

Multicultural Education and the Reinforcement of Character Education: A Critical Review of Concepts, Theories, and Educational Approaches

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Abstract

Social, cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity is an inseparable reality of Indonesian society. Within this context, education faces the challenge of not only producing learners who excel academically but also fostering individuals with tolerant, just, and civilized character. Multicultural education is regarded as a strategic and relevant approach to strengthening character education, as it positions respect for diversity as an integral component of the learning process. Nevertheless, comprehensive theoretical studies that systematically examine the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological relationships between multicultural education and character education remain limited and require further exploration. This study aims to examine and analyze the concepts, theoretical foundations, and approaches of multicultural education in relation to the strengthening of character education. This research employs a qualitative approach in the form of library research. Data were obtained from various scholarly sources, including textbooks, national and international journal articles, conference proceedings, and relevant educational policy documents. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, and was further strengthened through source triangulation to ensure data validity. The findings indicate that multicultural education plays a fundamental role in strengthening character education, particularly in cultivating values such as tolerance, empathy, justice, responsibility, and mutual respect. Theoretically, multicultural education and character education are complementary and cannot be separated from the social and cultural contexts in which learners live and interact. The implementation of multicultural education through inclusive, dialogical, and equitable learning approaches has been shown to create a conducive educational environment for character development. The integration of multicultural education and character education thus constitutes a strategic approach to developing a generation with strong character, social awareness, and the capacity to live harmoniously within a multicultural society.

Keywords: Multicultural Education, Character Education, Multicultural Society

Abstrak

Keberagaman sosial, budaya, agama, dan etnis merupakan realitas yang tidak terpisahkan dari kehidupan masyarakat Indonesia. Dalam konteks tersebut, pendidikan dihadapkan pada tantangan untuk tidak hanya mencetak peserta didik yang unggul secara akademik, tetapi juga memiliki karakter yang toleran, adil, dan berkeadaban. Pendidikan multikultural dipandang sebagai pendekatan strategis yang relevan untuk memperkuat pendidikan karakter, karena menempatkan nilai-nilai penghargaan terhadap perbedaan sebagai bagian integral dari proses pembelajaran. Namun demikian, kajian teoretis yang mengulas secara komprehensif hubungan konseptual, teoritis, dan pendekatan pendidikan multikultural dalam penguatan pendidikan karakter masih perlu diperdalam. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji dan menganalisis konsep, landasan teori, serta pendekatan pendidikan multikultural dalam kaitannya dengan penguatan pendidikan karakter. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis studi kepustakaan (library research). Data diperoleh dari berbagai sumber literatur ilmiah berupa buku, artikel jurnal nasional dan internasional, prosiding, serta dokumen kebijakan pendidikan yang relevan. Analisis data dilakukan dengan teknik analisis isi (content analysis) melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan, serta diperkuat dengan triangulasi sumber untuk menjaga keabsahan data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan multikultural memiliki peran fundamental dalam penguatan pendidikan karakter, terutama dalam menanamkan nilai toleransi, empati, keadilan, tanggung jawab, dan sikap saling menghormati. Secara teoretis, pendidikan multikultural dan pendidikan karakter saling melengkapi dan tidak dapat dipisahkan dari konteks sosial-budaya peserta didik. Implementasi pendidikan multikultural melalui pendekatan pembelajaran yang inklusif, dialogis, dan berkeadilan terbukti mampu menciptakan lingkungan pendidikan yang kondusif bagi pembentukan karakter. Integrasi keduanya menjadi strategi penting dalam membangun generasi yang berkarakter kuat dan mampu hidup harmonis dalam masyarakat multikultural.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Multikultural, Pendidikan Karakter, Masyarakat Multikultural

A. Introduction

Indonesian society is a multicultural community characterized by diverse ethnicities, religions, cultures, languages, and social backgrounds.¹ This diversity represents a national asset, yet it also has the potential to trigger social conflicts if not managed through appropriate education.² In this context, multicultural education plays a strategic role as a systematic effort to instill awareness of the importance of respecting differences, fostering tolerance, and upholding values of justice and equality in social life. Multicultural education is not only oriented toward recognizing diversity

¹ Dewi Anandita Khifadlul Khilmi et al., "Multikulturalisme Dalam Kehidupan Sosial Masyarakat Indonesia," *Journal Sains Student Research* 2, no. 2 (2024): 167–72; Edriagus Saputra, *Tradisi Dalam Kajian Hadis*, 1st ed. (Graha Aksara, 2021); Edriagus Saputra dan Syamsurizal, *Pendidikan Karakter Di Era Milenial (Dalam Lingkaran Islam)*, 1 (PT. Insan Cendekia Mandiri, 2021).

² Laros Tuhuteru, *Pendidikan Karakter Untuk Menjawab Resolusi Konflik* (Cv. Azka Pustaka, 2022).

but also aims to shape the mindset and attitudes of learners so that they can live together harmoniously within a pluralistic society.³

In line with this, character education has become a crucial agenda within the national education system as a response to various moral and social challenges, such as intolerance, violence, and the weakening of communal values.⁴ Character education emphasizes the development of students' moral values, ethics, and personal integrity, aiming to cultivate responsibility, social awareness, and ethical conduct. In a multicultural society, character education cannot be separated from the context of diversity, as the formation of well-rounded character must consider the realities of a pluralistic social environment.⁵ Therefore, integrating multicultural education into character education is an urgent necessity to ensure that the values instilled are inclusive, humanistic, and relevant to the social realities of students.

The emerging issue is the persistence of educational practices that remain homogeneous and insufficiently sensitive to the cultural and social diversity of students. This situation negatively impacts the internalization of values such as tolerance, empathy, and mutual respect within the learning process.⁶ Furthermore, educators' understanding of the concepts, theories, and approaches of multicultural education remains varied, resulting in suboptimal implementation in the strengthening of character education.⁷ This situation highlights the need for a comprehensive conceptual and theoretical study to clarify the role of multicultural education as a foundational framework for strengthening character education within formal educational settings.

This study aims to conduct an in-depth examination of the concept of multicultural education, its theoretical foundations, and the various approaches that can be applied in educational practice. Furthermore, the study seeks to analyze the relationship between multicultural education and character education, as well as its role in shaping students who are tolerant, democratic, and socially responsible. By employing a literature review approach, this research is expected to provide a

³ Banks, J. A., *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives* (Wiley, 2020).

⁴ Anugrah Anugrah and Rahmat Rahmat, "Pendidikan Karakter Dalam Perspektif Kurikulum Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan (PPKn)," *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran Indonesia (JPPi)* 4, no. 1 (2024): 22–34; Retno Widyastuti, "Strategi Pendidikan Karakter Dalam Mengantisipasi Paham Radikal Dan Intoleran Di Sekolah," *Wawasan: Jurnal Kediklatan Balai Diklat Keagamaan Jakarta* 2, no. 2 (2021): 187–201.

⁵ Lickona, T., *Educating for Character* (Bantam Books, 2020).

⁶ I Komang Agus Arta Suyatnya, "Internalisasi Nilai-Nilai Toleransi Beragama Pada Pembelajaran Agama Hindu Dan Budi Pekerti Berbasis Kurikulum Merdeka Di UPT SMP Negeri 2 Banjit Kabupaten Way Kanan Provinsi Lampung," *Padaseva: Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengabdian Masyarakat* 1, no. 1 (2025): 108–27; Nirwana Akib, *Strategi Guru Dalam Mengintegrasikan Nilai-Nilai Multikultural Pada Pembelajaran Ips Di Smp Negeri 4 Parepare*, 2025.

⁷ Dwi Nurmansyah and Muhammad Fauzan Muttaqin, "Implementasi Pendidikan Multikultural Dalam Pkn Untuk Menumbuhkan Toleransi Dan Nasionalisme Siswa Sekolah Dasar," *JISPE Journal of Islamic Primary Education* 5, no. 02 (2024): 92–101.

theoretical contribution to the development of discourse on multicultural education and character education in Indonesia.

Previous studies over the past five years have indicated a significant relationship between multicultural education and the development of students' character. Research by Rudianto (2023) demonstrated that the integration of multicultural values in learning can enhance students' attitudes of tolerance and mutual respect.⁸ Meanwhile, Hakim (2023) emphasized that multicultural education contributes to strengthening students' national character and identity amid cultural diversity.⁹ Another study by Fazira (2024) found that integrating multicultural education into the curriculum can foster democratic, inclusive, and socially responsible character among students.¹⁰ Furthermore, Suri et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of a multicultural education approach in primary education as a foundation for cultivating tolerant character from an early age.¹¹ Nonetheless, most of these studies remain largely implementation-focused, highlighting the need for a more in-depth conceptual and theoretical analysis to strengthen the academic foundation for integrating multicultural education with character education.

B. Literature Review

Multicultural education is grounded in the view that diversity is an inherent social reality in human life and should serve as a foundational principle in the provision of education. Conceptually, multicultural education is understood as an educational process that emphasizes the recognition, acceptance, and appreciation of differences in culture, ethnicity, religion, language, and the social backgrounds of learners. According to Banks, the aim of multicultural education is to create equal learning opportunities while fostering tolerant and democratic attitudes within a pluralistic society.¹² This education is not merely oriented toward the transfer of knowledge about diversity, but also aims at transforming the attitudes and values of learners so that they are able to live together harmoniously.

The theoretical foundation of multicultural education can be examined through the lens of cultural pluralism and social justice theory. Cultural pluralism asserts that each cultural group possesses equal value and identity, and therefore no single culture should dominate educational practices. From this perspective, schools function as

⁸ Rudianto Rudianto, "Implementasi Pendidikan Multikultural Dalam Membentuk Karakter Siswa," *Jurnal Multidisiplin Indonesia* 2, no. 6 (2023): 1360–66.

⁹ Arif Rohman Hakim and Jajat Darajat, "Pendidikan Multikultural Dalam Membentuk Karakter Dan Identitas Nasional," *Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan* 8, no. 3 (2023): 1337–46.

¹⁰ Widya Fazira et al., "Integrasi Pendidikan Multikultural Dalam Sistem Pendidikan Nasional: Strategi Membangun Masyarakat Inklusif Dan Toleran," *PENDALAS: Jurnal Penelitian Tindakan Kelas Dan Pengabdian Masyarakat* 4, no. 3 (2024): 186–203.

¹¹ Dharlinda Suri and Dharnita Chandra, "Teacher's Strategy for Implementing Multiculturalism Education Based on Local Cultural Values and Character Building for Early Childhood Education," *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies* 8, no. 4 (2021): 271–85.

¹² Banks, James A., *An Introduction to Multicultural Education* (Pearson, 2020).

social spaces that fairly and inclusively represent the diversity of society.¹³ Meanwhile, social justice theory views multicultural education as a means to reduce social inequalities, discrimination, and prejudice by fostering students' critical awareness of unequal social realities.

In the context of character education, a relevant framework is value-based character education theory. Lickona explains that character education encompasses three main dimensions: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action.¹⁴ These three dimensions indicate that character education focuses not only on cognitive aspects but also on affective and behavioral components. The goal of character education is to develop individuals who are ethical, responsible, and socially caring, equipping them with the competencies needed for life within the community.

The relationship between multicultural education and character education lies in the shared values they cultivate, such as tolerance, empathy, justice, mutual respect, and social responsibility. Multicultural education provides a relevant social context for the internalization of these character values. In a multicultural society, character education that is not grounded in an understanding of diversity may foster exclusivity and insensitivity toward differences. Therefore, multicultural education serves as a conceptual foundation for strengthening character education, ensuring that the values instilled are both inclusive and contextually relevant.¹⁵

The multicultural education approach in strengthening character education can be implemented through several key strategies: curricular, pedagogical, and cultural approaches. The curricular approach emphasizes the integration of multicultural and character values into learning objectives, content, and assessment. The pedagogical approach focuses on dialogical, reflective, and participatory teaching methods that encourage positive intercultural interactions. Meanwhile, the cultural approach highlights the creation of a school culture that values diversity as a shared norm and principle.¹⁶ Thus, multicultural education and character education are understood as two interrelated and mutually reinforcing concepts in shaping students who are morally upright, tolerant, and socially responsible.

C. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research design. This approach is chosen because the research aims to examine, analyze, and synthesize concepts, theories, and approaches of multicultural education in relation to the strengthening of character education, without involving field data collection. Library

¹³ Nieto, Sonia., *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education* (Longman, 2019).

¹⁴ Lickona, Thomas, *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility*. (Bantam Books, 2020).

¹⁵ Tilaar, H.A.R., *Multikulturalisme Dan Tantangan Pendidikan* (Grasindo, 2018).

¹⁶ Sleeter, Christine E., & Grant, Carl A, *Making Choices for Multicultural Education: Five Approaches to Race, Class, and Gender* (Wiley, 2021).

research enables the researcher to gain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of theoretical ideas developed in educational studies.

The research data consist of secondary sources obtained from relevant scholarly literature, including textbooks, national and international journal articles, seminar proceedings, and policy documents related to multicultural education and character education. The literature was selectively chosen based on thematic relevance, source credibility, and publication recency, particularly materials published in recent years.

Data collection was conducted through literature search and documentation. The researcher identified key terms such as multicultural education, character education, multicultural society, and multicultural educational approaches to obtain sources aligned with the research focus. All data were then classified according to discussion themes, including the concept of multicultural education, theoretical foundations of multicultural education, character education theory, and multicultural educational approaches for character development.

Data analysis was performed using content analysis techniques. At this stage, the researcher critically read and interpreted the main ideas of each source relevant to the research objectives. The analysis followed systematic steps of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting relevant information and excluding material outside the study's focus. Data presentation was conducted in descriptive-analytical form to illustrate the relationships among concepts, theories, and approaches studied. Finally, conclusions were drawn by synthesizing theoretical findings to obtain a holistic understanding of the role of multicultural education in strengthening character education.

To ensure data validity, the study applied source triangulation by comparing and confirming findings across multiple literature sources. This method ensures that conclusions are not based on a single perspective but result from a synthesis of diverse scholarly viewpoints. Through this research methodology, the article aims to provide a strong theoretical contribution and serve as an academic reference for the development of multicultural and character education in formal educational settings. A diagram illustrating the research method is presented below.

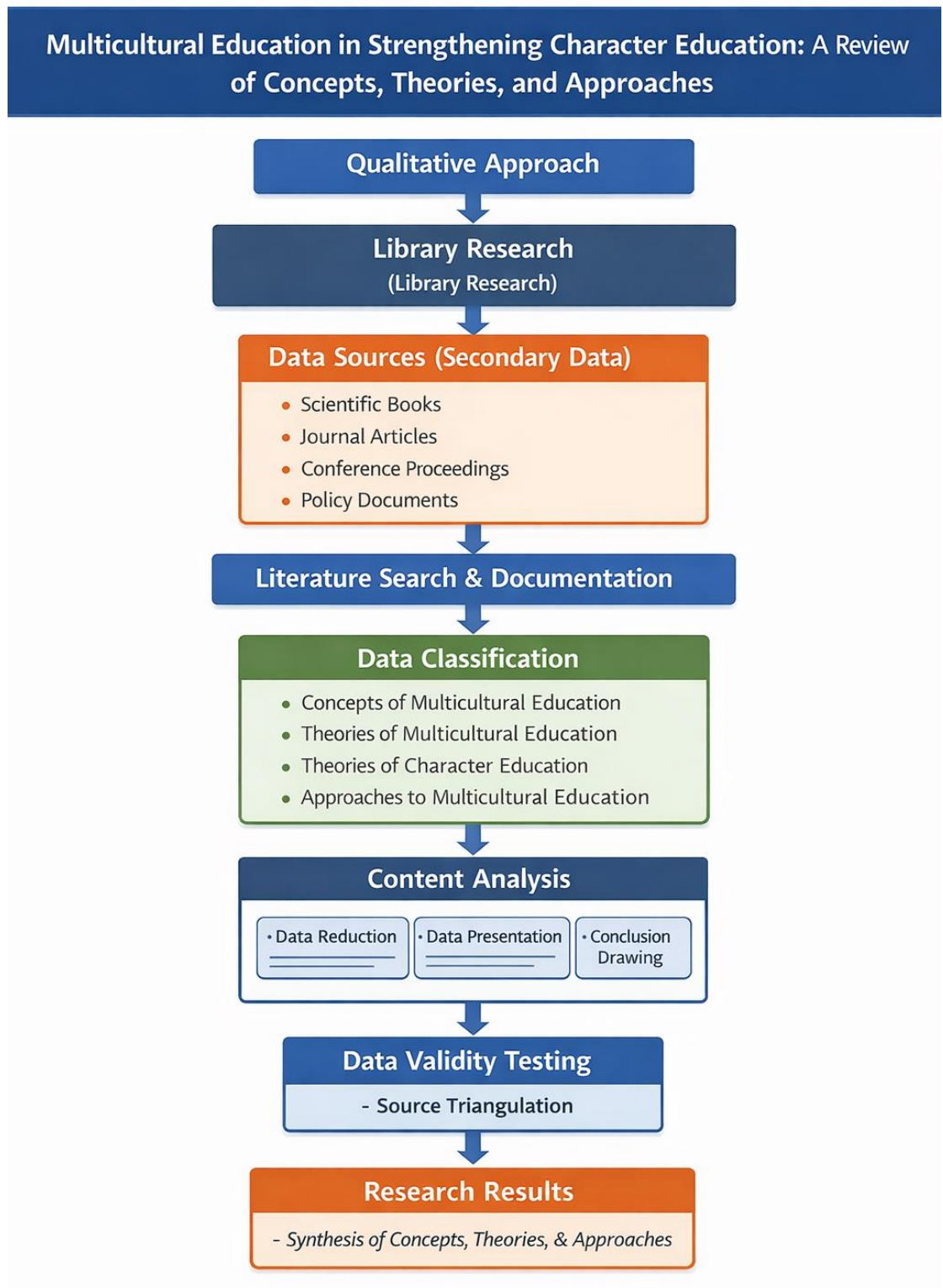


Figure 1. Planned Discussion Diagram

D. Results

The findings indicate that multicultural education plays a significant role in strengthening students' character development. The integration of multicultural values into the learning process has been shown to foster attitudes of tolerance, mutual respect, and social responsibility within educational settings. Students not only understand diversity as a social reality, but also interpret it as a collective asset that must be preserved in shared life.

This study further reveals that character education becomes more effective when contextualized through a multicultural education approach. Core character values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and empathy are more readily internalized when conveyed through authentic experiences related to differences in cultural, religious, and social backgrounds. This suggests that character education does not operate merely at a normative or abstract level, but is embedded in students' everyday social practices.

Moreover, the findings demonstrate a mutually reinforcing relationship between multicultural education and character education. Multicultural education serves as a social space that allows character values to develop organically through interactions among students, while character education provides moral and ethical guidance in responding to diversity. The synergy between these two approaches contributes to the creation of an inclusive, democratic, and equitable educational climate.

In instructional practice, teachers play a crucial role as facilitators of multicultural and character values. This study shows that teachers who consciously integrate principles of tolerance, justice, and respect for diversity into their teaching methods are able to shape students' character more profoundly. Dialogic learning approaches, heterogeneous group work, and value reflection emerge as effective strategies for instilling multicultural-based character development.

The findings also indicate that a school environment that supports diversity contributes positively to students' character formation. A school culture that upholds mutual respect, solidarity, and anti-discrimination strengthens the internalization of character values. Students tend to demonstrate more open, tolerant, and responsible social behavior in their daily lives.

Overall, this study affirms that multicultural education and character education are inseparable in the effort to cultivate well-rounded individuals. Their integration not only enhances the quality of the learning process but also contributes to the development of a generation with strong character, capable of living harmoniously in diversity, and possessing a high level of social and moral awareness.

E. Discussion and Interpretation **Concept of Multicultural Education**

Multicultural education is an educational concept grounded in the recognition of the reality of diversity within society, encompassing differences in ethnicity, culture, religion, language, and social background. This concept positions diversity as a social

asset that should be valued and constructively managed through educational processes. According to Tilaar, multicultural education represents a deliberate effort to cultivate mutual respect and social justice in pluralistic societies through the implementation of democratic and humanistic education.¹⁷

James A. Banks, a leading figure in multicultural education, states that multicultural education is an idea, an educational reform movement, and a process aimed at transforming the structure of educational institutions so that all students, regardless of their cultural and social backgrounds, have equal opportunities to learn.¹⁸ This perspective emphasizes that multicultural education is not limited to instructional content, but also encompasses policies, curricula, and inclusive pedagogical practices.

In a similar vein, Nieto views multicultural education as an educational process that affirms diversity and is oriented toward social justice. According to her, multicultural education should empower students to develop critical awareness of social realities and to challenge various forms of discrimination and inequality.¹⁹ Therefore, multicultural education possesses a transformative dimension that emphasizes changes in attitudes and social structures through education.

In the context of education in Indonesia, multicultural education is also understood as a means of strengthening unity within diversity. Sleeter and Grant emphasize that multicultural education encompasses several key dimensions, including the integration of multicultural content, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, and the development of a fair and inclusive school culture.²⁰ These dimensions aim to foster healthy and harmonious social interactions within educational environments.

Thus, multicultural education can be understood as a holistic educational approach grounded in humanistic values and oriented toward fostering tolerance and social justice. This concept is relevant to be implemented within modern educational systems, particularly in multicultural societies such as Indonesia, in order to cultivate a generation characterized by strong character, democratic values, and social civility.

Multicultural Theory and Character Education Theory

I. Multicultural Theory in Education

Multicultural theory in education is grounded in the view that cultural diversity is a social reality inseparable from human life. This theory emphasizes the importance of recognition, appreciation, and equitable treatment of diverse cultural groups within educational systems. James A. Banks states that multicultural education theory aims to reform educational structures and practices in order to provide fair learning opportunities for all students, without discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion,

¹⁷ Tilaar, H.A.R., *Multikulturalisme Dan Tantangan Pendidikan*.

¹⁸ Banks, James A., *An Introduction to Multicultural Education*.

¹⁹ Nieto, Sonia., *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education*.

²⁰ Sleeter, Christine E., & Grant, Carl A, *Making Choices for Multicultural Education: Five Approaches to Race, Class, and Gender*.

or social background.²¹ Education functions not only as a means of knowledge transfer, but also as an instrument for cultivating inclusive and democratic social attitudes.

Theoretically, multicultural education is influenced by the theories of cultural pluralism and social justice. Cultural pluralism theory holds that every culture possesses equal value and dignity, and therefore no single culture has the right to dominate others. In the educational context, this theory calls for curricula and instructional practices that fairly represent diverse cultural perspectives.²² Meanwhile, social justice theory emphasizes the role of education in reducing social inequalities and challenging discriminatory practices. Within this framework, multicultural education is directed toward developing students' critical awareness of social realities and promoting the creation of a more just and civilized society.

2. Character Education Theory

Character education theory focuses on the development of students' moral values, ethics, and personality so that they may become individuals with integrity and responsibility. Lickona explains that character education encompasses three primary dimensions: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action.²³ These three dimensions indicate that character is shaped not only through the cognitive understanding of values, but also through internalization and the habituation of behavior in everyday life.

Value-based character education emphasizes the importance of internalizing universal values such as honesty, responsibility, justice, care, and respect for others. In the context of multicultural societies, character education must be developed contextually in order to respond effectively to social and cultural diversity. According to Berkowitz and Bier, effective character education should be integrated into all aspects of school life, ranging from the curriculum and instructional processes to the overall school culture.²⁴ Thus, character education is not merely normative in nature, but constitutes an ongoing process of value habituation.

3. The Relevance of Multicultural and Character Education Theories

Multicultural theory and character education theory are closely interconnected in shaping students who possess social civility. The values promoted in multicultural education—such as tolerance, empathy, and justice—constitute an integral part of character education. Therefore, multicultural education can be viewed as a contextual foundation for strengthening character education in pluralistic societies. The integration of these two theories enables education to play a strategic role in

²¹ Banks, James A., *An Introduction to Multicultural Education*.

²² Nieto, Sonia., *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education*.

²³ Lickona, Thomas, *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility*.

²⁴ Marvin W Berkowitz et al., "Toward a Science of Character Education: Frameworks for Identifying and Implementing Effective Practices," *Journal of Character Education* 13, no. 1 (2017): 33–51.

cultivating a generation that is not only academically competent, but also characterized by inclusive and democratic social values.²⁵

The Role and Relationship of Multicultural Education and Character Education

I. Multicultural Education as a Social Framework for Character Education

Multicultural education plays a strategic role as a social framework in the development of character education, particularly in pluralistic and heterogeneous societies. It is grounded in the awareness that diversity in culture, religion, ethnicity, and social background is an unavoidable reality in social life. Therefore, education must be capable of managing this diversity constructively through inclusive and equitable learning processes. Banks emphasizes that multicultural education represents an effort at educational reform aimed at creating equal learning opportunities and fostering mutual respect amid differences.²⁶ In this context, multicultural education provides a social space that enables character values to develop contextually and in ways that are relevant to the lived realities of students.

Without a multicultural framework, character education risks becoming merely normative and abstract. Values such as tolerance, justice, and empathy are difficult to be deeply understood if they are not connected to students' real-life experiences in encountering differences. Thus, multicultural education functions as a social foundation that strengthens the internalization of character values in everyday life.

2. Character Education as the Value Orientation of Multicultural Education

On the other hand, character education represents the primary value orientation in the implementation of multicultural education. Multicultural education is not only intended to introduce diversity, but is also directed toward shaping students' personalities so that they develop moral attitudes aligned with universal human values. Lickona states that character education encompasses three principal dimensions: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action.²⁷ These three dimensions indicate that character education requires a continuous process of value internalization that is integrated into all educational activities. Character values such as tolerance, honesty, responsibility, and social concern are also central to multicultural education. Sleeter and Grant emphasize that effective multicultural education should be capable of reducing prejudice, fostering empathy, and promoting social justice through educational processes.²⁸ This indicates that character education represents the value-

²⁵ Tilaar, H.A.R., *Multikulturalisme Dan Tantangan Pendidikan*.

²⁶ Banks, James A., *An Introduction to Multicultural Education*.

²⁷ Lickona, Thomas, *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility*.

²⁸ Sleeter, Christine E., & Grant, Carl A, *Making Choices for Multicultural Education: Five Approaches to Race, Class, and Gender*.

based outcome expected from the consistent implementation of multicultural education within the curriculum and school culture.

3. The Synergy of Multicultural Education and Character Education in the Learning Process

The relationship between multicultural education and character education is complementary and mutually reinforcing. Multicultural education provides the social and cultural context, while character education offers moral and value-based direction within the educational process. In instructional practice, this synergy can be realized through the integration of multicultural and character values into learning objectives, teaching materials, instructional methods, and assessment. Dialogic, collaborative, and reflective learning approaches serve as important means of instilling tolerance and empathy through authentic interactions among students.

Tilaar emphasizes that education in multicultural societies should be directed toward the formation of individuals who are civilized, democratic, and committed to social justice.²⁹ Thus, the synergy between multicultural education and character education enables education to function not only as a means of intellectual development, but also as a vehicle for shaping students' personality and social responsibility.

4. The Relevance of Multicultural Education and Character Education in the Indonesian Context

In the context of Indonesia as a multicultural nation, the relationship between multicultural education and character education is highly relevant. Cultural and religious diversity requires an educational system capable of instilling unity without diminishing the identities of individual groups. Multicultural education provides an understanding of diversity, while character education reinforces values embodied in Pancasila, such as tolerance, justice, and mutual cooperation. Through the integration of these two approaches, education is expected to produce a generation that is not only academically competent, but also possesses strong social character and the ability to maintain harmony in social life.

²⁹ Tilaar, H.A.R., *Multikulturalisme Dan Tantangan Pendidikan*.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings and discussion presented, it can be concluded that multicultural education plays a highly significant role in strengthening character education. Multicultural education functions not only as a pedagogical approach to addressing social and cultural diversity, but also as a value-based foundation for shaping students' character to be tolerant, just, and socially civilized. Through multicultural education, students are guided to understand, accept, and appreciate differences as part of a social reality that must be managed constructively. Conceptually and theoretically, multicultural education aligns with the objectives of character education, particularly in instilling moral and social values such as tolerance, empathy, responsibility, honesty, and mutual respect. The integration of these two approaches demonstrates that character formation cannot be separated from the social and cultural contexts in which students live and interact. Character education becomes more meaningful when internalized through authentic multicultural experiences in learning processes and school life. From a practical perspective, this study confirms that the implementation of multicultural education through inclusive, dialogic, and equitable learning strategies can create an educational environment conducive to character development. The roles of teachers and school culture are key factors in the successful integration of multicultural and character education. Exemplary conduct, healthy social interactions, and school policies that value diversity have been shown to strengthen the internalization of character values among students. In conclusion, multicultural education and character education are complementary and mutually reinforcing concepts. Their integration represents a relevant and strategic approach to cultivating a generation that is not only academically competent, but also possesses strong character, social awareness, and the ability to live harmoniously in multicultural societies. Therefore, multicultural education should continue to be developed and systematically integrated into educational policies and practices as a sustained effort to strengthen national character development.

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