



Problems and Challenges of Multicultural Education in the Wana Tribe's Interior, Central Sulawesi

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Received: December 2024; Accepted: November 2025; Published: November 2025

Abstract: This study examines the importance of multicultural education in Indonesia, a country characterised by rich ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity. With a population of approximately 250 million people and over 300 ethnic groups, as well as 200 languages, this diversity can be both a blessing and a challenge if not managed properly. Multicultural education plays a crucial role in shaping national identity and fostering intercultural understanding and tolerance. However, its implementation faces various challenges, particularly in remote areas such as the Wana tribe in Central Sulawesi. Despite a strong interest in learning, limited access to education and a lack of understanding of multicultural values among the younger generation pose serious problems. The research method used was descriptive, qualitative, and ethnographic, drawing on the researcher's direct experience with the local community. The results indicate that multicultural education is not only crucial for preventing social conflict but also for strengthening unity in diversity. Challenges include disparities in educational facilities and low teacher competency. Therefore, greater government attention and inclusive policies are needed to improve the quality of education and strengthen cultural identity amidst the tide of modernization.

Keywords: cultural challenges; multicultural education; national identity; Wana tribe.

1. Introduction

Indonesia is a large multicultural country in the world, consisting of various tribes, religions, ethnicities, cultures, and so on. Indonesia consists of 13,000 islands large and small (Nurcahyono, 2018). This country is comprised of more than 300 tribes, 200 languages, and six recognized religions: Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. This diversity is a great blessing for the Indonesian people, but it can also be a challenge if multiculturalism is not managed harmoniously (Akhmad, 2020). The Indonesian people are reminded to always live side by side peacefully in a society of different tribes, religions, races, and groups. In accordance with the motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, every Indonesian citizen is required to understand, appreciate, and realize a harmonious life together to maintain unity and oneness in diversity. This reminds us to always respect and uphold differences of race, religion, race, and class as the main factor in uniting the nation, not as a reason for conflict. Social sciences teach the importance of peaceful coexistence as part of the socialization of the values embraced in multiculturalism (Hesti, Kurniansyah, & Rizki, 2022).

Multicultural education in Indonesia has a long and dynamic history, starting from the pre-colonial period, the colonial period, the New Order period which tended to emphasize uniformity such as the concept *melting pot*, until entering the current era of reform and digitalization. Throughout its history, multicultural education has played a strategic role as a means of socio-cultural transformation, fostering mutual respect, honor, and acceptance of diversity as part of the nation's identity. In a global development marked by digitalization and modernization, Indonesia's education system is required to be increasingly open, adaptive, and able to accommodate the plurality of its society (Nurcahyono, 2018).

Multicultural education is not only concerned with social and cultural aspects, but also serves as a crucial instrument in realizing an education that is inclusive, equitable, and relevant to the needs of the times. This is especially important in the context of Islamic education, given that Indonesian society is known for its diversity, both ethnically, culturally, and religiously. Therefore, curriculum development in Islamic education must be directed at strengthening the values of tolerance, respect for differences, and the ability to interact harmoniously. Thus, multicultural-based Islamic education can be a crucial pillar in developing a generation with character, broad perspectives, and readiness to face global challenges without losing their national identity (Sumarno & Iksan, 2024). Furthermore, Islamic education that integrates a multicultural perspective can also be a strategic tool in preventing potential social conflicts rooted in differences in identity. Through learning that emphasizes inclusive values, students not only gain religious knowledge but also develop an awareness of mutual respect, cooperation, and harmony. A curriculum that adapts to multiculturalism will equip students with critical thinking skills, social empathy, and an open attitude toward diversity. In this way, Islamic education plays an active role in strengthening the foundations of national unity while fostering a civilized global awareness.

The digitalization of education is a strategic step in creating a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. Through the use of technology, every student has equal opportunities to access various learning resources, regardless of differences in social background or geographic location. This effort also aims to increase student engagement in the learning process by presenting materials that are structured in an engaging, interactive manner and relevant to their needs (Yanti, Syaifudin, Mulio, Hendra, & Marlina, 2024). Furthermore, the implementation of digitalization opens up significant opportunities to expand the scope of education through online platforms. This way, students from various regions, even those far from city centers, can still participate in distance learning effectively and efficiently. This innovation is crucial, especially during the global pandemic, when face-to-face learning is limited. Digital-based learning is a key solution for maintaining the continuity of a quality educational process.

This is feared to lead to the erosion of national identity, which in turn can lead to various problems in the world of education and hinder the development of educational quality. Along with technological developments and globalization, education in Indonesia needs to re-emphasize the importance of multicultural education. This aims to ensure that the younger generation grows up with a strong understanding of their identity while also being able to appreciate differences within society. Multicultural education plays a crucial role in instilling national values and maintaining unity amidst the increasingly rapid flow of modernization. The experiences of other countries in integrating multiculturalism into education can provide valuable insights for Indonesia in strengthening its multicultural education program. Geographical and cultural proximity to Indonesia makes these practices easier to adapt. However, one of the main challenges in integrating multicultural education content into the elementary school curriculum is the imbalanced focus on knowledge and attitudes, while aspects of function and behavior are often neglected. Multicultural education in Indonesia is generally delivered through a passive learning model, resulting in less active student engagement. Furthermore, some teachers may still lack adequate knowledge and skills to implement multicultural education effectively in their teaching. To realize the functions and behaviors appropriate to multicultural education, teachers need to possess adequate cross-cultural competencies. A more participatory and comprehensive approach to multicultural education can provide students with opportunities to actively contribute to creating social justice. Thus, multicultural education is not merely theoretical but also reflects real-life practices (Kurniasih et al., 2024).

Minority communities cannot be viewed from a single perspective, as various variables shape their groupings. For example, among indigenous minority communities in Indonesia, such as the Wana people in Central Sulawesi, their dynamics and development have shown significant growth. Modernity has triggered the identification of minority groups in Indonesia, placing them in a new position within multicultural discourse. The Wana people are often considered isolated and backward, but in reality, this condition is heavily influenced by socio-cultural processes in modern Indonesia, including the marginalization of indigenous tribes. The isolation, marginalization, and alienation that contribute to the emergence of "minority" status are better understood as the result of social construction. This construction

reflects the complexity of culture and history that continues to evolve. In various studies of minority rights, minority groups are defined as those who, due to their physical characteristics, origins, or culture, are separated from the majority group and are often treated unfairly in the society in which they live. This perspective underscores the importance of understanding minority dynamics as an integral part of efforts to achieve social justice in a multicultural society (Solikhin, 2016).

The implementation of multicultural education in Indonesia, particularly in remote areas such as the Wana tribe in Central Sulawesi, faces various complex challenges and problems. Despite a high level of interest in learning among children, adequate access to education remains a major issue. The challenges of multicultural education in Indonesia are unique and differ from those faced by other countries. These challenges encompass social aspects that can be addressed through multicultural education, as well as challenges related to culture-based learning. These challenges can serve as a basis for developing multicultural education that is appropriate to the Indonesian context (Gani, 2025).

Education is always directed towards addressing various emerging national problems and challenges, with the goal of providing prosperity for the people. The combination of education and multicultural values provides a solution to existing cultural diversity, while simultaneously developing comprehensive skills that respect differences. Multicultural education aims to minimize conflicts arising from differences in society, thereby fostering an attitude of mutual respect and appreciation (Suradi, 2018). This represents significant potential that should receive greater attention from the government and relevant parties. Efforts to address this challenge require special programs that address the unique conditions of remote areas, deploy more skilled teachers, improve educational infrastructure, and implement multicultural education that is appropriate to the local cultural context.

The Wana people, often called Tau Taa Wana, or "people who live in the forest," also refer to themselves as Tau Taa, or "people of Taa." They speak the Taa language, which bears similarities to the language spoken by the Taa people in Banggai Regency and Tojo Una-Una Regency. The Wana are one of the oldest tribes in Sulawesi and are thought to be among the first groups to inhabit this land around 8,000 years ago during the Mesolithic period. Before inhabiting the Tokala Mountains, the ancestors of the Wana people came from around Bone Bay. The Wana people hold strong beliefs related to a harmonious relationship with their ancestors. In their beliefs, land (*tana poga'a*) is the first essential element, as it is believed to have been created by Pue (God) to be the home of their first ancestors. The second essential element is trees, which serve as the glue that holds the ancestral land together. Certain trees, such as the *kaju kele'i* and *kaju paramba'a*, are believed to have been planted by Pue to protect their ancestors and to bind the ancestral land, or *tana ntautua*, together, to keep it strong and unified. Rivers are also an important element in the lives of the Wana people. Large trees (*kaju*), land (*tana*), and rivers (*ue*) form a unity called *pangale*. According to their beliefs, damage to any of the *pangale* elements will disrupt the balance of nature. Therefore, preserving the *pangale* is believed to prevent disasters and maintain harmony in life. The Wana people live a nomadic lifestyle, often migrating to various areas while farming. One of their migration destinations is the Bongka River (Tojo Una-Una Regency), eventually settling in the Salato River area (North Morowali Regency). In this region, they began to settle and form a sub-ethnic group known as Tau Taa Wana or Wana Posangke (Nutfu, 2019).

The Tau Taa Wana believe that their first ancestor, Tundantana, was an incarnation from heaven who descended to Kaju Marangka. According to Apa Martin (*Old Tau Ada*), there are six main locations that have become the origins of the spread of the Tau Taa Wana customary law community to this day: Kaju Marangka, Tongku Tua, Vatumoana, Salubiro, Kaju Kelei, and Sarambe. Five of these locations are located in the Morowali Nature Reserve, while one location, Sarambe, is located in the Protected Forest area. The Tau Taa Wana customary law community still maintains a customary law system that functions to maintain and restore social balance and harmony in human relations with the environment. This system includes customary norms related to natural resource management. Violations of ancestral values, whether related to the treatment of nature or defiance of customary institution decisions, are considered serious offenses. The local wisdom of the Wana community is reflected in forest and land governance. They distinguish several types of forests, such as "*Kapali Forest*", primary forest areas that are considered sacred and cannot be used directly, as well as "*jungle (pangale)*", which serves as a protected area to

maintain water management and soil fertility. In addition, there are forests utilized for non-timber forest products, such as rattan, resin, and honey. Management and utilization of forest resources are carried out according to certain rules and rituals passed down from generation to generation. Their basic principle is respect for nature as part of the universe. These practices are not only carried out in daily life but also become part of their spiritual beliefs, including rituals performed to preserve the forest and the surrounding environment. The continuity of this local wisdom is an important legacy that shapes the Tau Taa Wana's behavioral patterns in maintaining harmony with nature, fellow humans, and the supernatural (Nugroho, 2020).

These values are relevant in the context of modern challenges, particularly those related to environmental issues such as deforestation and climate change, which threaten the ecosystems of traditional forests that have long been preserved. Various educational issues in Indonesia currently pose significant challenges to achieving quality education. Issues such as disparities in facilities, low teacher competency, and limited access to education in remote areas are key factors hindering improvements in education quality. Serious attention and efforts are needed to improve the education system, as the quality of the human resources produced is highly dependent on the quality of the education received (Kurniawati, 2022).

2. Research methods

The research method used is a descriptive qualitative approach with ethnographic methods, which aims to describe the activities and socio-cultural patterns of the community (Yusuf, 2014). This research focuses on an in-depth exploration of the life views, behaviors, and daily interaction patterns of the research subjects, using field observation as the main instrument. The data collection process was carried out through direct involvement of the researcher with the Wana Tribe community living in the interior of Central Sulawesi. This involvement provided the researcher with the opportunity to understand the reality of community life more authentically, starting from communication patterns, cultural practices, and how they interpret diversity in social and educational contexts. The ethnographic approach was chosen because it can provide space for critical reflection on the researcher's personal experiences when interacting with the community. Through this method, the researcher not only records visible phenomena but also interprets the meaning behind cultural practices and values adopted by the community. This allows for a deeper understanding of the challenges faced in developing multicultural education, especially in remote areas where access to information and educational facilities is still limited (Kusumajanti, Syarifuddin, Sanulita, & Gopur, 2025).

In addition to empirical data from the field, this study also enriches the analysis through a literature review or library research. Academic sources such as books, scientific journals, previous research reports, and official documents are used as references to strengthen the theoretical context. This literature review serves as a conceptual foundation that complements the field findings, so that the research results are not only descriptive but also have a solid analytical framework. The integration of empirical experience in the field with theoretical knowledge from various literatures produces a comprehensive perspective on the issue of multicultural education in the Wana Tribe community. Thus, this study not only highlights the socio-cultural realities of the remote community but also strives to make a significant academic contribution in formulating more relevant, inclusive, and contextual multicultural education strategies. This approach is expected to open up space for intercultural dialogue and provide new insights into the development of education based on local wisdom (Hanum, Astria, Imara, Hidayatullah, & Harmonedi, 2025).

3. Research results

3.1. Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is a strategic concept that plays a crucial role in shaping the identity of a multicultural nation. A nation is born from cultural diversity, so managing multicultural education is key to its development and prosperity. Multicultural education emphasizes the importance of instilling a way

of life that is respectful, sincere, and tolerant of cultural differences in a pluralistic society. Multicultural education is education for or about cultural diversity in response to demographic and cultural changes in a particular community environment or even for the sake of the nation as a whole (Munadlir, 2016). Thus, multicultural education is not merely an academic discourse, but rather an urgent need that must be implemented in national and state life. This concept encourages the creation of a more just, democratic society that values diversity as a national asset. In the educational context, a multicultural approach can be applied through the development of an inclusive curriculum, participatory learning methods, and the involvement of students in learning experiences that foster empathy. The implementation of multicultural education also plays a role in building collective awareness to avoid discrimination, intolerance, and horizontal conflict, thereby realizing sustainable social harmony.

Education is essentially a conscious, planned, and continuous effort to develop individual potential. This process aims not only to equip individuals with knowledge but also to develop spiritual and religious strength, self-control, a mature personality, noble morals, and skills relevant to the needs of the individual, society, nation, and state. In the context of Indonesia's diverse population, education cannot be separated from the multicultural reality, namely the diversity of socio-cultural backgrounds that encompass differences in religion, race, ethnicity, language, and tradition. Multiculturalism essentially reflects the nation's pluralistic conditions, which can become a powerful force if managed wisely. Therefore, education must be a vehicle for instilling values of respect for differences, strengthening tolerance, and fostering mutual respect amidst diversity (Fatoni, 2020).

Furthermore, education also plays a key role in developing national character. This character-building process must be carried out consistently and integratedly through various strategies, including the socialization of values, empowering individual and group potential, and strengthening cooperation involving all elements of the nation. Not only formal educational institutions but also families, government, community organizations, the mass media, and the business and industrial sectors share a shared responsibility in realizing education oriented toward multicultural character. With the involvement of various parties, education is expected to produce a generation with noble character, tolerance, and preparedness to face global dynamics without losing its national identity (Hakim & Darajat, 2023).

Multicultural Education is a conscious effort to develop personality inside and outside of school, by studying various social statuses, races, ethnicities, and religions, in order to create intelligent individuals in facing the challenges of cultural diversity. Building a multiculturally educated citizenry is not easy; this process involves various stages, such as: developing a curriculum that emphasizes cultural differences, studying the cultures of other ethnic groups in Indonesia, including traditional dances, languages, literature, and crafts, and developing a non-discriminatory curriculum that upholds human rights, religious moderation, and socio-cultural values that reflect the nation's diversity (Sani, 2017). The educational curriculum should be designed based on the nation's noble ethical and moral values, so as to instill an attitude of mutual respect, tolerance, and openness towards others, including in dealing with differences in religion and belief. This effort can be strengthened through the construction of historical monuments and the establishment of museums that house relics from various regions. The presence of these facilities not only functions as a preservation of cultural heritage, but can also be used as an important academic reference in designing learning materials that are rich in local content (Prasetiawati, 2017).

Multicultural education needs to be implemented evenly across all levels and types of educational institutions, whether government-run, private, or international schools implementing foreign curricula. This is crucial because such education is based on the principle that historical truth cannot be interpreted in a single sense. Therefore, the curriculum should be structured using a comparative analysis approach, examining various cultural perspectives to foster broader understanding. Ultimately, multicultural education is expected to reflect a balance between recognizing cultural similarities and differences. This way, students are encouraged to maintain their individual cultural identities while broadening their national perspectives. Andersen and Custer define multicultural education as an educational effort that emphasizes the recognition and understanding of cultural diversity. Meanwhile, Musa Asy'ari

emphasizes that multicultural education is the process of developing mindsets and lifestyles based on a sincere, open, and tolerant attitude toward differences in a pluralistic society, which is highly relevant to the Indonesian context (Karman et al., 2022).

Multicultural education plays a crucial role in the context of Indonesia, a nation characterized by a complex diversity of cultures, ethnicities, religions, and social backgrounds. This education not only introduces students to diverse cultural heritage but also serves as a strategic platform for instilling social values that support a harmonious life together. Through a multicultural-based learning process, students are guided to understand differences as both natural and valuable, fostering an attitude of respect, acceptance, and constructive management of diversity. Multicultural education also serves to develop students' social and emotional abilities. Students are accustomed to cultivating empathy for others, honing social skills, and enhancing their communication skills. This provides essential provisions for healthy, peaceful, and tolerant interactions within society. Therefore, multicultural education is not only oriented toward enriching cultural knowledge but also serves as a means of developing inclusive character. Ultimately, this education can produce a generation with a strong national consciousness and the ability to maintain unity amidst diversity (Nurmansyah & Muttaqin, 2024).

Multicultural education plays a strategic role in preventing the emergence of prejudice, negative stereotypes, and discriminatory practices that often trigger conflict and social tension. Through this approach, students are given a deep understanding of the importance of diversity, so they can see differences as both natural and positive for communal life. With this awareness, it is hoped that the younger generation will be able to develop an open attitude, mutual respect, and uphold tolerance in their social interactions. Furthermore, multicultural education contributes to strengthening national bonds amidst a highly diverse society. The process of internalizing multicultural values can foster a sense of belonging to the nation, so that differences are no longer seen as dividing, but rather as richness that strengthens unity. The implementation of this education not only produces students with broad insights but also forms inclusive individuals who are able to maintain harmony in social life. Thus, the application of multicultural education can be seen as an important foundation for national development. It functions not only as a learning tool but also as an instrument for forming a strong national character and identity amidst the dynamics of Indonesia's diversity (Agustian, 2019).

Multicultural education in Indonesia is highly urgent given the nation's diversity, encompassing cultures, customs, ethnicities, and religions spread throughout the archipelago. Multicultural education serves as a strategic tool for fostering understanding, acceptance, and appreciation for these differences. Therefore, it serves not only as a learning medium but also as a crucial tool in preventing social conflict, often triggered by misunderstandings between groups. Instilling multicultural values from an early age, for example through elementary school education, is an effective first step in developing a more open, tolerant generation capable of living side by side harmoniously. This educational process emphasizes the importance of appreciating diversity as a force that strengthens national unity, rather than as a source of division (Khairiah & Walid, 2020).

From the perspective of sociologists, multicultural education is seen as a fundamental means of realizing social inclusion, equality, and respect for cultural diversity in society. In other words, the implementation of multicultural education in Indonesia is an important foundation for creating a just, peaceful, and civilized life together. Several sociologists have offered varying views on multicultural education. James A. Banks, known as one of the pioneers in the study of multicultural education, emphasized that the primary goal of this education is to provide equal opportunities to all students, regardless of their cultural background, so that each individual can receive a quality education (Banks, 1993). According to Pierre Bourdieu, education is seen as a means of maintaining the cultural capital and habitus of dominant groups. According to him, the education system often tends to reinforce socio-cultural inequality because it ignores the experiences and cultural values of minority groups. Therefore, Bourdieu emphasized that multicultural education should provide equal respect for all forms of cultural capital, not just that originating from dominant groups (Bourdieu, 1993). Meanwhile, according to Samuel P. Huntington, through his idea of the clash of civilizations, he highlights the global challenge of uniting diverse cultural groups. From a multicultural education perspective, Huntington emphasizes the

importance of maintaining national cohesion while respecting cultural diversity, so that diversity does not lead to social division (Samuel, 1993).

3.2. Problems and Challenges of Education in Indonesia

The history of education in Indonesia shows that the direction of education policy often undergoes changes influenced by political interests, such as the shift from a Dutch colonial orientation towards efforts to fulfill national interests (Kandia, 2023). Throughout Indonesian history, education has often been used as a means to meet the political needs of those in power. The direction of education policy is often adjusted to the interests of the ruling government to align with the desired political goals. Since Indonesia gained independence, the nation has experienced four major leadership models: the Old Order, the New Order, the Reformation Order, and the contemporary era, often referred to as the transition to democracy. Each leadership period not only brought about political changes but also had a significant influence on the character, direction, and implementation of education in the country. During the Old Order, education was used as a tool of struggle to build national identity and strengthen the state ideology. Meanwhile, during the New Order, the education system was more directed towards centralization and government control to support political stability and economic development. Entering the Reformation era, there were efforts to decentralize and democratize the implementation of education, although bureaucratic challenges remained problematic. To date, educational practices in Indonesia are still controlled by a multi-layered bureaucratic system, starting from the central, regional, and educational unit levels, which often makes the policy implementation process slow (Alam, 2020).

This bureaucratic-based leadership has had a significant impact on the world of education, where educators' guidelines and actions often no longer refer to professionalism but rather to instructions from their superiors. This condition results in bias toward superiors and eliminates educators' professional rights and authority. Consequently, education produces individuals who tend to follow orders without independence or the courage to make decisions. In the process of social transformation, educational transformation is an inevitability that is heavily influenced by leadership. Indonesia has experienced seven changes in national leadership. Great hopes are placed on the new leaders to carry out effective educational transformation, so that problems in the education sector can be addressed and changes can occur towards national progress (Qomar, 2002). Education in Indonesia still shows low quality, which is often assumed to be due to a lack of serious government attention to this area. However, one of the most important factors in a nation's progress is education. Education serves as the basic capital for building progress and social welfare. One fundamental problem is the gap in education, which is evident in various aspects such as the availability of educational facilities and infrastructure and the quality of teaching staff. In some areas, particularly remote ones, educational facilities are often inadequate, and available teaching staff are poorly trained or insufficient. This exacerbates the disparity in educational quality between developed and underdeveloped regions in Indonesia (Satria, Kusasih, & Gusmaneli, 2025).

Fuad Hassan emphasized that in the era of globalization, serious anticipatory measures are needed, particularly in the cultural sphere. The rapid development of science and technology (IPTEK) has narrowed the distance between nations while increasing opportunities for cross-cultural interaction. This situation poses increasingly severe and complex challenges for education in Indonesia. Therefore, concrete and sustainable solutions are needed to address them. If this is ignored, especially in the education sector, which is responsible for improving the quality of Human Resources (HR), the younger generation risks losing direction and forgetting the cultural roots that constitute the nation's identity (Muslich, 2022). In this context, multicultural education exists as a process of developing attitudes and behaviors that mature individuals and groups through teaching, training, and educational processes that emphasize respect for plurality and heterogeneity in a humanistic manner. Multicultural education also strives to create an inclusive learning environment and provide space for diverse cultural backgrounds to be equally valued.

According to Anita Lie, multicultural education in Indonesia faces three main challenges in the era of globalization. The first challenge is the emergence of hegemony in education, as evidenced by the segregation of students based on religious background, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. This condition reflects the persistence of social distance that can hinder the realization of inclusive education. The second

challenge relates to curricula that are not completely free from bias. Curricula often contain certain tendencies, whether related to gender, social class, local culture, or even geographic differences, thus limiting students' multicultural awareness. The third challenge is the low competence of teachers in implementing multicultural-based learning. Many teachers still struggle to manage diverse classes and lack the adequate skills to instill the values of tolerance, inclusion, and respect for differences (Pohan, Ismail, Sitorus, & Hanum, 2024).

There are three major challenges in implementing multicultural education in Indonesia. First, it relates to religion, ethnicity, and tradition. Religion is a vital bond in Indonesian society and often serves as a source of social strength. However, at the same time, religion also has the potential to cause conflict, especially when used as a political tool or exploited for the benefit of certain groups. Conflicts between religious adherents usually involve more than just belief, but also social, economic, and political aspects. This situation is often exploited by interest groups, often turning into conflicts of interest in the name of religion and God (Nasution & Albina, 2024). Second, the challenge of trust. In a pluralistic society, trust is a fundamental element that underpins social relations. Suspicion, distrust, or fear of other groups often arise when communication is poor. Multiculturalism is essentially the belief that ethnic and cultural groups, including religions, can coexist peacefully based on the principle of coexistence. Multicultural education plays a crucial role in developing students' awareness, understanding, and skills, enabling them to appreciate differences within a pluralistic society (Antone, 2010). Third, the challenge of tolerance. Tolerance is seen as the highest form of acceptance of differences, which demands openness in adapting personal views and attitudes to create a harmonious environment. Tolerance is causally related to harmony, as without it, harmony is impossible. However, tolerance does not mean mixing interfaith teachings or worship, as that would constitute compromise-syncretic behavior, not true tolerance (Hetharion & Serly, 2024).

Multicultural education is seen as a strategic path to addressing the various social and cultural challenges facing the Indonesian nation. Through the implementation of multicultural-based education, the world of education is expected to make a real contribution to building a society more in tune with the reality of national diversity. The diversity of ethnicities, cultures, races, and traditions spread throughout the Indonesian archipelago constitutes a national treasure that must be preserved and passed on to future generations. Thus, multicultural education is a crucial instrument for instilling mutual respect, fostering awareness of the value of togetherness, and teaching skills for peaceful coexistence amidst differences. This also aligns with efforts to strengthen national identity without losing local cultural roots. In the context of remote communities such as the Wana Tribe, the implementation of multicultural education faces even more complex challenges due to the interconnected social, cultural, and geographic factors.

First, limited infrastructure and access to education are fundamental issues, with poor road conditions, school facilities, and transportation directly impacting the quality of learning (Fanani, 2025). Second, the availability of teaching staff remains very limited, with few teachers willing to teach in remote areas due to a lack of incentives and difficult living conditions. This adds to teachers' mental burden and worsens the quality of education (Dewi, Syamsinar, Sagita, & Jeni, 2025). The third challenge is the lack of multicultural education programs relevant to local culture. Low public awareness of the importance of multicultural education prevents children from receiving learning that aligns with their cultural identity (Adnyana et al., 2025). Fourth, limited technology and minimal digitalization leave students in remote areas lagging behind in terms of access to information (Kusnanto, Noviyanti, Gudiato, & Usman, 2024). Furthermore, government policies that have not yet focused on remote areas further exacerbate the gap in access to education. Modernization also presents a dilemma for the Wana community: how to maintain tradition while adapting to changing times. Another challenge is the less than optimal recognition and protection of customary rights, especially regarding land and natural resources, which are an integral part of the life of the Wana people (Thontowi, 2013).

3.3. Implementation of Multicultural Education

Multicultural education plays a crucial role in creating a more harmonious and just society. It involves not only teaching about diversity but also actively practicing respect and celebration of existing differences. This statement reflects the core principles of multicultural education. The application of

multicultural education to achieve peace involves several key elements that support harmony and social justice. Multicultural education can play an effective role in building a peaceful, inclusive, and just society, as well as addressing various challenges that may arise from social and cultural differences (Pala, Rahman, & Kadir, 2020). Due to the plethora of differences in Indonesian society, multiculturalism-based education is essential to understand differences as a given or national treasure given by God Almighty, which should be cared for and developed so that diversity can contribute to the nation's progress. It is time for a policy of implementing multiculturalism-based education to be implemented evenly at every level of education in Indonesia to build national integrity. Multicultural education is highly relevant in supporting the democratization process, where multicultural education includes several related matters: the recognition of human rights, the absence of discrimination, and the pursuit of social justice.

Furthermore, multicultural education enables individuals to live peacefully in cultural environments different from their own. Indonesian society is a pluralistic society, even the most pluralistic in the world. Therefore, efforts must be made to manage this diversity to prevent it from becoming a threat to disintegration. Education is one of the primary answers. The concept of multicultural education is a learning process that should be made a compulsory subject at all levels of education, with elementary education serving as the starting point for each individual's educational process. Furthermore, teachers, curriculum, facilities, and various other resources needed to support the multicultural learning process must be provided by the state. In this regard, the state is the highest authority in the administration of education (Peter & Simatupang, 2022).

Multicultural education is crucial for implementation in Indonesia. Multiculturalism will serve as a bridge that can accommodate the differences that exist in Indonesia, including differences concerning regional customs. Multicultural education is one of the quickest solutions to minimize divisions. By implementing multicultural education, Indonesian society can understand, accept, and appreciate the differences that exist in every society. Instilling this multicultural concept can be done in elementary school to facilitate the process of fostering multicultural education. In rural communities, diversity often reflects close interdependent relationships, where each individual and group has specific roles and responsibilities in maintaining social, economic, and environmental balance. In these communities, daily life usually centers on cooperation, such as sharing harvests, working together to build houses, or preserving forests as a source of shared life. These relationships are formed not only by economic necessity but also by cultural values that value solidarity, togetherness, and mutual trust. In the context of multicultural education, a relevant approach can emphasize the importance of understanding and respecting each individual's role within the community, as well as teaching ways to strengthen these interdependent relationships. For example, educational programs can include lessons on local traditions that support collaboration, such as the custom of deliberation to reach consensus or rituals that strengthen collective identity. Furthermore, education can be designed to encourage children to understand how diversity, whether in culture, traditional knowledge, or skills, can be a vital asset in achieving shared goals such as maintaining environmental sustainability or improving community well-being.

Multicultural education fundamentally plays a crucial role in strengthening reciprocal relationships between individuals and cultures. In rural areas, this type of education is not only useful for preserving the community's identity and local wisdom, but also serves as a crucial tool in preparing them to face social and economic dynamics that arise from outside the community. With multicultural education, rural communities can maintain traditional values without being left behind by the process of modernization. However, its implementation in areas with limited access to education requires a more careful approach. Each program must be tailored to local realities, respect existing cultures, and address the specific needs of the local community. With this strategy, education becomes not merely an instrument for knowledge transfer but also a vehicle for empowerment that can build adaptability, strengthen solidarity, and encourage the creation of a harmonious social life amidst diversity (Rendi, Sinaga, & Topayung, 2024).

First, social and cultural mapping can be conducted. This process aims to understand the unique characteristics of remote communities by gathering information about their social structure, leadership patterns, social stratification, daily habits, customs, religious beliefs, language, and how they utilize

natural resources in their environment. This mapping is crucial to ensuring that educational programs are designed to align with the real lives of the community.

Second, community involvement. The success of multicultural education is largely determined by the active participation of the community, particularly traditional leaders, informal leaders, and extended families, who wield significant influence in decision-making. This involvement can take the form of discussions about educational needs and expectations, scheduling, selecting learning locations, and determining a curriculum that aligns with the realities of their lives, such as material on sustainable agriculture or forest product management for communities that rely on subsistence farming. Furthermore, community members can be empowered as local educators or facilitators, making the learning process more relevant because it is delivered by individuals who understand the local culture. Communities can also contribute by providing learning resources, tradition-based teaching materials, or volunteering. Thus, education serves not only as a transfer of knowledge but also as a means of empowerment that strengthens cultural identity while improving quality of life.

Third, a non-formal approach can be implemented to provide more flexible and contextual access to learning. This approach is not tied to a standard curriculum, fixed schedule, or conventional school facilities, but rather utilizes local potential and cultural wisdom in delivering learning. This strategy makes education more accessible and its benefits more directly felt by rural communities. Implementing a non-formal approach in rural education can be realized through several strategies, as follows:

1. Training and Mentoring by Facilitators. Non-formal approaches often involve facilitators who are from or already familiar with the local culture, enabling them to deliver material in a manner that is appropriate to the community (Nugraha, Wismayanti, & Wirantari, 2024).
2. Learning through Experience. Rather than using lectures, this approach encourages hands-on learning through practice, such as teaching more efficient farming methods or skills in making handicrafts for sale (Iskandar et al., 2023).
3. Education through Arts and Culture. Artistic activities, such as composing songs or folktales, are used to convey educational messages, such as the importance of environmental protection or basic health (Turyani, Sugiarto, & Naam, 2024).
4. Small Group Learning. Small study groups are formed to create a comfortable atmosphere, so that students feel more confident asking questions and interacting (Abror, Rosuli, & Bahri, 2025).

Building teacher capacity in remote communities is a crucial process to ensure educators are able to adapt to unique conditions, such as limited infrastructure, cultural diversity, and geographic isolation, while simultaneously delivering relevant and contextualized learning. This effort is carried out through local culture-based training, strengthening pedagogical competencies, using creative methods utilizing local resources, and ongoing mentoring to help teachers overcome challenges in the field. Furthermore, teachers are provided with emotional and social training to build strong relationships with the local community and create an inclusive learning environment. Policy support, in the form of incentives and access to professional development, also plays a crucial role in maintaining teacher motivation, enabling them to become agents of change who not only educate but also empower the community as a whole. Furthermore, teacher empowerment and improving the quality of education in remote or underdeveloped areas can be achieved by deploying mentor teachers whose duties include community service and strengthening the capacity of local teachers, thereby empowering the community towards better conditions (Irham, 2020).

4. Conclusion

Multicultural education in Indonesia, particularly in remote areas such as the Wana community in the interior of Central Sulawesi, faces various challenges despite its significant potential for strengthening national identity and fostering intercultural tolerance. Studies show that children's enthusiasm for learning is quite high, but limited access to education, inadequate facilities, and low teacher competency are major obstacles to optimal implementation of multicultural education. This type of education plays a crucial role in preventing prejudice, discrimination, and social conflict that can threaten national unity.

To achieve this goal, more inclusive government policies and educational programs tailored to the local context are needed. This includes improving the quality of teaching staff, providing adequate educational facilities, and integrating the cultural values and local wisdom of the Wana people into the curriculum. In this way, education is understood not only as a means of transferring knowledge but also as a medium for instilling awareness of the importance of respect for diversity. The application of multicultural education is also relevant in addressing contemporary global challenges such as deforestation and climate change. Traditional knowledge of local communities can be leveraged as part of sustainability-oriented learning. Thus, multicultural education does not stop at the conceptual level, but must be realized in real practice in everyday life to create a harmonious, inclusive society that respects differences.

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