

ANALYSIS OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION TO SHAPE THE CHARACTER AND NATIONAL IDENTITY OF STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT	
<i>Multicultural education developed Empowering school culture or empowering school culture which is used to form the character and national identity of the Indonesian nation for students. The characters to be formed in students are religious, honest, tolerant and disciplined. This is emphasized because currently the four character values have begun to fade and be eroded by the rapid development of technology and globalization, so that students ignore the character values of religion, honesty, tolerance and discipline. Apart from these character values, there is a national identity that will be formed for students, namely: Pancasila values, love of the homeland, and unity in diversity. The research method used is a literature study or literature review by reading and compiling various journals that have been found and according to the title of our article. From the results of this research, it can be concluded that multicultural learning with the empowering school culture system is able to shape the character and national identity of students in accordance with the expectations and objectives of the writing.</i> Keywords: Multicultural, Character, National Identity, Students	Article History Submitted: 18 November 2025 Received: 1 April 2026 Published: 30 April 2026

A. INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia, as it exists today, has undergone tremendous improvement and progress, especially regarding the realm of accessibility, quality of education, and the incorporation of modern technology into the learning process, as highlighted by UNESCO's findings in 2023. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that the rapid evolution of technology, coupled with the power of globalization, introduces a number of new challenges that the educational landscape must navigate, especially in terms of preserving and promoting the values of students' character and national identity, as noted by the OECD in 2021.

Given this complex scenario, the concept of multicultural education emerged as a very important framework that aims to foster an empowering school culture, which serves as a fundamental strategy for nurturing the

character and national identity of learners, as described by Banks in 2021. Character values that are considered essential for development, such as religious beliefs, honesty, tolerance, and discipline, are increasingly at risk of erosion in contemporary contexts, largely due to the pervasive influence of digitalization and globalization, as demonstrated by Lickona in 2020 and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) in 2022.

Beyond character building, the education system also plays an important role in strengthening national identity, which includes the values enshrined in Pancasila, a deep love for the homeland, and the spirit contained in the motto of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*. This aspect of education is particularly significant given the current phenomenon of globalization, which has been observed to encourage the younger generation to increasingly embrace the influence of foreign cultures at the expense of their local cultural heritage, as articulated by Suyanto in 2021. In addition, the alarming increase in cases of bullying in the educational setting underscores the urgent need to strengthen the principles of tolerance and diversity within the comprehensive framework of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, as reported by UNICEF in 2022.

Indonesia, which is recognized as an archipelagic country, boasts a very high level of ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity, a fact that contributes to the creation of a multifaceted multicultural society, as analyzed by Geertz in a reinterpretation of a contemporary study conducted by Hoon in 2020. Despite this intricate tapestry of diversity, the nation's moral order remains united under the auspices of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, which proudly upholds the motto of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*. This rich diversity manifests itself not only in horizontal dimensions, such as variations in languages, customs, and cultural practices, but also in vertical dimensions that include social, economic, and educational disparities, as discussed by Hefner in 2021.

School culture is recognized as an important component in driving educational success. School culture can be defined as a holistic system of values, norms, and practice habits that develop within the school

environment, which then influence students' behavior and academic achievement, as articulated by Deal and Peterson in 2020. Empirical evidence has shown that a positive school culture can significantly improve the quality of the educational experience and contribute to the development of lasting student character, as noted by Hallinger and Kulophas in 2020.

In pursuing the development of a strong school culture, it is crucial to consider the unique characteristics inherent in the local community while ensuring the active involvement of all stakeholders within the school, including teachers, students, and administrative personnel, as emphasized by Fullan in 2021. A resilient school culture can serve as a fundamental pillar for building a learning environment that is not only conducive to academic success but can also be adapted to the demands of an ever-evolving contemporary society. As a result, it is imperative that systematic and concerted efforts are made to enhance positive cultural attributes while simultaneously reducing negative influences through the collaborative engagement of the entire school community, as Schein underlined in 2021.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This research effort adopts a qualitative methodology, specifically focusing on the literature review approach, which is a rigorous research paradigm that systematically examines a diverse array of written materials, including but not limited to, scientific books, peer-reviewed scientific articles, comprehensive research reports, and other reputable academic documents. The primary purpose of using the literature review as a methodological framework is to facilitate an in-depth and nuanced conceptual understanding of the designated topic being investigated, as highlighted by Snyder in 2019, and further corroborated by the findings presented in a more recent investigation conducted by Booth et al. in 2021.

In the context of this study, the techniques used for data collection were carefully implemented through systematic tracing and identification of scholarly sources that have significance to the overall research theme, with a concentrated focus on areas such as multicultural education, complex school culture, and developmental processes involved in character formation among

students. Data sources are largely derived from leading databases of leading scientific journals, including but not limited to Google Scholar, Scopus, and Garuda, with a deliberate emphasis on publication sources spanning the temporal span of the last five years, specifically from 2020 to 2025. This strategic choice aims to ensure that the data used in this study is contemporary and relevant to ongoing developments in the scientific community, as articulated by Xiao and Watson in 2020.

The comprehensive data collection process is carried out through a series of methodical stages, which include: (1) proper identification of relevant search topics and appropriate keywords, (2) judicious selection of articles based on the relevance of their titles and abstracts, (3) a complete evaluation of the content in the selected articles, and (4) systematic grouping and synthesis of information drawn from multiple sources. After this selection process, the identified articles are subjected to thorough analysis and paraphrasing to produce a coherent, systematic, and comprehensive narrative, while simultaneously maintaining academic scientific integrity by citing original sources, as emphasized by Paul and Criado in 2020.

The data analysis techniques applied in this scientific paper are based on the principles of content analysis, in which a careful review, comparison and interpretation of various findings derived from the collected literature is carried out. The main goal of this analytical process is to distinguish the patterns, conceptual frameworks, and intricate relationships that exist between various variables related to the core focus of research investigation, as articulated by Elo et al. in 2021. The findings resulting from this analytical effort are then systematically arranged in a descriptive-analytical format, thus facilitating the formulation of conclusions that are able to overcome the core research problems posed at the beginning of this study.

Using the literature study methodology, this study aspires to provide a holistic and comprehensive overview of the concept of school cultural empowerment in the realm of multicultural education, while simultaneously

explaining its significant contribution to the process of character formation and the formation of national identity among learners.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Multiculturalism in Education and School Cultural Empowerment

The concept of multiculturalism can be described as a comprehensive framework consisting of diverse social values, beliefs, and practices that not only recognize but also celebrate the rich tapestry of cultural diversity that exists in society, while encouraging the active engagement and participation of each different cultural group in a socially inclusive manner (Banks, 2021; Nieto, 2020). In the field of education, the idea of multicultural education is interpreted as a pedagogical approach that places significant emphasis on promoting respect for a wide range of differences, including, but not limited to, racial, cultural, and religious differences, as well as variations related to the gender identity and socioeconomic background of all learners involved in the educational process (Gay, 2021)

Multicultural education plays an important and indispensable role in efforts to create a learning environment that is not only inclusive but also equitable, thereby enabling learners to cultivate an attitude of enduring tolerance and to truly appreciate and appreciate the richness that diversity brings to their social interactions (UNESCO, 2023). The practical implementation of multicultural education in the school system actively encourages students to gain a deeper understanding of the complex and diverse social realities they inhabit, while simultaneously fostering awareness of the importance of harmonious coexistence among individuals from diverse backgrounds (Hoon, 2020).

Practically, the principles of multicultural education can be effectively integrated into the educational framework through the cultivation and empowerment of a strong school culture—often referred to as a culture of school empowerment. This empowering school culture can be defined as an intricate system of shared values, established norms, and habitual practices that collectively contribute to shaping not only the character but also the behavior of all individuals who are considered part of the school community (Fullan, 2021). Strengthening the basic aspects of school culture has been

empirically shown to contribute significantly to the formation of student character, especially in relation to fostering important values such as religious beliefs, honesty, tolerance, and a sense of discipline (Hallinger & Kulophas, 2020).

In addition, rapid advances in technology and the pervasive forces of globalization have had a profound impact on learners' behavioural patterns, highlighted by a decline in the internalisation of character values that are essential for social cohesion and harmony (OECD, 2021). Given these evolving conditions, the integration of multicultural education that is firmly rooted in the principles of school culture has emerged as a vital strategy that aims to strengthen national identity, encapsulated in values such as Pancasila, foster love for the homeland, and realize the spirit of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022).

In addition, the alarming increase in cases of bullying in educational settings underscores the urgent need to strengthen the values of tolerance and empathy through the application of a multicultural approach to education (UNICEF, 2022). In this context, multicultural education has an important function as a preventive measure designed to reduce social conflict while simultaneously contributing to the formation of a culture of peace within the school environment (Hefner, 2021).

Multicultural Education as a Character Builder

The overarching goal of character education is to cultivate individuals who embody moral integrity, take responsibility for their actions, show tolerance towards others, and have a strong sense of integrity in their interactions within the social framework (Lickona, 2020). Within the framework of national education, the process of character formation is in harmony with the values embraced by Pancasila, which emphasizes the essential balance between the spiritual, social, and intellectual dimensions of personal development (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022).

The observable phenomenon of moral degradation, characterized by an alarming increase in violent acts, dishonesty, and a marked decline in social

attention, serves as a striking indicator of a developing character crisis among the younger generation (OECD, 2021). This unsettling condition is further exacerbated by pervasive global cultural influences, which often promote individualistic and consumer-driven lifestyles that reduce communal values and interpersonal relationships (UNESCO, 2023).

In this context, multicultural education emerges as a significant strategic approach to character development, as it effectively instills and promotes the values of tolerance, empathy, and appreciation for the richness of differences that exist among individuals (Gay, 2021). Educational settings that actively support and embrace diversity have been shown to be able to shape positive behaviors in students, especially through the facilitation of healthy and constructive social interactions (Elo et al., 2021).

The underlying principles of social learning theory further reinforce the idea that individual character is strongly influenced by the context of the environment in which they are nurtured and developed (Bandura, in an updated review by Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). School environments characterized by a positive and empowering culture tend to foster habits and behaviors that reflect values associated with exemplary character development.

As a result, there is a critical need for an integrated approach that encourages collaboration between families, schools, and community members to comprehensively build and maintain students' character (Fullan, 2021). The implementation of multicultural education, which is based on the principles of the school's culture, stands out as one of the most effective strategies for the continuous internalization of values such as religious beliefs, honesty, tolerance, and discipline among students.

Multicultural Education as a Form of National Identity

The concept of national identity can be understood as a comprehensive representation that summarizes the core values, social norms, and characteristics of a nation, all of which fundamentally derive from the ideological framework set by the state, especially the principles enshrined in

Pancasila, in addition to the basic legal document known as the 1945 Constitution (Hefner, 2021). In this regard, the realm of education plays an undeniably important role in effectively transmitting and instilling these values to the younger generation, ensuring that they remain relevant and resonate in an increasingly interconnected world characterized by the forces of globalization (Banks, 2021).

The rapid advancement of global technology and the widespread influence of diverse cultural expressions present significant challenges to the preservation of a cohesive national identity, especially among youth, who, due to inherent curiosity and exposure, often show a growing interest in adopting foreign cultural practices and ideologies (OECD, 2021). This particular phenomenon underscores the urgent need for a proactive approach to strengthening education based on national values, using methods that are contextual and adaptive to the evolving cultural landscape.

In this context, multicultural education, which is based on the empowerment of school culture, emerges as a viable solution for the development and strengthening of students' national identity. The deliberate integration of Pancasila values, a deep love for the homeland, and the principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* — translated as *Unity in Diversity* — in educational activities has proven to be an effective strategy to increase students' awareness of their national identity and foster a spirit of tolerance among them (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022).

The implementation of initiatives such as the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) serves as an interesting illustration that education, when anchored in the context of local culture and infused with national values, can significantly foster important qualities such as empathy, honesty, and a deep appreciation of the richness of diversity in the educational environment (UNESCO, 2023). In addition, this educational strategy contributes significantly to the mitigation of discrimination and the reduction of social conflicts that may arise in the educational environment.

Given these considerations, it becomes clear that multicultural education serves not only as an instructional approach but rather as a strategic framework designed to strengthen national identity in the midst of the complexities of contemporary society. Through the deliberate reinforcement of school culture, it is anticipated that learners will not only internalize the vital values associated with their national identity but will also develop into individuals characterized by tolerance and resilience in their ethical and moral foundations.

D. CONCLUSION

Through multicultural education based on *Empowering school culture* or school culture empowerment that has been applied to schools in Indonesia. Providing great benefits and changes to the education system in schools that implement it. One of them is by achieving the character of students in the form of religious values, honesty, tolerance, and discipline in students. In addition, the implementation of multicultural education also forms the national identity of students in the form of Pancasila values, a sense of love for the homeland, and the strengthening of the value of diversity and diversity.

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