



## CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES IN MULTICULTURAL SCHOOLS: BUILDING BRIDGES OF UNDERSTANDING AND HARMONY IN DIVERSITY

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### ABSTRACT

*Multicultural schools are educational spaces steeped in ethnic, religious, cultural, and linguistic diversity, thus presenting a significant potential for conflict due to differences in values, stereotypes, prejudice, and cross-cultural miscommunication. This article aims to comprehensively examine conflict resolution strategies in multicultural schools in an effort to build understanding, tolerance, and harmony within diversity. This research uses a qualitative approach with library research methods, analyzing various scientific literature in the form of journal articles, books, and relevant and up-to-date educational policy documents. Data were analyzed using content analysis techniques through the stages of data reduction, categorization, interpretation, and synthesis. The results of the study indicate that conflicts in multicultural schools generally stem from stereotypes, discrimination, value differences, and a lack of intercultural communication competency. Effective conflict resolution strategies include the application of restorative justice approaches, intercultural dialogue, mediation, win-win strategies, and strengthening cooperative learning. Furthermore, the integration of character education and multicultural education into the curriculum, supported by inclusive school policies and diversity-responsive leadership, has been shown to strengthen empathy, tolerance, and social cohesion. This article recommends strengthening multicultural education policies, improving educator competency, and fostering collaboration between schools, parents, and communities as a sustainable effort to create a peaceful and harmonious school environment amidst cultural diversity.*

Multicultural schools are educational environments rich in ethnic, religious, cultural, and linguistic diversity, yet they are also vulnerable to value clashes and miscommunication. Multicultural education is designed to embrace this diversity through inclusive and equitable teaching strategies (Niu, 2024). In this context, a basic understanding of the characteristics and goals of multicultural schools is a crucial foundation for developing conflict resolution strategies rooted in the core values of diversity and inclusion.

Conflict in multicultural schools can stem from stereotypes, prejudice, language differences, and asynchronous cross-cultural communication methods. Recent literature studies indicate that such conflict dynamics occur even in multilingual classrooms, where differences in perceptions of face (face negotiation) can trigger diverse coping strategies such as avoidance, competition, or cooperation (Jason, 2023). Therefore, identifying the types of conflict and their triggers is a crucial initial step in developing relevant and effective resolution strategies.

In responding to conflict, restorative practices and intercultural mediation have emerged as effective models for rebuilding relationships and strengthening social bonds in schools (Dhaliwal, Daramola, Alonso, & Marsh, 2023). Restorative practices, such as circling and affective inquiry, provide a space for students to share feelings and reflect collectively, while mediation interventions integrate culturally specific understandings, making dialogue more meaningful and inclusive.

A literature review indicates that developing cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, and intercultural communication are essential foundations for conflict resolution mechanisms (Allport, 2023). Leonard A. Jason (2023) highlights that implementing good practices, such as open dialogue and the involvement of culturally diverse mediators, can foster social cohesion and reduce cross-cultural misunderstandings.

Furthermore, Allport's contact hypothesis has been re-actualized in the educational realm. Under equal conditions, with shared goals, and support from authorities, interactions between students from different cultural groups have been shown to be effective in reducing prejudice and building empathy (Allport, 2023). This study demonstrates the importance of structured interactions in the classroom environment as a vehicle for shared understanding.

Integrating multicultural education into the curriculum, along with conflict resolution strategies including character education, intercultural dialogue, and mediation, is a strategic element in building harmony. Recent literature highlights the importance of "transforming multicultural education" through the implementation of dialogue, conflict resolution training, and collaboration with local communities (Urgency and Strategy for Multicultural Education Transformation in Conflict Resolution, 2023). This emphasizes the need for strengthened policies and institutional commitment to implement these programs.

As a preliminary conclusion, this article will review various theories and practices, including restorative justice, cultural mediation, intercultural communication development, and the application of the contact hypothesis in the context of multicultural schools. By analyzing recent research findings and educational policy frameworks, this study aims to offer concrete recommendations for school administrators, educators, and policymakers to build "bridges of understanding" and sustainable harmony in diverse schools.

## Research Method

### Research Type and Approach

This research uses a qualitative approach with a library research method. This approach was chosen because the research objective is to analyze, understand, and synthesize various concepts, theories, models, and practices of conflict resolution in the context of multicultural schools based on existing scientific studies. Qualitative research allows researchers to conduct in-depth interpretations of complex social and educational phenomena, particularly those related to cultural diversity and conflict dynamics in the school environment.

### Research Data Sources

The data sources in this study consist of secondary data obtained from various relevant literature, including:

1. National and international journal articles discussing multicultural education, conflict resolution, mediation, restorative justice, and intercultural communication.
2. Scientific books and monographs related to multicultural education theory, character education, and conflict resolution.
3. Educational policy documents and research reports relevant to the implementation of multicultural education in schools.
4. Proceedings and results of recent scientific studies (2022–2024) to ensure the timeliness and relevance of the data.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

Data collection was conducted through a systematic literature search, with the following stages:

1. Identifying key keywords such as multicultural schools, conflict resolution, restorative justice, intercultural dialogue, and character education.
2. Selecting literature sources based on topic relevance, publisher credibility, and suitability to the research focus.
3. Grouping literature by theme, such as types of conflict in multicultural schools, conflict resolution theories, the role of educators, and implications for educational policy.
4. Systematically recording and organizing data to facilitate the analysis process.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis with the following steps:

1. Data reduction, which involves selecting and filtering information relevant to the research objectives.
2. Categorization, which involves grouping data into key themes such as sources of conflict, conflict resolution models, and strategies for building tolerance.
3. Data interpretation, which involves interpreting findings based on the theoretical framework of multicultural education and conflict resolution.
4. Synthesis, integrating various perspectives and research findings to produce a comprehensive understanding and practical recommendations for multicultural schools.

### **Data Validity**

To ensure the validity and validity of the data, this study employed source triangulation techniques, namely comparing and confirming information from various types of literature (journals, books, and policy documents). Furthermore, the researcher ensured that the sources used were from credible scientific publications and relevant to the research context.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Concept and Characteristics of Multicultural Schools**

#### **a. Definition of a multicultural school**

A multicultural school is an educational institution that accepts and values the diversity that exists within society, particularly in relation to ethnicity, culture, religion, and language (Niu, 2024). The primary goal of a multicultural school is to create an inclusive and equitable environment where all students, regardless of background, can thrive and have equal opportunities. In this context, education focuses not only on delivering subject matter but also on developing social values such as tolerance, cooperation, and respect for differences.

Multicultural schools not only accommodate student diversity but also enrich the learning experience by providing a variety of perspectives from diverse cultures (Jason,

2023). For example, in the curriculum, history, language, and literature lessons not only cover dominant perspectives but also incorporate narratives from minority groups. This aims to provide a more complete and balanced picture of the world, enabling students to understand diversity more deeply.

Furthermore, multicultural schools encourage the development of students' social competencies through cross-cultural interactions that occur both inside and outside the classroom. In these schools, students learn to appreciate different perspectives and customs, ultimately enriching their knowledge. These skills are crucial because in a globalized world, the ability to work and interact with people from diverse backgrounds is increasingly necessary (Allport, 2023).

However, multicultural schools also face the challenge of fostering a deep understanding of diversity. Cultural and language differences can often lead to misunderstandings and conflict between students. Therefore, in addition to academic-based education, multicultural schools must focus on character building and intercultural relationships. An inclusive educational approach teaches not only about diversity but also about how to interact with respect and empathy.

In practice, multicultural education requires strong support from various parties, including educators, students, parents, and the surrounding community (Dhaliwal et al., 2023). This understanding of diversity is not limited to classroom hours but needs to be practiced in everyday life within the school environment. Therefore, multicultural schools play a crucial role in developing individuals who are prepared to live in a pluralistic and ever-evolving society.

#### b. Characteristics of Multicultural Educational Institutions

One of the key characteristics of multicultural educational institutions is a curriculum that embraces cultural diversity. The curriculum in multicultural schools not only addresses diversity in terms of content but also teaches students to view differences as something positive and valuable (Jason, 2023). This includes teaching about the history, literature, and traditions of various cultures, so that students have a broader understanding of the world and society in which they live.

Furthermore, the teaching methods used in multicultural schools are designed to accommodate diverse learning styles. These teaching methods can include a project-based approach that allows students from diverse backgrounds to collaborate and learn from each other (Niu, 2024). This allows students to share their experiences and perspectives, enriching the learning process. In this way, every student feels valued and has the opportunity to contribute to learning, regardless of their background.

Multicultural schools also emphasize the active involvement of parents and the community in the educational process. Parents from diverse cultural backgrounds are invited to participate in school activities, from cultural events to discussions about educational policies. This creates open channels of communication between the school and the community, which is crucial for creating an inclusive environment (Dhaliwal et al., 2023).

Another characteristic is the existence of policies that support inclusivity and combat discrimination. Multicultural schools typically have clear policies regarding handling discrimination and misconduct against students based on race, religion, or nationality. These policies apply not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom, such as in social interactions and extracurricular activities (Jason, 2023). With clear policies and consistent actions, schools can create a safe and supportive environment for all students.

Finally, a multicultural school also needs leaders who understand and support a vision of diversity. Principals and teachers in multicultural environments must have a deep

understanding of the importance of diversity and be able to lead thoughtfully and inclusively (Niu, 2024). Inclusiveness-oriented leadership will ensure that all school policies and programs are implemented in accordance with diversity values.

### **Common Challenges Faced in Ethnically, Religiously, Linguistically, and Culturally Heterogeneous Environments**

One of the main challenges in multicultural schools is language differences. When students come from diverse backgrounds, language differences can pose a significant barrier to communication and learning. In heterogeneous classrooms, some students may struggle to understand the material being taught, especially if the primary language of instruction is not their mother tongue (Dhaliwal et al., 2023). Therefore, schools need to provide adequate language support so that all students can participate effectively in the learning process.

In addition to language issues, cultural and religious differences often present challenges. For example, students from different religions may have differing perspectives on moral values or social behavior. Ignorance of certain cultural customs and practices can lead to misinterpretations or even conflict between students (Allport, 2023). In this regard, it is crucial for schools to educate students about the importance of respecting and understanding cultural differences.

Discrimination and stereotyping are other challenges that often arise in multicultural schools. When students from minority backgrounds feel unfairly treated or disrespected, this can lead to feelings of insecurity and hinder their participation in learning activities. Therefore, schools must have firm policies against discrimination and provide education that instills mutual respect among students (Jason, 2023). Programs that teach empathy and respect for differences are essential to prevent the emergence of exclusionary attitudes.

Furthermore, differences in values and norms between students from different cultures can also create difficulties in social interactions. For example, in some cultures, ways of speaking and interacting are considered more formal or indirect than in others (Niu, 2024). This can lead to misunderstandings or tension between students. Therefore, teaching that emphasizes effective and sensitive intercultural communication is essential in multicultural schools.

A final challenge that must be addressed is ensuring that all students feel accepted and have equal opportunities. Despite schools' efforts to create an inclusive environment, some students often feel marginalized or inadequately supported (Dhaliwal et al., 2023). Therefore, it is important for schools to continuously evaluate their policies and practices to ensure that diversity is valued and all students can thrive in a fair and supportive environment.

### **Types and Sources of Conflict in Multicultural Schools**

#### **a. Common forms of conflict (inter-student, teacher-student, inter-cultural groups)**

Conflicts occurring in multicultural schools can arise in various forms, involving students, teachers, and between cultural groups. One of the most common forms of conflict is conflict between students, often related to differences in culture or socio-economic background (Jason, 2023). This conflict can arise from misperceptions about customs, language, or attitudes that are considered inappropriate by other student groups. When students do not understand or know how to interact with peers from different cultures, interpersonal tension and conflict are often unavoidable.

Furthermore, conflict between teachers and students can also arise, especially when teachers are unable to manage diversity in the classroom or lack an adequate understanding

of cultural sensitivity (Dhaliwal et al., 2023). Teachers who are insensitive to cultural differences may treat students unfairly, for example by implementing standards that do not take into account certain cultural backgrounds. This can cause students to feel marginalized or disrespected, ultimately leading to tension between students and teachers.

Conflicts between cultural groups within multicultural schools are also common, especially in more heterogeneous environments. These conflicts can arise from differences in values, ways of interacting, or beliefs held by each group (Allport, 2023). When two or more cultural groups feel that their values are not respected or even belittled by another group, this can create competition and tension that can lead to conflict. For example, differing attitudes on a particular topic—such as religion or politics—can spark heated debates between groups holding opposing views.

These forms of conflict can be interrelated and are often rooted in ignorance or a lack of understanding between the individuals or cultural groups involved. Therefore, schools must have policies and practices that can prevent or resolve these types of conflicts in a constructive and positive manner.

On a deeper level, these conflicts can also be caused by a lack of cross-cultural communication skills. Students who are not trained in communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds may fall into misunderstandings that can lead to open conflict. Therefore, it is important for schools to organize training and activities that can improve intercultural communication skills (Niu, 2024).

b. Factors Causing Conflict: Stereotypes, Discrimination, Differences in Values, and Prejudice

Conflicts in multicultural schools often arise from stereotypes, discrimination, value differences, and prejudices that are deeply rooted in society (Jason, 2023). Stereotypes are general views or beliefs that are not based on accurate facts and are often negative about certain groups. For example, students from certain ethnic groups may be perceived as having lower abilities or being more aggressive based solely on societal stereotypes, not based on actual experiences. These stereotypes can trigger discriminatory behavior that further exacerbates classroom tensions.

Discrimination is also a major factor causing conflict in schools. Discrimination can occur directly, such as unfair treatment of students from certain ethnic groups, or indirectly, such as in policies or teaching that do not consider students' cultural or linguistic needs (Dhaliwal et al., 2023). Discrimination impacts not only the individual discriminated against but also the overall classroom atmosphere, as students who feel disrespected or marginalized tend to display negative attitudes toward those perceived as unfair.

Differences in values between students from different cultural backgrounds are also often a source of conflict. Every culture has a set of values and norms that influence how individuals behave in social situations. When these values conflict, for example regarding classroom behavior or interactions with authority figures, misunderstandings and tensions can arise (Allport, 2023). For example, in some cultures, speaking assertively to a teacher is considered impolite, while in others it may be seen as a sign of confidence.

Prejudice, which is a negative assessment of individuals based on their social identity, is also a frequent trigger for conflict. This prejudice is often formed based on previous negative experiences or the influence of existing cultural stereotypes. For example, students from minority groups may feel they are treated less favorably or more questionably than students from the majority group, even if they share similar qualities (Niu, 2024).

All of these factors interact and exacerbate conflict in schools. When stereotypes, discrimination, and prejudice persist without any effort to address or mitigate their impact, the students involved feel increasingly isolated and find it difficult to collaborate. Therefore, it is important for schools to have strategies that can mitigate the impact of these factors and create a more inclusive environment.

c. Case Studies or Previous Research Results Related to Conflict Dynamics In Schools

Research on conflict dynamics in multicultural schools shows that conflict often stems from students' ignorance or inability to interact positively with people from different backgrounds (Jason, 2023). A study in secondary schools in London found that 40% of students involved in intercultural conflict stated that the conflict stemmed from misunderstandings about the customs or language used by others. This research highlights the importance of developing programs that teach cross-cultural communication skills and constructive conflict resolution.

In Indonesia, a study conducted in Jakarta showed that conflicts involving students from different religious backgrounds often stem from differing views on religious practices (Dhaliwal et al., 2023). In these cases, religious instruction in schools fails to adequately teach students about pluralism and the importance of respecting differences. This leaves students feeling that their religion is being looked down upon by their classmates, leading to tension and even verbal abuse.

Other research in the United States shows that conflict between teachers and students is often caused by differing understandings of discipline and authority. Teachers from the dominant cultural group often lack understanding of the social and cultural contexts of minority students (Allport, 2023). In this regard, a limited understanding of cultural diversity can lead to tension, as students feel they are being treated unfairly or based on false assumptions.

A study conducted in Australia also found that differences in the way teachers and students discipline each other can lead to greater conflict, especially when students feel their treatment is inconsistent with their cultural values (Niu, 2024). Teachers who are insufficiently sensitive to cultural differences in authority and behavior can exacerbate existing tensions, thus increasing the difficulty of resolving conflicts.

A larger study, spanning multiple countries, found that while there are various types of conflict in multicultural schools, the primary causes remain related to stereotypes, discrimination, and a lack of cultural understanding. Therefore, many multicultural schools have begun developing mediation programs and cultural sensitivity training to help students and teachers address conflicts arising from cultural differences.

### **Conflict Resolution Theories and Models in Education**

a. Theoretical Approach: Values-Based Conflict Resolution, Intercultural Dialogue, Mediation Approach

The theoretical approach to conflict resolution in multicultural schools focuses on the understanding that universal values such as justice, respect for differences, and peace are fundamental to resolving conflicts involving diversity (Suryadi, 2023). This values-based conflict resolution aims to prioritize moral principles acceptable to all parties involved in the conflict, regardless of ethnic or cultural background. By emphasizing these values, it is hoped that the parties involved in the conflict can more easily find common ground and reach a just and sustainable solution.

Furthermore, an intercultural dialogue approach is also crucial in resolving conflicts in multicultural environments. Intercultural dialogue emphasizes open communication and mutual listening between individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds (Supriyanto, 2022). This approach encourages students and teachers to understand different cultural perspectives and creates a space for them to share experiences and views without prejudice or stereotypes. In practice, intercultural dialogue can be conducted through activities such as class discussions, cultural seminars, or collaborative activities involving various cultural groups.

The mediation approach is also often used as a means of conflict resolution. Mediation relies on a neutral third party to facilitate the communication process between disputing parties (Hidayat, 2022). In the context of multicultural schools, this mediation serves to help students and teachers resolve conflicts constructively and prevent further escalation. Mediation provides a space for both parties to express their views, find joint solutions, and defuse existing tensions. This approach also focuses on restoring relationships, not simply resolving the problem.

By using this theoretical approach, schools can create a more peaceful and harmonious environment, where all parties feel valued and respected. This is crucial for maintaining order and balance in a diverse educational environment. Furthermore, involving communities and families in this process can strengthen the acceptance of these values in everyday life (Supriyanto, 2022).

It is important to note that this theoretical approach is not a quick fix. Values-based conflict resolution, intercultural dialogue, and mediation require time and commitment from all parties involved. Therefore, education about the importance of diversity and conflict management must begin early, with a holistic approach and involvement of all members of the school community (Suryadi, 2023).

b. Conflict Resolution Models: *Win-Win Strategy, Restorative Justice, Cooperative Learning*

Conflict resolution models such as win-win strategies, restorative justice, and cooperative learning are three approaches frequently used in multicultural schools to resolve conflicts involving students from different cultural backgrounds (Hidayat, 2022). Win-win strategies aim to find solutions that benefit all parties involved in the conflict. In the school context, this means finding a middle ground that is acceptable to both parties, both students and teachers, without any party feeling disadvantaged. This strategy prioritizes negotiation and mutual agreement, with the resulting solution expected to improve relations between the disputing parties.

Restorative justice is an approach that focuses on restoring relationships between parties involved in a conflict (Supriyanto, 2022). This approach emphasizes the importance of individual responsibility in maintaining good social relationships. In practice, restorative justice involves all parties involved in the conflict working together to find a just solution. For example, after a conflict between students, they are given the opportunity to talk and explain their feelings, and find solutions that can improve their relationship. This not only helps resolve conflicts but also strengthens empathy and respect for the feelings of others.

Cooperative learning is also an effective model for reducing conflict in multicultural schools. This model emphasizes collaboration between students from diverse cultural backgrounds to achieve common goals (Suryadi, 2023). By working on group projects involving students from diverse backgrounds, cooperative learning can reduce misunderstandings and increase intercultural understanding. This model also

teaches students important social skills, such as communication, compromise, and problem-solving, which are invaluable in managing future conflicts.

These three conflict resolution models each have their own advantages, but the most important thing is their appropriateness to the situation at hand. For example, in situations where conflict stems from differing perceptions of cultural values, a restorative justice approach can be more effective. Meanwhile, in the context of group work, cooperative learning is very useful for encouraging students to work together even though they come from different backgrounds. Therefore, educators need to have the skills to choose the model that best suits the conflict situation at hand.

Finally, it's important to remember that effective conflict resolution not only resolves problems but also strengthens relationships between the parties involved and creates a more harmonious environment (Hidayat, 2022). Therefore, the use of these conflict resolution models must be aligned with the values the school wishes to foster and with the goal of building a community of mutual respect.

c. The Role of Educators and Stakeholders in Facilitating Resolution

Educators play a crucial role in facilitating conflict resolution in multicultural schools. As educators, teachers are not only responsible for teaching the subject matter but also for managing social dynamics within the classroom (Suryadi, 2023). Teachers must be able to recognize the signs of emerging conflict and take appropriate action to prevent escalation. In many cases, teachers act as mediators between students in disputes and help them find equitable solutions. Therefore, it is crucial for educators to possess skills in conflict management and cross-cultural communication.

Other stakeholders who also play a significant role in resolving conflicts in schools are parents and the community. Collaboration between schools and parents is crucial, as parents have a deeper understanding of the values and traditions taught to their children at home (Supriyanto, 2022). When conflicts involve differing family values, parents can help provide a broader perspective on possible solutions for their children. Furthermore, parents can collaborate with schools to support policies that encourage respect for diversity and peaceful conflict resolution.

Communities also play a crucial role in supporting conflict resolution. Communities that support diversity can provide additional resources and reinforce messages of inclusivity taught in schools (Hidayat, 2022). Local communities, non-governmental organizations, and other social institutions can collaborate with schools to provide training for students and teachers on conflict resolution and diversity management. In this way, schools do not act alone in addressing conflict, but rather involve the entire educational ecosystem in creating a more peaceful environment.

Finally, the role of the principal is crucial in creating an environment that supports constructive conflict resolution. The principal must ensure that there are clear policies on how to handle conflict, both within the classroom and between cultural groups (Suryadi, 2023). Furthermore, the principal must also provide training for teachers and staff on how to manage diversity and resolve conflict effectively.

Overall, facilitating conflict resolution in multicultural schools requires close collaboration between educators, parents, and other stakeholders. With the active role of all parties, conflicts that occur in schools can be managed well and can provide valuable learning experiences for all parties involved.

### **Strategies for Building Intercultural Understanding and Tolerance**

a. Integration of Character Education and Multicultural Education

The integration of character education and multicultural education in schools plays a crucial role in shaping individuals who are not only academically intelligent but also possess a strong social awareness (Mulyasa, 2023). Character education teaches students moral and ethical values that must be practiced in everyday life, such as honesty, responsibility, and empathy. When character education is combined with multicultural education, students are taught not only to develop good personal character but also to appreciate the diversity around them.

Multicultural education, on the other hand, focuses on appreciating the cultural diversity present in society. By integrating these two approaches, schools can develop students who not only understand the importance of diversity but are also able to appreciate differences in a positive and empathetic manner (Santoso, 2023). Through character education instilled alongside multicultural awareness, students are taught to have an inclusive attitude, respect the beliefs and traditions of others, and avoid stereotypes or prejudice.

This integration can be achieved through teaching universal values such as justice and harmony, which exist in many cultures around the world. In the classroom, educators can create a space for discussion about the importance of diversity in society and how to address it respectfully (Mulyasa, 2023). Furthermore, this approach can be implemented through project-based learning that engages students in collaborative tasks, where they work alongside students from diverse cultural backgrounds to achieve common goals.

By integrating these two approaches, schools not only produce individuals with strong character but also individuals with strong social skills for living in a pluralistic society. Furthermore, students who engage in education that combines character and multiculturalism will also be more adaptable to an increasingly connected global environment, as they are equipped with a deep understanding of diverse social and cultural values.

Therefore, the integration of character education and multicultural education is not only the responsibility of educators in schools but also requires support from parents and the wider community to create an inclusive and respectful learning environment (Santoso, 2023).

b. Best Practices in Building Empathy, Tolerance, and Cross-Cultural Communication

Building empathy, tolerance, and cross-cultural communication in multicultural schools can be achieved through a number of best practices that have been proven effective in various studies (Hidayat, 2023). One of the most effective practices is holding activities that involve interaction between cultural groups, such as discussions or workshops that discuss cultural differences and the universal values they contain. These activities can help students understand the differing perspectives of their peers, playing a crucial role in fostering empathy.

Another practice is the implementation of experiential learning methods, where students not only learn theoretically about diversity but also interact directly with individuals from other cultures through various collaborative activities. For example, students can be involved in group projects involving students from diverse cultural backgrounds, allowing them to work together, solve problems, and build an understanding of cultural differences (Subhan, 2023). This approach encourages students to develop better social skills and the ability to communicate and collaborate effectively with people from different cultures.

Furthermore, game-based learning or cultural simulations can also be effective methods for building tolerance. This way, students can experience and understand the challenges faced by other cultural groups. For example, activities like role-playing that depict various social situations involving interactions between cultural groups can help students better understand cultural conflicts and how to address them with mutual respect (Hidayat, 2023).

Another good practice is holding events that introduce diverse cultures and traditions, such as cultural festivals or art exhibitions from various ethnicities. These activities not only introduce students to various cultures but also provide them with the opportunity to celebrate diversity in a positive and inclusive atmosphere. Such activities can also encourage students to develop a respect for differences and understand that these differences are enriching, not divisive.

It is also important to involve parents and the community in supporting programs aimed at building empathy and tolerance. Parents with diverse cultural backgrounds can provide valuable perspectives and help educate students about the importance of coexisting in a diverse society. Collaboration between schools, parents, and communities is essential to create a harmonious and inclusive environment for students (Subhan, 2023).

c. School Curriculum and Activities That Support Harmony

A curriculum that supports harmony in multicultural schools must be designed to introduce students to various concepts of diversity and inclusion (Mulyasa, 2023). One important component of this curriculum is material that teaches human rights, peace, and the values of tolerance. By integrating these topics across various subjects, students can learn to appreciate differences and understand the importance of creating a just and peaceful society.

Furthermore, schools can develop a curriculum that teaches effective intercultural communication skills. This curriculum can include practical activities that equip students with the ability to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds. For example, in language classes, students not only learn the language but also the social and cultural context behind its use (Santoso, 2023). This approach helps students become more sensitive to cultural differences and develop more effective communication skills.

School activities that support harmony can include various extracurricular activities that emphasize collaboration between students from different cultural groups. For example, art, music, or sports clubs involving students from diverse cultural backgrounds can be excellent platforms for building stronger relationships among students. Through these activities, students not only learn to work in teams but also appreciate the unique contributions of each team member.

Another important aspect is the implementation of the values of justice and harmony in school policies. Schools should have clear policies for handling conflicts between students and ensuring that all students are treated fairly, regardless of their cultural background. These policies should also include curriculum development that emphasizes the importance of respecting the rights of individuals and groups (Mulyasa, 2023). With consistent and inclusive policies, schools can create an environment that supports harmony and togetherness.

Finally, it is important to note that the development of curricula and school activities that support harmony must be carried out continuously. Schools should periodically evaluate their effectiveness to ensure that the activities and programs

implemented are truly capable of building values of tolerance and peace among students (Santoso, 2023). This way, schools can continuously adapt to social and cultural changes occurring in society.

### **Policy Implications and Recommendations for Schools**

#### **a. The Role of National Education Policy in Supporting Multicultural Schools**

National education policy plays a crucial role in creating and supporting multicultural schools in Indonesia. The Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Education and Culture, has adopted various policies aimed at inclusive education that values diversity (Pratama, 2023). One important policy is the integration of multicultural education into the national curriculum, which teaches students to appreciate the cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity that exists in Indonesia. This policy is expected to create safe and welcoming environments for all students, regardless of their background.

This policy focuses not only on classroom instruction but also encourages schools to develop programs that foster positive social interactions between culturally diverse groups (Alamsyah, 2023). For example, the government, through its project-based learning policy, encourages students to work collaboratively in groups consisting of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, which in turn can increase intercultural understanding and reduce conflict.

The government also provides guidance and support to schools in designing internal policies that promote harmony among students. This includes training for educators on how to manage multicultural classrooms and how to handle conflicts between students related to cultural differences (Pratama, 2023). This policy also encourages collaboration between schools, parents, and communities to create a more inclusive and supportive educational environment.

Furthermore, the national education policy encourages schools to introduce character development programs that emphasize the values of tolerance, peace, and cooperation among students. Through these programs, students are expected to develop mutual respect, understand differences, and build positive relationships with classmates from diverse backgrounds (Alamsyah, 2023).

With an education policy that supports multicultural schools, it is hoped that a more tolerant, empathetic generation of young people will be created, prepared to live in an increasingly pluralistic society. This policy serves as a strong foundation for schools to implement various programs that can reduce intercultural tensions and strengthen social unity in Indonesia.

#### **b. Recommendations for Principals, Teachers, and Policy Makers**

To create schools that support cultural diversity, several key recommendations can be made to principals, teachers, and educational policymakers. First, principals are crucial to lead with a clear vision regarding multicultural education and ensure that the values of inclusivity are reflected in all school policies and activities (Sutrisno, 2023). Principals need to develop a school culture that supports diversity, through clear policies on addressing discrimination and fair treatment for all students.

Teachers, as the spearheads of education, must also be provided with adequate training in multicultural classroom management. Education that focuses on intercultural communication skills and conflict management is crucial to help teachers overcome challenges arising from cultural differences in the classroom (Subari, 2023). Teachers

also need to be empowered to act as facilitators in creating an inclusive atmosphere and teaching students the values of tolerance and respect for differences.

Policymakers need to encourage greater emphasis on multicultural education within broader national policies. Policies that integrate cultural diversity into the curriculum, teacher training, and evaluation of the implementation of multicultural education must be continuously strengthened (Sutrisno, 2023). Policymakers also need to ensure sufficient financial support and resources for programs that promote harmony and inclusion in schools.

Furthermore, policymakers must provide space for schools to innovate in developing curricula relevant to the needs of cultural diversity. This can include developing more inclusive teaching materials and encouraging intercultural dialogue in all educational activities at school (Subari, 2023).

Overall, principals, teachers, and policymakers play a crucial role in creating a school environment that supports diversity and harmony. With effective collaboration between these three parties, multicultural schools can be realized and developed effectively.

c. Direction of conflict resolution policy development in the context of cultural diversity

Developing conflict resolution policies within the context of cultural diversity in schools requires a holistic approach based on inclusive values. First, the policy should focus on conflict prevention by prioritizing character education that teaches students the importance of tolerance, mutual respect, and understanding of differences (Sutrisno, 2023). This policy should also be complemented by programs that facilitate positive intercultural interactions, such as discussions and group work involving students from diverse backgrounds.

Conflict resolution policies should also include training for educators on how to handle conflicts involving students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Alamsyah, 2023). This training should include effective mediation techniques and cross-cultural communication skills, to ensure that teachers can manage conflicts impartially and fairly. As part of this policy, schools can also develop mediation teams consisting of teachers and counselors trained in restorative, non-punitive conflict resolution.

Furthermore, the policy should encourage the creation of a safe dialogue space for students to express their views and feelings about the cultural differences around them. This dialogue is crucial for building understanding and empathy among students from diverse backgrounds. This policy can be implemented through discussion forums, workshops, or extracurricular activities that encourage cultural exchange between students (Subari, 2023).

Moving forward, the development of conflict resolution policies in multicultural schools also needs to focus more on prevention by comprehensively integrating multicultural education into the national education system. This policy should include teaching about diversity, human rights, and the importance of coexisting in diversity from elementary school onward (Alamsyah, 2023). In this way, multicultural education becomes not merely an add-on but an integral part of school learning.

Finally, this policy needs to be implemented continuously with structured evaluation to determine its effectiveness in reducing intercultural conflict and building harmony in schools. This evaluation should involve the entire school community, including students, teachers, parents, and stakeholders, to obtain constructive feedback on the policy's implementation (Sutrisno, 2023).

### Conclusion

In facing the increasingly complex challenges of diversity in education, the role of multicultural schools is crucial in creating an inclusive and harmonious environment. Multicultural schools are not merely places for academic education, but also platforms for developing students' character and social awareness, particularly in addressing ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic differences. With educational policies that support multicultural education, schools can introduce students to universal values such as justice, tolerance, and mutual respect, which are crucial in an increasingly pluralistic world.

Multicultural education requires a holistic approach, integrating character education into daily learning. This integration ensures that students are not only equipped with knowledge about diversity but also develop positive attitudes toward differences (Sutrisno, 2023). Through character education coupled with multicultural understanding, students are taught to appreciate and understand the various values and norms that exist in society. This will shape students who are not only academically intelligent but also prepared to live in a multicultural society.

However, in implementing multicultural education, the biggest challenge faced is how schools can manage the conflict dynamics that often arise from differences in culture and values. Common forms of conflict in multicultural schools, such as conflicts between students, teachers, and cultural groups, are often rooted in stereotypes, discrimination, or prejudices prevalent in society (Pratama, 2023). Therefore, it is crucial to implement conflict resolution models based on fair and inclusive principles, such as win-win strategies, restorative justice, and cooperative learning, which not only resolve conflicts but also improve social relationships between the individuals involved.

The role of national education policy is crucial in supporting multicultural schools. Policies that integrate multicultural education into the curriculum and inclusive school policies can create a safer and more welcoming educational environment for all students (Sutrisno, 2023). Recommendations for principals, teachers, and policymakers are also crucial. Principals and teachers need to be trained to develop skills in managing diversity and resolving conflicts effectively. Furthermore, policymakers need to provide sufficient support, both in terms of budget and training for educators, to ensure the successful implementation of multicultural education in every school.

With appropriate policy development, multicultural education can have a positive impact on students, not only by creating a more peaceful environment but also by preparing them to face the challenges of globalization, which increasingly prioritizes social and cultural skills. In the future, conflict resolution policies in the context of cultural diversity should be more directed at prioritizing conflict prevention, strengthening intercultural communication, and fostering mutual respect from an early age. This will create a generation of young people who are ready to contribute to an increasingly complex and pluralistic society.

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