

Exploring Strategies of Incorporating Multicultural Values in the Teaching and Learning Process at an Inclusive Primary School in North Bali

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ABSTRACT

Incorporating multicultural values into the process of teaching and learning in school is important for enhancing inclusivity. There has been an abundance of studies conducted on this topic; however, most of them were conducted on special related subject matters, and there are limited resources for exploring strategies of how multicultural values can be implemented in all dimensions of school life. This study aims to explore strategies for incorporating multicultural values in an inclusive school. The study was conducted in the form of a case study in a private full-inclusion primary school in North Bali, considered a favourite and successful school in implementing multicultural values by the society around the school. The teachers have received specialized trainings to support and teach autistic students in an inclusive class. The school has 12 students with mild autism spectrum disorder (ASD) integrated with neurotypical students in every grade from grades 1 to 6. The data were gathered over a period of six months through observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis and were subsequently analysed qualitatively. This study found three main results. First, the school uses eight integrated strategies, five through activities that are part of the curriculum and three through activities that are not part of the curriculum. Second, these strategies have effects on many levels, such as more empathy, cooperation, less prejudice, more cultural pride, better critical thinking, and stronger social ties. Third, teachers' answers to the questionnaire show that they have consistently strong positive views about the program's cognitive, interpersonal, civic, and global outcomes. The study implied that the strategies positively influence students' attitudes and holistic development.

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INTRODUCTION

Social dynamics have emerged frequently in education recently. News of bullying cases has frequently appeared in the national media. There were 3,800 cases of bullying in schools throughout 2023 (Elaine, 2024). Cultural norms and beliefs are common reasons for bullying in schools (DeLara, 2024; Esposito et al., 2024). Lack of tolerance towards differences in race, ethnicity, language, religion, and social status often triggers bullying (Cincioglu, 2024). This phenomenon is driven by a lack of respect for cultural diversity and differences in social backgrounds, highlighting the need for inclusive education to increase equality, reduce discrimination, and create a supportive learning environment for all (Ali et al., 2024; Moreno-tallón et al., 2025).

Inclusive and multicultural education are both important in fostering an equitable learning environment. Inclusive education is an approach that recognises the rights of every child as a student and emphasises that regular schools must educate all students, regardless of physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other differences (Padmadewi, Sukma, et al., 2024; Meisuri, 2024). According to Rosa (2020), multicultural education prepares students to embrace the diversity of society and culture. Multicultural education focuses on recognising and respecting various cultures

(Banks & Banks, 2019). Inclusive education ensures that all students, including those from marginalised groups, receive equal opportunities to participate in quality education. Multiculturalism and inclusive education promote social harmony by reducing prejudice, fostering empathy, and strengthening harmony. In Indonesia, multicultural education increases cultural appreciation and prevents conflict (Praditya & Iqbal, 2024), while in Bali, an inclusive curriculum promotes peaceful coexistence among diverse communities (Lasmawan et al., 2024). Although empirical studies have shown that multiculturalism is crucial for inclusive learning, research on effective practices for integrating multiculturalism in elementary schools has not been conducted before. Therefore, it is crucial to explore strategies that incorporate multicultural values into the teaching and learning process.

Informal talks with several teachers and some people in North Bali claim that the importance of multicultural and inclusive education has been well implemented at North Bali Bilingual School, a multicultural and inclusive school in North Bali. People consider the school a favourite because it adheres to best practices. Some teachers said the schools implemented some additional programs and strategies to enhance inclusivity through multicultural and inclusive education. For that reason, it is necessary to explore the strategies implemented at that school to incorporate multicultural values within an inclusive education setting.

The urgency of this research is very high, both locally, nationally, and internationally. Nationally and internationally, each region has diverse communities that can foster social dynamics and pose the danger of disintegration if these differences are not properly addressed. As migration and globalisation bring about great cultural diversity, education must evolve to embrace inclusive teaching practices that respect and integrate different and diverse backgrounds and cultures (Arriani et al., 2022; Mulya & Khoiri, 2023). Research on multicultural and inclusive education is essential to promote equality and reduce discrimination by ensuring all students receive equitable learning opportunities. For instance, the study conducted by Muhammad et al. (2025) found that multicultural education enhances students' tolerance and reduces prejudice. Similarly, studies on inclusive education conducted by Oranga et al. (2024) and Moreno-tallón et al. (2025) confirmed that inclusive education promotes equal education for all. Considering the importance of multicultural and inclusive education, specifically, the purposes of the study are 1) to investigate the strategies that the teachers implement in incorporating multicultural values in teaching learning process to enhance inclusivity at the school; and 2) to analyse the impact of incorporating multicultural values, and to analyse the teachers' perceptions about the impact of multicultural education implemented at school.

METHODS

The phenomenon being examined is not a singular instructional strategy. Instead, this study explores a complex, multi-faceted integration of multicultural values across curricular practices, socio-cultural interactions, and institutional frameworks within a real-life school setting that incorporates students with mild ASD into mainstream classrooms.

Because this phenomenon is contextual, holistic, and socially embedded, a case study design was the most appropriate approach. Case studies allow for a thorough examination of modern phenomena in their actual contexts, especially when the distinction between the phenomenon and its context is not clearly defined (Grosvenor & Rose, 2013; Pokharel, 2021). Multicultural value integration in inclusive education can't be meaningfully separated from its natural environment, as it works through changing interactions among teachers, students, policies, and the school culture.

The study was conducted in a multicultural and inclusive school in North Bali. This school is a private, full-inclusion primary school where teachers have received specialised training to support and teach autistic students in inclusive classes. The choice of the school was conducted using purposive sampling with the criteria that the school has multicultural education/program and offers an inclusive system.

| Class | Number of classes | Number of students | Number of teachers |
|-------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | 2 classess | 52 | 2 |
| 2 | 2 classess | 51 | 2 |
| 3 | 2 classess | 49 | 2 |

| | | | |
|---|------------|----|---|
| 4 | 2 classess | 50 | 2 |
| 5 | 2 classess | 46 | 2 |
| 6 | 2 classess | 49 | 2 |

Table 1: Number of classes, students and teachers involved in the study

In each class, there is 1 student with mild autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), so there are 12 students with mild ASD in the school. Besides having students with ASD, the school is also multicultural, with students from various religions and backgrounds. Most of the students (256 out of 286) are from Bali (86%); 35 are from Java (11%); and 6 students are from mixed marriages (with one of their parents from abroad). The students' religions are mostly Hindu, followed by Muslim; several are Christian, Buddhist, and Confucian. The data were collected through observations, questionnaires, and in-depth interviews. The observation lasted 4 months. The researchers observed three times a week for about 4 hours each.

Different data collection techniques are used to maintain trustworthiness. The triangulation by the techniques (observation, interview, and questionnaire) was conducted repeatedly for 5 months until the data were saturated, and also by the persons who reviewed the results of the data collection were also reviewed by the technical assistant of the school under investigation.

To collect the qualitative data, the researchers are the main instrument provided with an observation sheet (attached). Besides, interviews were used to gather additional data. The researchers developed a questionnaire based on observations to record perceptions of the impact of incorporating multicultural values. The protocol of the interview was conducted into four phases, such as 1) ensuring that the interview questions are aligned with the research questions, 2) constructing questions, 3) receiving feedback, and 4) piloting the interview protocol (Shoozan & Mohamad, 2024).

The data were analysed using thematic analysis (Sandhiya & Bhuvanewari, 2024). To explore how multicultural values were integrated into an inclusive primary school and to examine their effects, the qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis. First, data familiarisation involved the meticulous reading and re-reading of field notes, observation records, interview transcripts, and questionnaire responses to achieve a thorough comprehension of the recurring patterns associated with multicultural implementation. Second, systematic codes were created by tagging important parts of the data related to teaching methods and how they were thought to work. Third, the codes were grouped to identify larger patterns, such as intra- and co-curricular strategies and multidimensional effects. Fourth, the themes were carefully checked to ensure they made sense with both the coded extracts and the full data set. Any themes that were too similar were improved or combined to make the analysis more consistent. Fifth, each theme was given a clear name that described its focus and its relationship to inclusive education. Finally, the report was written by carefully explaining each theme and clearly connecting the results to the research questions. This ensured that the results systematically addressed how multicultural values were put into practice and how they affected students' overall development in an inclusive school setting.

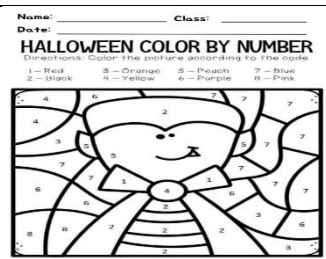
RESULTS

The strategies of incorporating Multicultural Education to increase inclusivity

The results of the data analysis reveal that the strategies for incorporating multicultural values consist of 5 implemented through the curriculum and 3 through co-curricular programs. The implementation summary is presented in the following tables (Table 2 and Table 3).

| No | Strategies of Incorporating Multicultural values through Intra-curricular activities | Description | Samples of Photos |
|----|--|-------------|-------------------|
|----|--|-------------|-------------------|

1 Integrating multicultural values into the content of the subject matter The multicultural values are inserted as a topic of emphasis in the reading texts.



2 Structured classroom and school-wide activities that explicitly accommodated students' religious and cultural backgrounds, such as the observance of Hindu (e.g., Galungan and Saraswati), Islamic (e.g., Eid al-Fitr), and Christian (e.g., Christmas) holy days, were used to teach and learn about multicultural values. Learning materials and school events that recognised Balinese traditions, Javanese cultural practices, and certain aspects of Western culture, like English-language performances and international celebrations, also showed cultural diversity.



3 Implementing equity pedagogy and providing access for all students Educators employ several pedagogical strategies, including differentiated instruction and universal design for learning, supplemented by several kinds of media to ensure inclusivity.



4 Character education program and PLS for prejudice reduction Character education is executed in cycles, with each value highlighted monthly and socialised by displaying in the school entrance gate. This is organised in a system. There are also personal life skills (PLS) inserted to keep students aware of having good character.



| | | |
|---|------------------------------|--|
| 5 | System of Positivity Culture | Every enhancement in performance and conduct is consistently acknowledged, and the school issues a certificate of commendation for such accomplishments. |
|---|------------------------------|--|

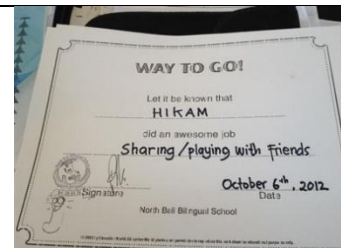


Table 2: Number of classes, students and teachers involved in the study
 Padmadewi's collections – observations results [source]

Table 2 demonstrates that the school uses multiple strategies to integrate multicultural values into in-curricular activities. The strategies outlined are as follows: 1) integrating multicultural themes into subject content by incorporating relevant topics into reading materials; 2) facilitating activities that promote critical discussions about the indicators of each value, with results displayed on a board outside the classroom; 3) employing diverse teaching methods to ensure equitable access for all students, regardless of individual characteristics, including a buddy program for students with special needs to foster mutual learning and promote character education and personal life skills; and 4) encouraging a positive paradigm to enhance appropriate behavior and performance, exemplified by awarding certificates of appreciation. The school incorporates multicultural education into co-curricular activities, in addition to intra-curricular activities, as outlined in Table 2.

| No | Strategies | Description |
|----|---|---|
| 1 | Project-based activities | Multicultural education topics are included in classroom projects requiring pupils to investigate the cultural characteristics of specific countries. |
| 2 | Celebration of each holy day of students' religions | Each holy day of students' religion is celebrated, e.g. By writing seasonal greetings to each other. |
| 3 | Creating events through the school's clubs attended by students: Door decoration contests; performing arts day. | The students read novels from various cultures and perform the content of each novel by decorating the classroom door as the stage for the performance about the novel. |

Table 3: Strategies to incorporate multicultural values through co-curricular activities
 observation results [source]

Table 3 indicates that the school employs various strategies to integrate multicultural education through co-curricular activities. The school offers a varied array of programs that necessitate pupils to engage in project-based activities, either collaboratively with peers or in conjunction with family members for take-home assignments. To honour the religious holy days of fellow students, the school engages all students in commemorating these occasions through seasonal greeting card creation or similar initiatives. The school employs novel study as a program to cultivate an appreciation for diversity, enabling students to engage with literature to comprehend both its content and their own cultural contexts. Comprehensive strategies demonstrate the obvious effects of integrating intercultural education.

The Impact of Incorporating Multicultural Education into the process of teaching and Learning

The integration of multicultural education into the teaching and learning process has a significant impact on students. The data were collected through interviews and through a questionnaire using Google Forms. The impacts collected through interviews can be summarised in Table 4 as follows.

| The Impact of Incorporating Multicultural Education | Description |
|---|---|
| Social /Interpersonal impact | Students build respect and empathy among themselves Develop cooperation with other students Reduce bias and prejudice |
| Personal Development | Strengthen cultural pride Promote open-mindedness and adaptability |
| Civic Values | Promote equity and justice in education Prepare students to be more responsible |

| | |
|------------------|--|
| | Strengthen social cohesion |
| Global Impact | Equip students with skills for a multicultural workplace and an international career in the future. |
| Cognitive Impact | Encourage high-order thinking Help students make connections between the classroom and real-life context. |

Table 4: The impact of incorporating multicultural education observation results [source]

Table 4 reveals that incorporating multicultural education can be seen in academic effects (as reflected in the reviews students wrote after reading novels assigned by their teachers). Table 5 is an excerpt from the interview that indicates the impacts of incorporating multicultural values.

| Interview Questions | Responses |
|---|--|
| <p><i>Bagaimana Ibu menjelaskan dampak dari penyisipan nilai-nilai multicultural di sekolah ini?</i> (How do you explain the impact of incorporating multicultural values at this school?)</p> | <p><i>"... seperti Ibu cingah, niki, niki, sekolah kami sangat serius menerapkan nilai-nilai multikultural dan disisipkan di setiap aktivitas baik intra dalam kurikulum maupun co-curricular, sekolah ini full day school, jadi kami memiliki keleluasaan dalam menambah kegiatan-kegiatan agar anak tumbuh jadi karakter baik, toleran, peduli, dan mau menerima perbedaan. Ini ditulis dalam visi sekolah. Sejak berdiri tahun 2012, kami tidak ada kasus bullying; dan jika ada friksi di antara siswa, mereka dilatih untuk segera lapor ke kantor, dan mereka langsung diajak dan dilibatkan untuk melakukan konflik resolution. Kami melatih siswa untuk langsung memecahkan konflik. Dampaknya luar biasa, Bu. Project yang dibuat sangat inovatif, dan, dan PLS yg diselipkan setiap saat mengajak anak jadi toleran. Secara akademik anak-anak bagus critical thinking nya, karena mereka dilatih mereview novel..."</i> (as you see, here, here, our school is very serious in implementing multicultural values, and is inserted in every event either through intra-curricular or co-curricular activities. The school is a full-day school, so we have flexibility in adding more programs and activities in order for the students to grow with good character, be tolerant, caring, and accept any differences. This is written in the vision statement of the school. Since we operated the school in 2012, there have been no cases of bullying so far. If there is any friction among students, they are required to report to the office and be directly involved in conflict resolution. The impacts are amazing, Bu. The project is very innovative, and PLS is inserted every time, requesting students to be tolerant. Academically, students' critical thinking is good, because they are trained to review novels..."</p> |

Table 5: Interview results – indicating the impacts of incorporating multicultural values observation results [source]

These impacts align with the questionnaire results, as shown in Figure 1. The questionnaire statements were developed based on the results of observations.

Teachers' perceptions about the impacts of incorporating multicultural values in the process of teaching and learning

Figure 1 illustrates that the effects are diverse, encompassing cognitive, interpersonal, and global consequences. In this study, a Likert-type scale of "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," and "Strongly Disagree" was used to measure the respondents' perceptions. The Likert-type scale is an instrument in which the measuring categories represent increasing levels of agreement, allowing researchers to quantify subjective attitudes and perceptions (Koo and Yang, 2025). Therefore, higher response categories were interpreted as stronger positive perceptions of the constructs under investigation.

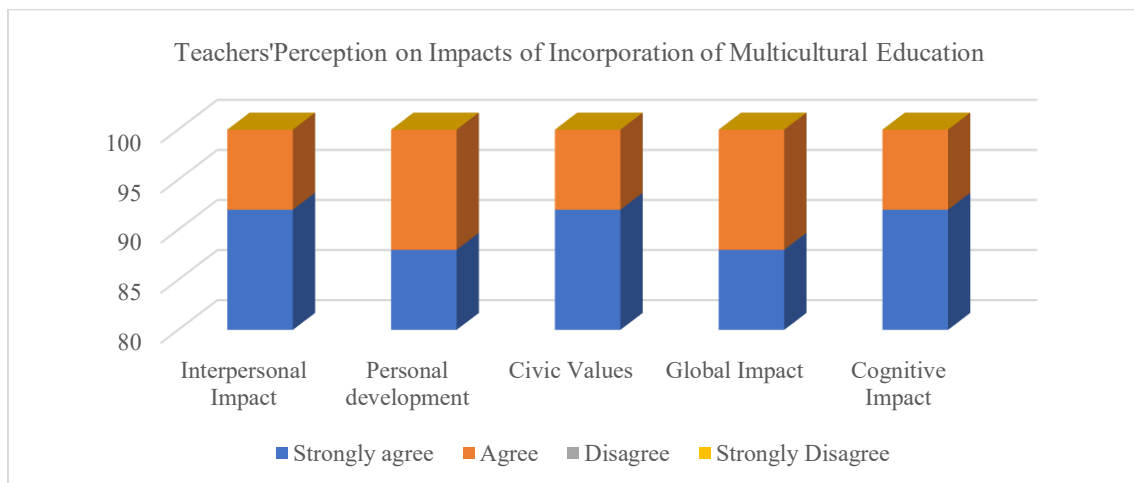


Figure 1: Teachers' perception of the impacts of the incorporation of multicultural education observation results [source]

DISCUSSION

This study found that implementing multicultural education at the school is undeniably crucial, and the school acknowledges that there have been no incidents of bullying to date. The school exemplifies its commitment to successful implementation by integrating multicultural principles comprehensively. Integrating multicultural viewpoints into primary education is essential, as students begin to develop social attitudes and cultural awareness at a young age. Early introduction and exposure increase young learners' understanding of appropriate behaviours that foster empathy, tolerance, and appreciation for diversity, thereby mitigating the emergence of biases, prejudices, and stereotypes. Integrating diversity into the curriculum during formative years establishes a robust foundation for inclusive ideals, social cohesion, and global competency throughout the academic journey (Ioannidi, 2023).

Additionally, the identified intra-curricular strategies, especially the incorporation of multicultural values into subject matter, validate findings from previous empirical research. Previous research also shows that integrating multicultural education into the curriculum is a key way to make it happen in the classroom (Klemenčič-Mirazchiyski et al., 2022; Mardhiah et al., 2024; Müller et al., 2025; Yuniawan, 2025; Zakiah et al., 2023). Consequently, the current study not only corroborates existing theoretical and empirical literature but also enhances it by illustrating the holistic functioning of these strategies within an inclusive primary school environment.

The finding regarding the other strategy of integrating multicultural values into the teaching and learning process also has positive impacts. The results of observation and also interview with the teachers reveal that the incorporation of multicultural values into the teaching learning process has been able to improve inclusivity. All students, regardless of cultural, social, and linguistic background, see their identities reflected and valued in learning. This aligns with previous studies by Muhajir et al. (2025) and Muhammad et al. (2025), which show that incorporating multicultural values into the curriculum fosters tolerance. By respecting diversity within the teaching learning process, the school cultivates respect, empathy, and inclusive learning communities.

The findings about the other strategies revealed in this study also align with the previous studies. Implementing equity pedagogy and providing access for all students aligns with previous studies by Williams (2024) and Wallace and Uchidiuno (2025), which confirm the importance of culturally responsive and inclusive education. Strategies for implementing character education to reduce prejudice also align with previous studies (Ilham & Rahman, 2024; Sitanggang et al., 2025). The strategy of fostering a positive culture also helps maintain an inclusive classroom. This finding is also in line with studies by González-San Martín et al. (2024), Woodcock and Anderson (2025), and Abdallah et al. (2023) that emphasise the importance of positive school culture.

The other strategies of incorporating multicultural values through co-curricular activities are integrated through project-based learning, which promotes collaboration across diverse groups. Through collaboration, students can practice multicultural values such as respect, empathy, and appreciation for diverse perspectives, thereby fostering inclusivity. To maintain the habit of proper behaviour and implementation of multicultural values, the school applies a reward system. The combination of multicultural content, collaborative activities through project-based learning, and appreciations through equitable recognition helps reduce prejudice and strengthen social cohesion in the classroom. Related studies by Situmorang and Afrianti (2025) and Leifler (2023) also highlight the importance of education and socialisation regarding inclusivity in enhancing students' social awareness. This finding is also in line with another study by Padmadewi et al. (2024), which found that creating a supportive social environment program for students with disabilities enhances their social awareness and interactions in an inclusive classroom.

The integration of multicultural perspectives into the curriculum also helps students develop global competence, the ability to examine issues from multiple cultural perspectives and interact across differences. This is in line with the studies conducted by Oubkkou (2025) and Williams and Soriero (2021), which also reported similar findings. By participating in collaborations with other students from different backgrounds, students realise interdependence, understand global challenges, and prepare for international collaborations. Reading novels about the world and participating in a school geography fair on the cultures of different countries help students develop their understanding of global issues. This process nurtures the skills essential to global competence in a connected world (Savić et al., 2025; Schat et al., 2023).

The strategy of providing opportunities for students to engage in project-based learning and collaborate with students from diverse backgrounds demonstrates that students can strengthen social cohesion with the school, both inside and outside the classroom. The integration of multicultural values into non-academic and academic activities through intra- and co-curricular activities provides opportunities for students to practice understanding and awareness, develop respect for peers from diverse backgrounds, and reduce prejudice, thereby nurturing a sense of mutual recognition. This aligns with Arab et al. (2025), who argue that schools that embrace multiculturalism through project-based learning, where students practice collaboration, real-world experiences, inclusivity, empathy, and collaborative problem-solving skills, are crucial for developing peaceful and equitable communities.

Teachers' perceptions also support the present findings. Teachers' perceptions reveal the impact of multicultural education on students' behaviour and character. Besides interpersonal impacts, where students can develop their confidence and social awareness, multicultural education also affects civic values, global perspectives, and cognitive development. By integrating multicultural perspectives into the teaching and learning process, students are exposed to readings on the cultures and geographical contexts of diverse countries, thereby enhancing social cohesion and positively influencing their academic outcomes. The students also presented the results of their explorations and participated in question-and-answer sessions. The presentations are also in front of their parents, which stimulates the students' critical thinking. During explanations of the students' identities represented in classroom content, they experience a stronger sense of belonging and greater motivation to engage in learning. This increases participation, persistence, and academic achievement, including those from minority groups. Exposure to diverse perspectives enriches classroom discussion and strengthens problem-solving strategies, critical thinking, and creativity. Students are trained to analyse information from multiple viewpoints and broaden their insights. Promoting culturally responsive instructions, inclusive teaching practices, multicultural programs, and activities ensures equitable learning opportunities and encourages higher academic outcomes for all students (Ghaemi & Boroushaki, 2025).

The alignment of the empirical results with the present study strengthens the study's validity. It underscores the importance of incorporating multicultural values into the teaching and learning process across all dimensions of school life. Despite alignment with previous studies, the study is limited because the investigation was not conducted separately for each grade. For this reason, future research should examine how multicultural values can be integrated across all primary school grades.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that incorporating multicultural values into the teaching and learning process in an inclusive primary school is achieved through various strategies. There are 5 strategies identified, conducted through intra-curricular activities, such as integrating multicultural values into the content of the subject matter, incorporating multicultural values through teaching learning process by accommodating multicultural events in line with students' religions, implementing equity pedagogy and providing access for all students, character education program and PLS for prejudice reduction, as well as implementing system of positivity culture. Besides that, 3 other strategies are implemented through co-curricular activities, such as providing project-based activities, celebrating each holy day of students' religions, and organising events through the school's clubs attended by all students. The strategies provide impacts on students' social, global, and cognitive outcomes, which are reconfirmed by the teachers' perceptions about the importance of multicultural values incorporated in the teaching learning process for supporting holistic students' development.

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