

## Building Students' Tolerance through Multicultural Education in Inclusive Elementary Schools

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### Abstrak

*Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh pentingnya penanaman karakter toleransi di sekolah dasar inklusi yang menghadirkan keberagaman siswa reguler dan siswa berkebutuhan khusus. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis integrasi pendidikan multikultural dalam pembelajaran, mengidentifikasi pengaruhnya terhadap pembentukan karakter toleransi, serta menelaah peran guru sebagai penghubung antara nilai multikultural dan praktik toleransi di kelas inklusi. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi pustaka yang menelaah literatur terkait pendidikan inklusi, multikultural, dan karakter. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan multikultural berkontribusi signifikan dalam menumbuhkan sikap menghargai perbedaan melalui integrasi nilai ke dalam materi, metode, media, dan pembiasaan sekolah. Guru berperan penting dalam menciptakan suasana inklusif dan menstimulasi perilaku toleran siswa. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa kompetensi guru dan dukungan kebijakan inklusi sangat menentukan keberhasilan pembentukan karakter toleransi di sekolah dasar inklusi.*

**Kata Kunci:** Pendidikan Multikultural, Toleransi Siswa, Sekolah Dasar Inklusif

### Abstract

This study is motivated by the importance of cultivating tolerance among students in inclusive elementary schools, where regular students and students with special needs learn together. The aims of this study are to analyze the integration of multicultural education in learning practices, identify its influence on the development of students' tolerance, and examine the role of teachers as mediators between multicultural values and tolerance practices in inclusive classrooms. This study employs a qualitative method with a library research approach, drawing data from literature on inclusive education, multicultural education, and character formation. The findings indicate that multicultural education significantly contributes to fostering respect for differences through the integration of multicultural values into instructional content, teaching methods, learning media, and school routines. Teachers play a central role in creating an inclusive learning climate and encouraging tolerant behaviors among students. This study emphasizes that teachers' competencies and supportive inclusive education policies are crucial in ensuring the successful development of tolerance in inclusive elementary schools.

**Keywords:** Multicultural Education, Student Tolerance, Inclusive Schools

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a diverse nation rich in ethnicity, language, culture, race, beliefs, and religion. The diversity of the Indonesian people is a potential Which great for progress nation (Wijayanti & Indriyanti, 2016). Even with this diversity make reference in motto nation Indonesia that is Unity in diversity Unity in diversity. As a country with a large population, Indonesia is a multicultural country. the biggest in world (Dike, 2017). When This Indonesia is a country who is racing in realize Indonesia proceed on year 2045. For realize Indonesia proceed One way is through education. Through education, dignified human resources will grow. For reach education that more Good must more active in respond all existing changes and challenges as well as every problem that occurs in Indonesia (Latifah et al., 2021).

Tolerance is a character trait that can support the educational process. The goal of tolerance is to develop a person's ability to weigh and decide on something good or bad, maintain and realize goodness in everyday life in a state of awareness and acceptance of diversity in life so that harmony is realized among people amidst differences (Dianita et al., 2018). age school base, student Already capable realize will appearance on himself And Also on person others. Awareness the will grow question on student when you know something Which different from somebody so that need taught that every person have differences and instill a way of respecting these differences (Haryanti et al., 2023).

The character of tolerance is not only a key characteristic in public schools but also in inclusive schools. base inclusion is a school base which accommodates normal students and students in need special Study together in One class. Student Which attending inclusive schools, some of whom are students with special needs, so that it is possible that an intolerant attitude towards children with special needs will occur (Rahim, 2016). One of them alternative For support planting character tolerance in scope school base inclusion is through learning based multicultural.

Multicultural education is a comprehensive school reform process for all students to challenge and reject racism and other forms of discrimination in schools,

communities and to accept and affirm the pluralism of ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, and gender diversity represented by students, groups, and teachers (Baidhawry, 2005; Istianingrum & Hidayat, 2023).

In inclusive schools, the diversity of students is not only limited to differences in customs, culture, ethnicity, and language, but also differences in abilities and learning needs, namely students with special needs (Bayu Pamungkas, 2016) . Multicultural education is very necessary, especially for students who attend inclusive schools to educate their character of tolerance to become students who are ready for the heterogeneity of their school environment. And capable value lack Which owned by Friend in school Which carrying students with special needs (Suyitno & Suryarini, 2023).

However, although inclusive schools are designed to create a welcoming and accepting learning environment, in practice, cases of intolerance are still common within them. These acts of intolerance can include social rejection, bullying, and even the exclusion of students with special needs by their peers. For example, some normal students are reluctant to sit with or play with students with special needs because they are perceived as different or unable to participate in normal activities. Furthermore, some teachers and educational staff lack understanding of how to deal with the diversity of student abilities, resulting in unequal treatment of students with special needs or even neglect.

Cases like these reflect a lack of understanding and appreciation of the values of tolerance in inclusive schools, which should be the primary vehicle for fostering respect for differences. Therefore, systematic and integrated inculcation of tolerance, such as through a multicultural education approach, is crucial for inclusive schools to truly fulfill their role as equitable and welcoming educational settings for all students.

Various previous studies have shown that multicultural education is effective in building tolerance in students, but most of these studies have focused on the context of regular schools and have not yet examined in depth the dynamics of its implementation in inclusive elementary schools. as done by Wijayanti & Indriyanti

(2016), Dianita et al. (2018), and Istianingrum & Hidayat (2023) many discuss importance education multicultural and character tolerance, but not yet in a way specific highlight what is the education strategy multicultural can integrated For overcome behavior intolerance to student in need special. In addition, some studies at school inclusion more emphasize on aspects service learning and adaptation curriculum (Bayu Pamungkas , 2016; Rahim, 2016), however Not yet explain in a way comprehensive effort formation character tolerance through approach multicultural. Gap study this is what it is base importance studies this, namely for fill in emptiness study about implementation education multicultural as a planting strategy character tolerance of students at school base inclusion. With thus, research This offering novelty in the form of mapping and analysis integrative about How education multicultural can implemented in a way contextual in environment inclusion for strengthen attitude tolerance student to diversity, in particular to student in need special.

## RESEARCH METHODS

Research methods used is study qualitative type study literature (library research), that is research that focuses on collecting, processing and analyzing data from sources from various literature like books, articles journal scientific, documents policies and results study previous (Zed, 2014; George, 2008). Through method this, object study reviewed in a way deep based on information conceptual and empirical that have been available at source library.

Study This use approach philosophical and pedagogical as grand theory in examine phenomenon education tolerance and multiculturalism in school base inclusion. Approach philosophical functioning browse values, meaning and essence education in context diversity, whereas approach pedagogical used to understand principle learning, interaction participant to educate, and dynamics of the educational process (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018; Gutek, 2014). With combine second approach said,

research This build channel thinking in motion from draft base philosophy education → principle pedagogical → analysis practice education → synthesis solution.

Procedure study done through a number of stages systematic. Stage First is identification problem, namely formulate issue related low tolerance in school base inclusion and relevance with education multicultural. Stage This referring to technique determination focus study in studies literature according to Creswell (2014). Stage second that is data collection through search literature, good theory philosophy education, concept pedagogical, as well as study relevant previous with tolerance, multiculturalism, and education inclusion. Collection literature done in a way selective as Zed (2014) recommends that ensure all over source fulfil standard academic and relevance.

Stage third is data classification and evaluation, namely grouping literature based on themes, variables, and findings study previously. Evaluation done for evaluate reliability, validity, and contribution every source to focus research (Bowen, 2009). Stage fourth that is analysis reflective, namely the process of review deep against data using perspective philosophical and pedagogical for dig meaning, value, and implications theoretical-practical from education multicultural in context school inclusion. Analysis reflective follow the reasoning model critical in study qualitative as explained by Patton (2015). Stage fifth is compilation synthesis, namely combine theory, findings research and analysis reflective become complete understanding about relevance education multicultural for formation character tolerance students at school inclusion. Synthesis This become base for build argument theoretical study. Stage final is withdrawal conclusion in a way descriptive-analytical, namely formulate description conceptual answer focus study as well as give contribution theoretical in accordance framework structured thinking.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is an effort to fulfill every child's right to receive equal educational services without discrimination, including for children with special needs (ABK). This concept emphasizes that all students learn together in regular classes according to the principles of justice and equality (Arifin et al., 2023). Inclusive education No For mix up student normal with student with special needs, thus causing feelings of inferiority in students with special needs. However, on the other hand, inclusive education aims to provide opportunities to Students with special needs receive a proper education and are prepared to secure a brighter future. However, several studies show that the implementation of inclusion does not always run ideally. (Barsihanor & Rosyida, 2019) emphasize that inclusion No just mix normal students with special needs, but rather ensure availability support sufficient so that ABK can develop optimally .

Inclusive education is a teaching system whose implementation incorporates children with special needs. special with child normal And describe half or all time Study students with needs special in class regular, Where environment school give freedom to support children in need special (Ramadhanti & Herawati, 2024) . Inclusive education is an implementation education in school Which involving all students to be involved in the learning process, all members receive the same treatment because they own mark the same one as member school (Rahim, 2016). Inclusive education is a solution for students with special needs so that they do not experience pressure psychological Because condition Which overwrite himself. Lift dignity And The dignity of children with special needs, feeling accepted and not marginalized by the circumstances that befall them will be able to encourage students to be more active and can develop their creativity (Nurwan, 2019) .

Inclusive education requires the active involvement and preparedness of teachers to address the diverse needs of students in the classroom. Research conducted by Radic et al. (2022) found that although most elementary school teachers

expressed positive attitudes toward the concept of inclusion, they acknowledged significant challenges in its implementation, such as a lack of training and professional support, as well as limited school facilities and resources. Therefore, the success of inclusive education is not solely determined by teacher attitudes but is also significantly influenced by supportive policies, ongoing training, and synergy between stakeholders within the educational environment.

Based on these various understandings, it can be concluded that inclusive education is a service that recognizes the diversity of student abilities and provides equal learning opportunities. However, its implementation requires a culture of tolerance, professional support, and inclusive and humanistic learning.

### **Principles in the Implementation of Inclusive Education**

In implementing inclusive education in elementary schools, there are several general principles that must be adhered to be understood by each organizer Inclusive education emphasizes the importance of creating a friendly, open, and diversity-respecting learning environment, where every child has the right to learn and develop their potential optimally in a safe and supportive atmosphere. A friendly school means that teachers demonstrate a positive attitude towards all students without exception, including children with special needs who are not considered a burden. Considering that each child has different abilities and needs, the educational approach must be adapted to each individual's conditions. Therefore, the education system needs to be flexible, including in class arrangement, modification of learning programs, and the implementation of assessment systems that are appropriate to students' special needs (Sudarto, 2016) .

However, several studies show differing views. Haryanti et al. (2023) emphasized that inclusive schools must integrate regular and special education services. Conversely, Mitchell's (2015) research emphasizes the importance of learning differentiation as the core of inclusion, rather than a combination of service systems. This difference demonstrates that the principle of inclusion requires not only acceptance but also a deep pedagogical understanding of each student's needs.



These principles are relevant to the objective of this research, which is to examine how multicultural education can strengthen the character of tolerance in inclusive practices. The principles of inclusion and multiculturalism have a mutually supportive relationship: both emphasize acceptance and appreciation of differences. Based on this description, in its implementation, schools that provide inclusive education are schools that combine special and regular education services in one school system to accommodate the special needs of each student (Haryanti et al., 2023).

### Implementation of Inclusive Education

The implementation model of inclusive education consists of several forms, ranging from full integration in regular classes to full services in special classes (Sunardi et al., 2011). Each model has objective different and customized with condition student.

However, criticism appear from a number of experts who argue that some models still resemble segregation disguised. Florian & Black-Hawkins (2011) criticized the “pull-out” model because can making ABK isolated and less interact with Friend peers. In contrast, the inclusion model full considered the most consistent with mark equality, but need adequate teacher support and facilities.

Table 1. Implementation of Inclusive Education

No	Service Model			Description
1	Regular	Class	(Full Inclusion)	Children with special needs study full time in regular classes with other students, using the same curriculum.
2	Regular	Class	with Cluster	ABK are in regular classes and are grouped into special groups within those classes.
3	Regular	Class	with Pull Out	Children with special needs learn in regular classes, but are occasionally taken to a special room for additional learning with a special tutor.
4	Regular	Class	with Cluster and Pull Out	Children with special needs are grouped in clusters in regular classes and also receive special sessions outside of regular classes with special tutors.
5	Special	Classes	with	Children with special needs study in special classes, but take



	Various Integrations	certain lessons in regular classes with other students.
6	Full Special Class	ABK learn entirely in special classes within a regular school environment.

This discussion reinforces the urgency of the research: without a strong sense of tolerance among students, any model will be ineffective. Multicultural education is a strategy to strengthen positive interactions between regular students and students with special needs.

### **Tolerance**

Dictionary General Language Indonesia defines tolerance as open-mindedness, meaning liking everyone, allowing people to have different opinions or views, not wanting to interfere. freedom think And believe person Another. Tolerance is a fundamental value that needs to be instilled in a pluralistic society, including in educational settings. The General Indonesian Dictionary defines tolerance as open-mindedness, namely an attitude of liking everyone, allowing others to have different opinions or beliefs, and not interfering with others' freedom of thought. In a religious context, Islam recognizes the term *tasamuh*, which has a similar meaning: an attitude that allows for disagreement while respecting differences in opinion, lifestyle, and beliefs. This demonstrates that tolerance is not only about accepting differences, but also about providing space and respecting individual freedom of action. (Perwitasari et al., 2020).

Furthermore, according to (Perwitasari et al., 2020), tolerance encompasses not only moral and spiritual aspects but also broader aspects such as ideology, social, and political aspects. This shows that in everyday life, especially in a school environment filled with diverse student backgrounds, tolerance must be part of a character that is cultivated from an early age. The Ministry of National Education (2010) also emphasizes the importance of tolerance in the educational context as an attitude and action that respects differences in religion, race, ethnicity, opinions, and behavior of others. Tolerance plays a major role in creating harmonious relationships between students amidst existing differences.

Tolerance is an important character trait to cultivate in a diverse society. Likewise, within the school setting, tolerance needs to be instilled to develop students who are able to appreciate differences among others. Tolerance is an attitude and action that respects differences in religion, race, ethnicity, opinions, attitudes, and actions of others (Ministry of National Education, 2010). Tolerance plays a role in fostering mutual respect and appreciation. in middle differences between student the.

Based on these various views, the indicators of tolerance in this study can be formulated as follows: (1) accepting differences in opinion and belief; (2) respecting diversity of ethnicity, religion, race, and culture; (3) not being discriminatory in social interactions; (4) avoiding conflict based on differences; (5) being open to different ideas and lifestyles; and (6) showing empathy and mutual respect. These indicators are an important basis for assessing the extent to which students have and apply tolerance in their daily lives, especially in a pluralistic and dynamic school environment.

### **Multicultural Education**

Multicultural education is learning that teaches students about the meaning and attitudes of diversity. According to Mahiri (in Latifah et al., 2021) , multicultural education is an understanding of issues surrounding immigrant students and better ways to serve their learning and social needs. Multicultural-based learning aims to instill a tolerant character and respect for differences between students. fellow (Suyitno & Suryarini, 2023) . Through education based multicultural will influence student For behave more tolerant and inclusive to condition public Which diverse so that education multicultural will be integrated effectively accompanied by an approach that suits the conditions Indonesian country.

In inclusive schools, multicultural education can be defined as a learning approach that respects, accepts, and celebrates differences in cultural background, ethnicity, religion, language, and individual abilities within the educational environment. This education aims to create a fair, open, and welcoming learning environment for all students, including those with special needs, so that each student

feels valued and has equal opportunities to develop academically, socially, and emotionally.

In the context of inclusive schools, multicultural education focuses not only on cultural diversity but also integrates the principles of social justice, equal access, and respect for individual identities. Teachers in inclusive schools play a crucial role in building a culture of mutual respect in the classroom, adapting learning methods to the needs of diverse students, and encouraging positive interactions between students from diverse backgrounds. relevant with objective research: shows that education multicultural become foundation important for grow tolerance in inclusion settings.

### **Multicultural Education Approach**

According to Banks (2006), there are four approaches to integrating multicultural education into the school curriculum that are considered relevant for implementation in schools in Indonesia. Within multicultural education, several approaches can be used to integrate diversity into the curriculum. First, the contributions approach is the most basic and commonly applied, especially in the early stages of the ethnic awareness movement. This approach is characterized by the insertion of important figures from various tribes or ethnicities and cultural elements into relevant subjects, as is often found in the Indonesian curriculum. Second, the additive approach adds new material, themes, or perspectives to the curriculum without changing the core structure or existing educational objectives. This approach is usually accompanied by the use of additional materials such as books or special modules. Third, the transformation approach offers more profound changes because it shifts the basic assumptions of the curriculum and encourages students to examine issues, concepts, and problems from various cultural and ethnic perspectives. Finally, the social action approach not only invites students to understand differences through various perspectives but also encourages them to take concrete action. This approach aims to shape students into individuals who have critical awareness, are able to make decisions oriented towards social change, and are actively involved in fighting for justice and equality in society.

The four explanations above demonstrate how to instill multicultural values into the learning process in an integrated manner. National diversity can encourage each individual to recognize and understand differences in ethnicity, religion, race, language, and ability. To implement these four principles and achieve the goal of multicultural education, which aims to create individuals who appreciate differences, teachers and schools play a crucial role (Istianingrum & Hidayat, 2023).

### **The Role of Teachers and Schools in Implementing Multicultural Education**

The role of teachers and schools is crucial in implementing multicultural education. Teachers must organize and direct the content, processes, situations, and activities of the school in a multicultural manner. In where each student from various ethnic group, gender, race, have the opportunity to develop himself and each other value difference that (Supriatin & Nasution, 2017). Whereas school as a formal institution, it has a role in building awareness and changing students' perspectives on diversity among them.

Business that can be done through development method view and build attitude anti-discriminatory in various aspects, both ethnicity, tribe, and differences in ability. Differences ability which owned every student don't until become reason emergence conflict between students. Teacher play a role in build awareness on student that every person own different abilities, strengths, and weaknesses are gifts from God and humans are obliged to respect, understand, and appreciate each other. This explanation explains that schools and teachers play a role in providing educational services to all students, including students with disabilities need which different. School and teacher also play a role to grow awareness for mutual respect, value and behave tolerant to immediately form difference on student.

### **Teacher Strategies in Integrating Multicultural Education in Inclusive Elementary Schools**

Multicultural education is not taught as a separate subject in elementary schools. In inclusive elementary schools, multicultural education can be integrated into subject matter, learning strategies, learning methods, teaching materials,

learning media, and school-based practices. Multicultural education in inclusive elementary schools can be integrated into the materials provided in each class. eye lesson And No focused on One or two eye lesson just. Teacher can provide examples and relate the material in one eye lessons with shapes diversity on students especially students special needs. For example, differences in academic and physical abilities. Integrating this material is, of course, inseparable from the concepts of the material being taught (Istianingrum & Hidayat, 2023).

Integration education multicultural in Elementary School inclusion through strategy And method learning can done one of them with discussion with group which consist from several students Which among them is student in need special. Integration education multicultural through materials teach And media on Elementary School inclusion can done through variation teaching materials And media Which used as well can support student in need special when learning. How to the can build tolerant attitude And value between student especially to student in need special. Habituation in Schools can also be a way to integrate education multicultural in Elementary School inclusion. Habituation the can done for example student normal, accustomed For be friends, communicate, And help students in need special so that it is realized attitude accept difference in between they.

Thus, integrative strategies ranging from heterogeneous grouping, group discussions, social habituation, to the use of ABK-friendly media are very relevant to achieving the objectives of this study, namely strengthening students' tolerant character in an inclusive environment.

## CONCLUSION

Study This confirm that planting character tolerance is fundamental needs in environment school base inclusion that brings together student regular and students in need special in One room learning. Research novelty This lies in the affirmation that education multicultural No only relevant applied to the context diversity ethnicity, culture, or religion, but can also become framework strategic in face

diversity abilities and needs studying in school inclusion A coverage that is still seldom discussed in a way comprehensive in study previously. Research This in a way specific fill in gap in the form of lack of conceptual models planting tolerance based education multicultural in education unit inclusion level school base.

Contribution main study This can formulated in three thing. First, research This give construction theoretical about How mark tolerance can implanted in a way systematic through approach education multicultural which includes learning strategies , integration mark in curriculum, sensitive use of media to diversity, as well as habituation attitude social in interaction everyday life . Second, research This clarify teacher's position as actor the key that has control pedagogical For contextualize mark multicultural in conditions real class inclusion , so that produce practice more learning inclusive and empathetic. Third, research This contribute in expand understanding that education inclusion No only demand readiness facilities and policies school, but also requires runway philosophical that is award to humanity and diversity which are operational can realized through education multicultural.

As for the limitations study This lies in its nature which is in the form of studies literature so that findings obtained nature conceptual and not yet tested in a way empirical in the field. In addition, research This only focus on context school base inclusion as well as use perspective main from draft education multicultural Banks. Therefore that, research furthermore recommended expand object studies at the level education medium as well as integrate other theories for example theory constructivism social, education character based context, or pedagogical model inclusive For enrich understanding and producing more findings comprehensive as well as empirical.

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