



# Multicultural Education as a Strategy to Prevent Discrimination in Modern Educational Systems

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## Abstract

**Article history:**

Received: July 12, 2025

Revised: August 27, 2025

Accepted: October 6, 2025

Published: December 30, 2025

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**Keywords:**

Discrimination,  
Inclusion,  
Multicultural,  
Education,  
Social Justice.

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**Identifier:**

Zera Open

Page: 94-107

<https://zeraopen.com/journal/gjes>

Multicultural education plays a vital role in building an equitable, inclusive, and discrimination-free educational system. This study employs a Systematic Literature Review approach to critically examine research published in the past five years focusing on the implementation of multicultural education as a strategy to prevent discrimination across both formal and non-formal educational contexts. The findings reveal that multicultural education effectively enhances student engagement, reduces social stereotypes, and fosters solidarity and empathy within diverse learning environments. Teachers act as key agents in integrating diversity values through reflective and humanistic pedagogical practices, while educational policies should emphasize strengthening social justice and ensuring equal learning opportunities for all students. This approach not only influences academic achievement but also promotes psychological well-being, emotional balance, and social harmony within schools. In conclusion, multicultural education represents a transformative strategy that remains highly relevant in addressing global challenges and in cultivating a tolerant, democratic, adaptive, and competitive generation for the modern era.

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## 1. Introduction

Social, cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity is a characteristic of modern society that demands the education system to be more inclusive and adaptive. In the context of globalization and the acceleration of digitalization after the COVID-19 pandemic, new challenges have emerged in realizing equal access and quality of education. Education now functions not only as a means of transmitting knowledge, but also as a vehicle for character formation that respects differences and social justice. Therefore, a multicultural education approach is crucial in encouraging equal participation and eliminating various forms of discrimination, whether based on ethnicity, gender, socio-economic, or religion (Abacioglu et al., 2023).

Multicultural education emphasizes the importance of recognizing differences and diversity as sources of social strength. In practice, multicultural education encourages a paradigm transformation from a homogeneous system towards one that values cultural and social plurality. Rentzi (2024) emphasized that multicultural education is not just a discourse of tolerance, but also a critical learning strategy to build social justice in schools. By instilling the values of respect for differences, students learn to develop empathy, solidarity, and cross-cultural thinking skills. This concept is aligned with the goals of 21st century education that emphasize collaborative capabilities and global competence.

Nevertheless, educational discrimination is still a complex issue in various countries. Wenz and Hoenig (2020) show that discrimination based on ethnicity and social class still affects access to educational resources and academic opportunities. This phenomenon strengthens social inequality and gives birth to structural

injustices in the education system. In some cases, social bias is even unconsciously embedded in curriculum and teaching practices (Hendriksen, 2024). Therefore, it is important for educational institutions to adopt inclusive and multicultural principles in order to create a safe, equitable, and participatory learning space for all individuals.

Teachers play a strategic role in internalizing multicultural values in the school environment. Liu et al. (2021) highlight that teachers' beliefs about cultural diversity have a direct impact on the way they manage classrooms and organize learning activities. When teachers have a high awareness of multiculturalism, the learning process becomes more open to different backgrounds of students. Conversely, low cultural sensitivity can give rise to an exclusivity attitude that exacerbates discrimination. Thus, teacher training and professional development needs to be directed at cross-cultural competency enhancement and critical reflection on personal biases.

In addition to the role of teachers, education policies also need to be directed to build an inclusive ecosystem. According to Deroncele-Acosta and Ellis (2024), schools that implement inclusive education with a multicultural approach are able to increase the engagement and emotional well-being of students from various backgrounds. The implementation of policies that support diversity not only reduces the rate of discrimination, but also increases a positive learning climate. Education that fosters the value of justice, respect for identity, and social empathy will give birth to a generation that is more adaptive to the challenges of global pluralism.

Naz et al. (2023) also emphasized that multicultural education plays an important role in building awareness of equality and destroying social stereotypes

that are often the root of discrimination. In an increasingly complex society, education must function as a liberating force to develop human capacity to coexist peacefully and with mutual respect. Thus, multicultural education is not only a pedagogical solution, but also a social movement towards a transformation of universal justice and humanity. Multicultural education is an important foundation for the development of an inclusive, just, and civilized society. Through this approach, the educational process is no longer limited to academic achievement, but is also directed at the formation of a character that respects differences and rejects any form of discrimination. In the context of years marked by rapid social change and the integration of technology in learning, multicultural education has become an urgent need to ensure that every individual obtains equal and dignified learning rights (Ferrell, 2022).

## **2. Methods**

This study uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to in-depth analyze various research results relevant to the theme of multicultural education and educational discrimination in the last five years. The SLR method was chosen because it is able to provide a comprehensive understanding through a systematic synthesis process of secondary data that has been published, both in the form of journal articles, research reports, and other academic documents. This approach also serves to identify patterns, gaps, and directions of research development related to multicultural education topics as an effort to prevent discrimination in the context of global education.

The research process begins with the identification stage of data sources. Researchers use scientific databases such as Google Scholar, Elsevier and ResearchGate. The selected articles are limited to peer-reviewed publications with a publication time span of the last five years to ensure the relevance and novelty of the study. The main keywords used in the search process include "multicultural education", "educational discrimination", "inclusive education", "cultural diversity", and "equity in education". The initial search results resulted in a number of articles that were then selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Inclusion criteria include research that discusses the application, challenges, or impact of multicultural education on educational equity and justice, as well as studies that contain conceptual or empirical approaches to discrimination in the school or college environment. Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria include non-academic publications, popular articles, non-peer-reviewed reports, and works with a scope that is not relevant to the research focus. After the screening stage, a final selection is made for articles that meet the standards of methodological validity and content quality.

The next stage is the data extraction process. Each selected article was analyzed based on key variables, such as research context, methodological approaches, key findings, and policy recommendations. The results of the analysis are then classified into thematic categories to facilitate conceptual synthesis. In this regard, the main themes found include: (1) the role of multicultural education in building social equality; (2) structural and cultural challenges in the implementation

of inclusion; and (3) pedagogical strategies for the prevention of discrimination in schools.

The last stage is the synthesis of the results of the study which aims to formulate integrative conclusions from various previous research findings. The analysis was carried out narratively by paying attention to the fit between theory, empirical context, and developing educational policy. The results of the synthesis are expected to be able to provide a comprehensive understanding of the strategic position of multicultural education in overcoming discrimination and strengthening the values of social justice in the field of education. Thus, this research not only serves as a descriptive literature review, but also as a conceptual contribution to the development of more inclusive and humanistic education policies in the future.

### **3. Results**

The results of the literature synthesis show that multicultural education has a strategic role in building an education system that is fair, equitable, and free of discrimination. From the thirteen studies analyzed, it was found that the main issues that arise in global education today are the increasing social and cultural gaps in the learning space due to globalization, technological developments, and structural biases that have not been completely resolved. Multiculturalism in education is not just a moral policy, but also a pedagogical strategy that enables students to understand diversity as a source of social strength (Sibaweh et al., 2024).

A number of studies have shown that multicultural approaches are effective in reducing stereotypes and prejudices among learners. The study of Abacioglu et al.

(2023) in secondary schools found that multicultural-based interventions increase the engagement of students from minority groups and strengthen a sense of belonging to the school community. These findings are in line with Ferrell (2022) who emphasizes that multicultural education serves a dual function: as an academic forum for transferring the values of tolerance and as a social system that fosters solidarity. Thus, the application of multicultural education is able to create a more open, safe, and collaboration-oriented learning space across identities.

On the other hand, educational discrimination is still a latent phenomenon in many countries, especially in societies with multi-layered social structures. Research by Easterbrook and Hadden (2021) found that students from low social classes tend to receive different treatment than students from high social groups, both in access to resources and pedagogical interactions. This inequality shows that discrimination is not only explicit, but also veiled through biased learning policies or practices. In this context, multicultural education plays a role as a normative intervention that demands a paradigm shift from an assimilative approach to an inclusive paradigm that emphasizes equality of opportunity.

One of the important dimensions in the implementation of multicultural education is the role of teachers as agents of social transformation. Liu et al. (2021) found that teachers' beliefs in the importance of diversity greatly determine the effectiveness of multicultural education in schools. Teachers who have a high cross-cultural awareness tend to develop participatory and difference-sensitive teaching methods. In contrast, teachers with ethnocentric biases can unwittingly reinforce discriminatory practices in the classroom. Therefore, the professional development

of teachers needs to be directed at improving cultural literacy, self-reflection, and the ability to apply critical pedagogy that respects plurality (Akçaoglu, 2021).

It is also important to highlight that the implementation of multicultural education does not always go smoothly. Deroncele-Acosta and Ellis (2024) identified a number of barriers such as lack of institutional support, cultural resistance, and inconsistent policies between the national and local levels. In some cases, multicultural education simply stops as a slogan with no real application in the curriculum and learning practices. Luehmann et al. (2024) emphasized the need to integrate social justice theory in every aspect of education, so that multicultural values do not stop at normative discourse, but are operationalized through concrete policies.

Hendriksen (2024) expands this perspective by emphasizing the importance of teacher agency in implementing inclusive education. According to him, fair education must provide space for teachers to innovate in creating a learning environment that respects diversity. However, without adequate policy support and resources, these ideals are often difficult to realize. A similar thing was found by Naz et al. (2023), who show that the biggest challenge in multicultural education is not in its ideological aspects, but in weak institutional commitments and lack of ongoing training for educators.

In addition to internal school factors, the literature also shows that educational discrimination is closely related to social and political contexts. Janssen (2024) found that racial and gender bias often form from primary education, even before children have a complete social consciousness. This shows the importance of

multicultural-based character education from an early age. Learning that instills the values of equality, empathy, and respect for differences can foster a more tolerant and open generation. Abacioglu et al. (2023) adds that students involved in multicultural learning environments have stronger social-emotional abilities than students from homogeneous schools, especially in terms of empathy and cross-cultural communication skills.

Technological developments also affect the dynamics of multicultural education. According to Ferrell (2022), the integration of digital technology in learning can be a tool to expand access to education and strengthen intercultural interactions. However, without inclusive digital literacy, technology can actually widen the educational gap between social groups. Therefore, the implementation of multicultural education in the digital era needs to consider aspects of equal access, participation, and representation. Schools are expected to be spaces that utilize technology to reinforce the values of diversity, not just learning efficiency.

The literature review also shows a shift in the orientation of multicultural education from a descriptive approach to a transformative approach. Rentzi (2024) calls this transformative approach an effort to combine social justice theory with pedagogical practice to create structural change in educational institutions. In this context, multicultural education is no longer seen as an additional activity, but as the moral foundation of the education system. This approach requires the involvement of all elements of teachers, students, policymakers, and the community in realizing an equal education ecosystem.

In addition, a number of studies highlight a positive correlation between multicultural education and student psychological well-being. Deroncele-Acosta and Ellis (2024) found that students who study in multicultural environments exhibit lower levels of academic stress as well as higher intrinsic motivation. This is due to the increased sense of social acceptance and safety in the classroom. These findings reinforce the argument that multicultural education not only impacts academic outcomes, but also on the formation of students' emotional balance, which is an important factor in achieving long-term achievement.

Interestingly, several recent studies show that the implementation of multicultural education has the potential as a tool to mitigate social conflicts. Naz et al. (2023) concluded that schools that implement a diversity-based curriculum tend to have lower levels of conflict between students and higher social cohesion. Thus, multicultural education functions as a means of preventing conflict and discrimination from an early age. This approach also supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially the 4th (Quality Education) and 16th (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) goals.

Finally, the results of the study also indicate that multicultural education has a strategic dimension in facing post-pandemic global challenges. Wenz and Hoenig (2020) emphasized that digital and economic inequalities that emerged during the pandemic widened the gap in access to education between social groups. Therefore, the integration of multicultural values in education policy is urgent to ensure that every individual has equal learning opportunities in the post-crisis era. In other

words, multicultural education must evolve from a mere conceptual approach to a policy strategy that emphasizes resource equity and social justice.

The results of the study show that the implementation of multicultural education not only strengthens inclusivity, but also fosters sustainable social cohesion. Diversity-oriented education has been proven to reduce prejudice, increase student involvement, and expand access to participation for marginalized groups. Taking into account the complexity of the social context and technological advancements, multicultural education needs to be placed as a key pillar in the transformation of 21st-century education. This approach has the potential to give birth to a more humane, fair, and resilient education system in the face of global dynamics.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Multicultural education is a strategic approach that is able to bridge social, cultural, economic, and ethnic differences in an increasingly complex education system. Based on the results of the literature synthesis, multicultural education has been proven to be effective in preventing discrimination and increasing the participation and involvement of students from various backgrounds. Through a learning process that respects diversity, education functions not only as an academic tool, but also as a social mechanism that builds empathy, solidarity, and a sense of justice in the learning environment. In the post-pandemic global context and digital era, multicultural education also plays an important role in overcoming access inequality and developing critical and collaborative thinking skills. The

implementation of multicultural values requires the involvement of all components of education, from teachers, students, to policymakers.

Teachers play the role of the main agents of transformation that instill the value of inclusivity, while educational institutions must create policies that support diversity and equality in a sustainable manner. Thus, multicultural education is not only understood as a pedagogical approach, but also as a moral foundation for building a fair and humane education system. Its implementation efforts are expected to strengthen social cohesion, foster cross-cultural awareness, and prepare future generations who are tolerant, democratic, and globally competitive. Through education that is oriented towards justice and diversity, the future of the world of education can move towards a more inclusive, harmonious, and equitable society.

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