth, Consistent Implementation: One of the main dilemmas is ensuring consistent implementation of multicultural education throughout the education system. The lack of training for teachers and educators, as well as insufficient support from educational policies, can hinder these efforts. Multicultural education as a resolution to ethnic conflicts requires the concept of religious moderation, because every national curriculum implemented needs to be adaptive to local cultures closely related to religion. Moderate religious understanding can serve as a bridge for harmony among followers of different religions and even different cultures, so that the curriculum implemented becomes better and more suited to the local conditions of the school (Shalahuddin et al., 2024).

In the third scientific journal titled *Implementasi Pendidikan Multikultural dan Relevansinya dengan Kurikulum Merdeka* (Implementation of Multicultural Education and Its Relevance to the Independent Curriculum) the concept and results of implementing multicultural education at the research location have been explained. The implementation of multicultural education in elementary schools is highly relevant to the Merdeka Curriculum, which aims to create an inclusive learning environment that appreciates diversity. The implementation of multicultural education in elementary schools within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum faces several dilemmas, including, first, Curriculum Alignment: One of the main dilemmas is ensuring that the curriculum applied is in line with multicultural values.

The Merdeka Curriculum aims to provide flexibility in learning, but ensuring that all multicultural aspects are fairly represented can be a challenge. Second, Teacher Readiness: Teachers play a key role in implementing multicultural education. However, not all teachers may have a deep understanding of the concept of multiculturalism or the skills needed to teach it. Adequate training and professional

development are very important, but are often limited by resources and time. Third, Resistance to Change: The implementation of multicultural education may face resistance from various parties, including teachers, parents, and the community. Some may feel that focusing on multiculturalism reduces attention to core subjects or traditional values. Fourth, Resource Limitations: Integrating multicultural education requires additional resources, such as diverse teaching materials, teacher training, and extracurricular activities. Budget and resource limitations can hinder these efforts. Fifth, Measuring Success: Assessing the success of multicultural education can be difficult. Clear and measurable success indicators need to be developed to ensure that the goals of multicultural education are achieved. Sixth, Local and National Contexts: Multicultural education must consider local and national contexts. On one hand, it is important to appreciate and integrate local cultures; on the other hand, it is also important to build a strong national identity. Balancing these two aspects can be a dilemma. Multicultural education as the implementation of an independent curriculum requires the development and adjustment of the curriculum, because every national curriculum applied needs to be adaptive to local culture. The implementation of a local curriculum can develop and adjust the curriculum being carried out even in the most basic aspects, such as concepts of greeting, courtesy, ethics, and so on, which are certainly not comprehensively covered in the national curriculum. Therefore, this is where the role of the local curriculum as a developer and completer of the national curriculum becomes necessary (Abregana et al., 2024).

## **CONCLUSION**

Multicultural Education in Improving Quality aims to create an inclusive and fair learning environment for all students, regardless of cultural background. The review results indicate that multicultural education quality management can be one of the effective approaches in optimizing the educational function in Indonesia, which is diverse in ethnicity, culture, and religion. However, this research also identifies several dilemmas and challenges faced in the implementation of multicultural education, such as the potential emergence of negative stigma about cultural diversity if not implemented properly. Therefore, it is recommended that multicultural education management focus more on enhancing human resources with an Indonesian nationalism approach, to ensure that cultural diversity can be appreciated and positively integrated into the education system. Addressing these dilemmas requires a holistic and collaborative approach, involving various stakeholders, including the government, schools, parents, and the community. Thus, multicultural education can be an effective tool for building a more inclusive, tolerant, and harmonious society.

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