

## Format of multicultural education for early children age in the formation of tolerance character

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### ABSTRAK

This article describes the application of early childhood multicultural education to create a tolerant character in the globalization era. Multicultural education must provide contextual and tolerant moral ideals in very diverse societies such as Indonesia. The research method used is the library research method. This research is a type of descriptive-qualitative research. Data collection techniques are carried out by reviewing documents, archives, national and international reputable journals, and books related to the topics discussed. The results obtained are that multicultural-based education has an important role in fostering tolerant and tolerant attitudes and working with different faiths or religions. Multicultural education to children from an early age should enable the growth of brotherhood and tolerance in togetherness from an early age to build a new generation of civilization that is more meaningful to all humankind. Multicultural education is an effort to instill the value of tolerance to children at an early age, especially to stimulate the child to be ready to accept the existence of others and have a tolerant attitude toward the pluralist.



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## INTRODUCTION

Education is the process by which the nation prepares its young generation to live its life. Education is the process of sowing the seeds of cultural and human life that live and lived by the values or visions that developed and developed in a society. This is education as a cultural process (Tilaar, 1999). This means that education functions to develop the ability and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation to educate the nation's life. It aims to develop the potential of learners to become human beings who believe and is cautious of God Almighty, morality, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become citizens. Citizens are tolerant, democratic, and responsible.

Ideally, the world of education, especially religious education, becomes a powerful and effective solution to reduce various acts of violence based on religion. Education is considered to

have a noble and grand role in the history of human life (Budyono & Santosa, 2018). Education is also understood as an effective means of providing various life provisions for learners and educating individuals in society, state and nation (Saavedra, 2020). This means in interreligious relations, especially the values of peace, tolerance, inclusion, and harmony can be instilled in the nation's youth through education. This means education becomes the "commander" in shaping the nation's civilization, shaping the country's character, and forming a tolerant person.

Getting an education is the right of every child. A nation will not flourish and advance if its inhabitants have not had a good education, and proper education is done as early as possible. Experts say that failure to plant character in a child from an early age will trigger the formation of a troubled person later in life. In addition, instilling morale and tolerance in the younger generation is a strategic undertaking. Early age is a critical period for determining one's character, and the 0-6 year age range is the golden age of every child.

It is known that Indonesian society is diverse in various aspects, requiring tolerance to maintain unity. Although no doubt that the emergence of conflicts in various regions is due to these differences. It is a sign of the importance of teaching the attitude of tolerance to children from an early age. Thus, the child can introduce the concept of tolerance from an early age, around the age of four. Before reaching that age, it does not mean that the child will not completely absorb the various instances or know the values of that tolerance. From the age of one year, the child's subconscious can absorb examples made by parents and people around him ("Menanamkan Sikap Toleransi Pada Anak," 2008).

In children, this age is a period of the golden age, the golden age aged 0-6 years. At this time, the child's brain can grow 80%. At this time, children are also easy to be formed. Therefore the child needs to be guided in a way that is good and appropriate for his age so that later he becomes a superior child in religion and intellectuals. The cultivation of pluralist children's characters through multicultural education as early as possible is the key to building a tolerant nation. Due to racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity, it is necessary to have an education that must provide a contextual picture of the moral ideals of its religion. So in the process of education is needed a review of religious doctrines is rigid and less humanist during this implementation. The plurality of religions and cultures is no longer understood as a potential riot but a potential to be invited to carry out the teachings for the sake of humanity (Danoebroto, 2012; Fitri, 2015).

At this time, parents and teachers are expected to provide good character education for early childhood, instilling moral values, and so forth. Thus, the education of this character is very important to be formed in early childhood because this is the age when children absorb and receive information quickly. Because what is given to the child will be absorbed properly and applied in his life. Thus, if character education is not given to children, it will clearly be seen a difference between children who are given character education well and those who are not at all.

And also, the choice of the child to the environment is very influential on his behavior. If he is in an environment that supports growth, he will pass the stages of development well. Supported by a positive stimulus given by the people around him, but on the contrary, if there is no support from the people around him who do not provide a positive stimulus for growth, he will become a character that is not able to compete with the world they will be, and he will be a person who is not able to interact with his colleagues well later.

One of the issues that are becoming a hot issue in Indonesian society today is intolerance. This country is very vulnerable to cases of intolerance derived from differences in religion, ethnicity, and culture because Indonesian people are diverse. Therefore, the attitude of tolerance should be instilled in children as early as possible. Teaching faster tolerance will be better for the development of the souls of children from an early age. When children start hanging out with their friends, the nature of childhood will come up. If not taught to tolerate, conflict with a playmate because of the difference will likely occur.

Many factors can affect the development of the soul of child tolerance. These factors include the lack of parental example, the busyness of the parents because of work, the busyness of various jobs, including parent's separation for some reason the lack of parental role in providing an example for their children (Soraya, 2013). Changes in society that is busy living life reduce the community to

attend to the family itself. The child is reduced and replaced by a babysitter, so it can be sure other family's attention, if friends and acquaintances, is much reduced.

From the previous explanation, it becomes interesting for researchers to conduct a more in-depth review and find answers to how multicultural-based education for children from an early age can affect the character of child tolerance. The purpose of this study is to understand and explain how providing a multicultural education based on children from an early age can affect the character of children who are tolerant of others.

## METHOD

The research method used by the author is the library research method, namely data collection techniques by conducting study studies of books, literature, notes, or reports that have to do with the problem being solved. Library research examines documents, archives, journals, and books related to the topics discussed. This research is also descriptive-qualitative. Namely, that does not use statistical tests in the data processing. Two kinds of data sources are used in this study, namely primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are books or journals that are directly related to this research, and secondary sources are books that support research, namely those related to the format of multicultural education for early childhood age as support for analyzing the formation of tolerance character.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Nature of Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education is a series of systematic and programmatic efforts in conducting guidance addressed to children from birth to 6 years old through the provision of educational stimuli to assist physical and spiritual growth and development for the child to have the readiness to enter further education. According to [Gutama \(2013\)](#), early childhood education is like the golden age or golden age that determines its future and the critical period in the child's life. For that time, it is appropriate to lay the foundations of the development of physical ability, religion, language, social-emotional, self-concept, art, and ethics based on moral values so that all its potential grows and develops maximally.

According to [Suryabrata \(2006\)](#), Aristotle has described that the growth and development of children are divided into two phases. The first phase, from children aged 0-7 years, is called childhood into play. The second phase, children aged 7-14 years, called childhood, is known for low learning. In comparison, [Daradjat \(1994\)](#) argued that children aged 3-4 years are in a period of dissent or a crisis. In infancy (0-2 years), Piaget, as quoted by [Desmita \(2015\)](#), calls this stage of motor sensory while the early childhood (2-7 years) is the preoperative stage, and the final children (7-12 years) concrete operations, and after that is the formal stage of operations.

In terms of education, precisely the phase of first phase and the second phase is open opportunities for non-compliance, as well as a foundation to enforce compliance. At that time, the child is open to a chance to accept the real willingness and has inner awareness. This is where it takes a touch of child education from an early age to foster motivation towards educational goals.

Similarly, in the National Education Act of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003, article 1, it is mentioned that early childhood is from birth to the age of six. At this age, a group of people who are in the process of growth and development is unique. They have a pattern of physical growth and development, intelligence (intellect, creativity, emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence), emotional (attitude, behavioral and religious), language, and communication specific to the level of growth and development that the child is going through ([Syamsuddin et al., 2015](#)).

The strategic role of early childhood education is that education should first contain the development of self-potential and creativity of children. If, as early as possible, the child has been noticed, then it will be easy to direct the ability and talents possessed, the formation of character and personality, psychological and emotional. Broadly speaking, aspects of growth and development in children can be grouped into four, namely: intellectual development (physical development), social-

emotional development (social-emotional development), and the development of the child's ability to communicate to express his wish (language development) (Kurniasih, 2009).

Thus, early childhood in terms of growth and development can be categorized into several stages, among others; (from birth to 12 months), toddler period (toddlers, 1-3 years of age), preschool (age 3-6 years), and early childhood education (age 6-8 years). During early childhood education, several aspects of child development and growth should be considered, including biological aspects, emotional aspects, aspects of intelligence (IQ), and aspects of childhood personality.

#### *Biological Aspects*

Rakhmat (2013) argued the process of human physical development occurs periodically, consisting of the period of growth, the period of achievement of maturity, the baby's age, and the period of aging. The period of growth is that in this period, the child's growth is very fast, especially in the first years. This period begins from birth to late adulthood (0-30 years). At the age of thirties, individuals are considered to have full physical and intellectual maturity. Physical growth, a child born in a state of weakness, powerless, needs to get help from adults around him because his body has not grown to perfection. Similarly, the steadiness and perfection of innate potential development, both physical and spiritual, requires maintenance and practice. The physical will be healthy if given nutritious food, and skills will be owned if trained.

#### *Emotional Aspects*

According to Tafsir (2004), emotion is an affective color that accompanies every individual circumstance or behavior, that is, certain feelings experienced when facing a particular situation, such as joy, despair, sadness, shock, hate, love, and so forth. Every individual has a naturally growing and developing emotion that starts from birth and growing until it reaches the maturity of the child. This is due to the age and maturity of each individual. Although the emotion is there, its emergence is caused by the stimulant. For example, children are crying because of hunger or thirst (Baraja, 2005). These emotions will evolve according to the individual's affective mood or development.

#### *Aspects of Intelligence (IQ)*

According to Bloom, the intellectual development of children occurs very rapidly in the early years of life, where about 50% of adult intelligence variability occurs when a child is aged four years. The subsequent increase occurred at the age of 8 years, and the remaining 20% in the middle or end of the second decade (Syamsuddin et al., 2015). While Djazifah (2007) suggests the role of educators is to build as many brain cells as possible, the more the connection, the thicker the myelin, and the more intelligent the child. Therefore, children need to be given special stimulation, that is, by providing a diverse experience that can strengthen the development of children's intelligence.

Thus, the more positive stimuli in the child's brain, the greater the chances of success in being intelligent, becoming a true learner, and becoming emotionally healthy. Therefore, parents, teachers, and the community (environment) are required to do the best they can to build children's brain cell nerve connections so that their children can think high and broad.

#### *Aspects of Childhood Personality*

The character or nature of an organized person in the individual as a behavioral system in conformity with his environment is a portrait of the personality. So, personality is a dynamic movement within a person, which is sometimes influenced by the environment, and adaptation to the environment. Personality Adaptations are related to character, temperament, attitude, emotional stability, responsibility, and social.

Thus the personality is formed by the temperament and the character it has. Mubarok (2010) states that temperament is a style of reaction to various stimuli derived from the environment and within yourself. The development of personality patterns is influenced by three factors, namely, innate, early experience of the family, and experience in the next life. Initial experience is the basis of personality. Next, children with an initial positive interaction experience will certainly form a positive personality and be praiseworthy.

## Multicultural Based Education Since Early Childhood in the Era of Globalization

Modernization and globalization can influence people's attitudes in both positive and negative forms. Among them are open-minded acceptance, more dynamic, unshackled by old-fashioned things, and developing an anticipatory and selective attitude in judging things that will or are happening. In addition, according to Arifin, cited by [Suradi \(2017\)](#), modernity can cause the community will be more closed, and anxiety (apathy), people who have been comfortable with the living conditions of the existing community become indifferent, and ordinary people who lack understanding strategic modernization and globalization, are less selective in dealing with the changes of modernization, and by accepting every form of new things without any selection/filter.

The changes that occur today as the impact of scientific and technological advances and the influx of globalization have a multidimensional effect. So it takes learning with multicultural approaches and models with a global perspective to meet the demands of students, society, and employment needs in the era of globalization. Thus, the world of education in the global era should understand global issues and issues such as cultural diversity, economic, social, conflict and peace, interdependence in the world, human rights issues, and environmental issues.

For that Banks argues, as quoted by [Budiyo and Santosa \(2018\)](#), that multicultural education has five dimensions that are related to each other, namely: 1.) Content integration; integrating different cultures and groups to illustrate basic concepts, generalizations, and theories in lessons/disciplines; 2.) The knowledge construction process brings learners to understand a lesson's cultural implications; 3.) An equity pedagogy; adjust learning methods by way of learning learners. This is done to facilitate students' academic achievement in various ways, ranging from race, culture, and social; 4.) Prejudice reduction; identify the characteristics of the race and determine the learning method of the learner; and 5.) Train learners to participate in sports activities and interact with all different ethnic and racial staff and learners to create an academic culture.

Thus, multicultural education can bring education capable of creating an educated and educated society, not a society that shuns social and cultural realities. Therefore, although multicultural education in Indonesia is relatively newly known as an approach considered more suitable for heterogeneous Indonesian society, especially during the new autonomy and decentralization period.

Introducing and teaching children at an early age about multiculturalism is necessary because, in everyday life, children will interact directly with people of different religions or have different standpoints and beliefs. Suppose it has been imprinted on the child's soul early on about diversity while understanding that there is another religion in addition to the religion that is believed. In that case, the child will not be affected or doubt the understanding of religion. Moreover, religion is considered part of the human personality that is indispensable in human life. Humans universally want to devote themselves to God, loving and being loved by God, who is regarded as a substance with supreme power.

Multicultural education of children from an early age is essential to train and build children's character to be democratic, humanist, and pluralist in their environment. In other words, through multicultural education, learners are expected to understand easily, master, have good competence, behave and apply democratic values, humanism and pluralism both at school and outside school. Therefore, the ultimate goal of multicultural education is to use the principles of justice, democracy, and at the same time, humanism. Education in a democratic world like Indonesia should be oriented to the interests of multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual, and so on. This means that the organization of education should consider the condition of a heterogeneous nation ([Budiyo & Santosa, 2018](#)).

An appropriate education system for early childhood is humanistic and positions learners as personal. A community member who needs to be helped and encouraged to have effective habits, a blend of desire, knowledge, and humanism ([Zuchdi, 2009](#)). Because the early age period proved to be a very decisive development of the potential ability of children, it is fitting that character education starts from the family environment, the early environment of child growth ([Samani & Hariyanto, 2012](#)). The active role of parents as role models will significantly influence the formation of the child's character. Early provisions in the form of characters obtained by children in the family



environment are believed to affect the child when it enters preschool and school. This means that a combination of insertion of character values will be built with learning materials. Such material can explicitly be associated with the context of everyday life. So learning the values is not only on the cognitive level but also on the internalization and real experience in children's daily life.

#### Establishment of Tolerance in Children at Early Age through Multicultural Education

The meaning of the word tolerance is an open attitude and respect for difference. However, tolerance is more often based on differences in ethnicity and religion. Tolerance also means respecting and learning from others, respecting differences, bridging cultural gaps, and rejecting unjust stereotypes to attain common attitudes (["Menanamkan Sikap Toleransi Pada Anak," 2008](#)).

Tolerance an attitude of mutual respect for groups or individuals in society or in other environments. If so, then tolerance is an attitude of tolerance and respect that allows others to have something different, on aspects of religion, culture, ethnicities, opinions, and so on that are different from himself. This attitude in the educational context must be established in the learning materials, the process of education, and learning.

Some of the tolerances that must be upheld are religious tolerance and social tolerance. Religious tolerance, this form of tolerance involves belief or *aqidah*. Loyalty and religious beliefs give birth to dogmas whose trueness is inviolable. Even if it is against the ratio or logic, people often assume that whatever comes in the religion is absolute and that truth must be communicated to others so that the person does not go astray. The forms of religious tolerance are: (1) knowing the religion, (2) knowing the rituals and religious holidays, and (3) Respecting the religion of others is manifested by the word of social tolerance, also called community tolerance.

Regarding social tolerance, in a diverse society of race, tradition, tolerance, and religion, tolerance enforces coexistence and cooperation within certain limits. This is done without sacrificing beliefs and worship that have been arranged and determined in detail and clear. Tolerance plays an important role in children's social interaction with their environment. Tolerance is defined as a child's ability to accept or adapt to conditions or with different individuals, regardless of differences ([Ibung, 2009](#)).

This is where the important role of the parent role in instilling the value of tolerance to her child early, especially stimulating the child so that he is ready to accept the existence of others. Simultaneously, it also instills a tolerant character towards others who are different from themselves. Many parents who live in diverse communities and have friends who have differences of origin, gender, religion, and so on are known. Teaching children tolerance from an early age should start with the attitude of parents who respect the differences well, by being themselves, without a false attitude. In particular, children in the future are faced with an age of globalization that requires them to deal with people of different backgrounds. Thus, understanding diversity is essential to the future of children.

According to Borba, cited by [Soraya \(2013\)](#), the forms of tolerance according to 1.) Tolerant children tend to show tolerance to others regardless of differences; 2.) Showing respect for adults and authority figures; 3.) Being open to knowing people of various different backgrounds and beliefs; 4.) Voicing feelings of displeasure and concern for someone being insulted; 5.) Extending a hand to another weak child, not allowing fraud; 6.) Refraining from commenting that would hurt the group or child; 7.) Focus on positive characters that exist in others despite their differences; and 8.) Refrain from judging others.

Building the character of child tolerance early on is very important for parents and teachers. I hope that children early on have good character. Building children's character can be done through formal education, non-formal or informal. The increasing attention of parents and the government towards early childhood education, on the one hand, is a very exciting thing. However, on the other hand, parents and educators often still have a less precise and narrow view of implementing personal formation in early childhood, which is limited to academic activities such as reading, writing, counting, and sharpening creativity ([Waluyo, 2010](#)).

Building character toward a child from an early age should make a child accustomed to behaving well so that he becomes accustomed and will feel guilty if he does not. For example, a child

who used to eat three meals a day would feel uneasy if eating only twice a day. Thus, good habits that have become instincts will automatically make a child feel less comfortable if not making good habits.

Efforts made by teachers and parents to build the character of early childhood according to [Waluyo \(2010\)](#) are: 1.) Treat the child according to the child's characteristics; 2.) Meet the basic needs of children, among others, the need for affection, providing nutritious food; 3.) Teacher education patterns with parents who are implemented at home and school are interrelated; 4.) Provide support and appreciation when the child displays commendable behavior; 5.) Provide environmental facilities appropriate to the age of development; and 6.) Be firm, consistent, and responsible.

In the stage of the educational process through which the human child, the character education itself can be planted early on, i.e., from 0-6 years old. The values of character education that can be implanted in early childhood include four aspects: spiritual aspect, personal/personality aspect, social aspect, and environmental aspect. It is more interesting for young children whose age is preoperational to observe closely, directly, and concretely ([Yati, 2016](#)).

The urgency of beginning character education early on is also confirmed by [Muslich \(2011\)](#) that qualified characters to need to be established and nurtured from an early age. Early age is a critical period (critical period) for the formation of a person's character. Failure to plant a good personality at an early age will form a problematic person in his later adulthood. So parents' success in guiding their children determines their children's success in their social life forward ([Muslich, 2011](#)). A positive personality can be manifested by showing good actions/behavior. This personality is then defined as a quality of a person's behavior that has become characteristic or characteristic or unique in all individual activities, and that nature is sedentary.

In the context of education, one is expected to realize a society with an attitude of tolerance, namely, awakening respect and allowing people to have different beliefs and religions; second, awakening an attitude of respect for others to stand up and dissent. Measurable indicators, according to [Sanaky \(2013\)](#), are 1.) The tolerance to respect the choice and the way of experimenting with others in performing their worship according to their religion and belief; 2.) Awakening awareness in understanding, acknowledging, and respecting the diversity of religions and beliefs that others believe; and 3.) building and developing a united attitude in diversity, differences in togetherness, and so forth.

With that, it is necessary for the attitude of parents who show tolerance every day because it will greatly influence the child so that children will appreciate the difference in the environment. According to [Laely and Aerin \(2019\)](#), there are four ways to teach tolerance to children since children at an early age namely; First, introducing diversity can begin by giving an understanding that there are diverse ethnicities, religions, and cultures, and introducing diversity as early as possible can nurture the child's sense of tolerance. Second, teach not to hate the difference. The hatred created by the difference will make the heart sad and hurt the hearts of others. Try to invite the child to suppose that the person hates them; thus, the child will be more empathetic towards the other person.

Third, give an example, do not just tell him through words, but also give a real example. If you meet someone using a religious symbol that is quite extreme or someone who has a different skin color, do not look at it with strangeness, let alone say something hateful and obscene. Remember that parents are an example for a child. Be normal, and give a wise explanation if your child asks. Fourth, tell the child that tolerance is needed. If there is no tolerance, many people will be hostile and hate each other. Tolerance and intolerance can be learned. If parents are afraid of differences, children will follow. The teaching of tolerance is the responsibility of the parents, and it needs to be taken seriously.

Thus, here the author gives educators some form in introducing children to tolerance from an early age through the context of multicultural education, among others: 1.) Addressing the attitude of respect for others. Living in an environment allows meeting with neighbors with diverse cultures, religions, and customs. Mixing and always respecting each other will set an example of good tolerance in children; 2.) Give examples of teaching tolerance by giving examples in their own way. Talking about tolerance and appreciation helps children understand what value you want to cultivate in them; 3.) Be careful in speaking. Children always listen to our words, so be careful when discussing the habits of people different from ourselves. Although only a joke, this will be absorbed

in the child's mind and can affect his attitude; 4.) Carefully choose toys, books, and music. Remember the immense media influence in shaping the child's behavior. Focus your conversation with your child about unfair stereotypes and may be exposed to media such as movies and books; 5.) Say honestly. Questions that show different religious and cultural habits should be answered honestly and reflect the attitude of respect; and 6.) Look for diverse communities. Give children a chance to play and move with other people who are different from themselves. For example, when choosing school, vacation, or child care, look for a place where the population varies.

Suppose the educator or parent teaches the child tolerance early, how to respect others, and demonstrates the behavioral model of treating others wisely. In that case, the child will nurture the same attitude as it progresses. The concept of multicultural education of children from an early age can embody a tolerant attitude and recognize the high appreciation of human dignity by building attitude and caring behavior, upholding human values, recognizing equality, equality of rights, equality of human obligations, and tolerance. Thus, realizing attitudes and behaviors that recognize equality, acknowledging the equality of degrees from the perspective of ethnicity, race, gender, and class, recognizing the equality of rights, equality of obligations as servants of God, community members in the association, and interacting with culturally diverse, ethnic communities, ethnicity, and religion, both local and global.

## CONCLUSION

Multicultural-based education developed in children from an early age is essential for training and characterizing children to be tolerant, humanistic, and pluralist in their environment. In other words, through multicultural education, learners are expected to understand easily, master, have good competence and attitude, and apply the values of tolerance, humanism, and pluralism in the family and the community. Therefore, multicultural education is to apply the principles of justice, tolerance, and humanism simultaneously. Multicultural education is an effort to instill the value of tolerance to children early, especially to stimulate the child to be ready to accept the existence of others and have a tolerant attitude. Simultaneously, it also instills a tolerant character towards others who are different from themselves. It is known that many parents who live in diverse environments have friends who have differences of origin, culture, religion, and so on. Teaching children's tolerance from an early age should start with the attitude of educators or parents who respect those differences well, by being themselves, without a false attitude. In particular, children in the future are faced with an age of globalization that requires them to deal with people of different backgrounds. Thus, understanding diversity is important for children's future, and they can behave tolerantly.

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