Integration of Multicultural Values in the Development of Islamic Religious Education Curriculum

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

ABSTRACT

Multiculturalism is an unavoidable social reality in human life. The diversity of religion, ethnicity, language, and culture is an inevitable reality that should serve as a source of strength rather than conflict. However, the lack of multicultural awareness often leads to social tensions. In this context, education plays a strategic role in instilling human values, tolerance, and respect for differences through an inclusive and multicultural-oriented curriculum, including in Islamic Religious Education (PAI). This study aims to analyze multicultural values, identify strategies for developing a multicultural-based curriculum, and examine the challenges and solutions in its implementation. The method used is a qualitative approach with a library research design, focusing on the exploration and analysis of various written sources such as books, scientific journals, articles, and relevant online materials. The results of the study indicate that the application of values such as tolerance, unity, mutual cooperation, and solidarity plays an important role in shaping inclusive student character. The strategies used include adjusting the educational philosophy toward a more humanistic approach, integrating cultural values into learning materials, implementing collaborative learning, and using comprehensive evaluation methods. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, the multicultural approach is effective in fostering religious moderation and tolerance, although it still faces obstacles such as limited resources and insufficient teacher training. Therefore, collaboration among the government, educational institutions, and society is needed to strengthen the implementation of multicultural curricula in schools.

1. INTRODUCTION

Multiculturalism is an inevitable social reality in human life. Every individual is born, grows, and develops in a different social and cultural environment, both in terms of religion, ethnicity, language, customs, and outlook on life (Saleh & Murtafiah, 2022). This diversity is actually part of God's will who created humans with various tribes and nations so that they can get to know each other. Throughout history, however, cultural differences have often been a source of conflict and division. Many events show that differences in race, ethnicity, or religion have led to social discrimination and conflict (Sapendi, 2015).This phenomenon illustrates that multicultural consciousness has not been fully internalized in human life. In fact, if managed wisely, diversity can be a great force that prospers civilization. In this context, education plays a very vital role. Education is not only a tool to convey knowledge, but also a forum for character building, instilling human values, and developing tolerance for diversity. Through education, students are taught to recognize, understand, and appreciate diversity as part of a harmonious social life.

One of the important elements in realizing education that is oriented to multicultural values is the curriculum. The curriculum acts as a guideline in the entire learning process as well as the main instrument in shaping the character and personality of students. According to Rahmi & Tang, (2024) The main function of the curriculum is to direct all educational activities and influence student

learning outcomes. Therefore, the development curriculum must be carefully designed, based on strong principles, and easily adapted to various social and cultural contexts. The ideal curriculum not only presents academic material, but also contains social, moral, and spiritual values that are relevant to the life of a pluralistic society.In the face of diverse social realities, the curriculum needs to be structured in an inclusive manner. Banks and McGee Banks, as quoted by (Sibaweh et al., 2024), emphasized that the inclusive curriculum must consider various cultural perspectives so that there is no marginalization of minority groups. A curriculum that accommodates cultural diversity is able to increase the sense of belonging and learning motivation of students from various backgrounds. Thus, the learning process not only fosters academic competence, but also fosters empathy, solidarity, and a spirit of togetherness.

The existence of a multicultural climate is important because it can bridge differences that have the potential to cause social inequality in the world of education. This kind of curriculum plays a role in creating a learning atmosphere that respects differences and prevents students from social prejudice. Multicultural education benefits not only minority groups, but also all students because it trains them to think critically, empathize, and interact civilly in a pluralistic society.According to Tentiasih & Rizal Rifa'I (2022), Multicultural education focuses on the formation of social tolerance as a core value in common life. Tolerance is not only respecting differences, but also rejecting all forms of discrimination against other groups. Through a multicultural approach, education is expected to be able to be a solution to various social problems that arise due to differences in culture, religion, and social status. Students not only understand human values, but are also able to actualize them in real life.

In line with this, Islamic teachings also contain multicultural values that from the beginning emphasized the importance of living in harmony and peace in the midst of diversity. The principles of justice (*al-'adl*), equality (*musāwah*), and compassion (*rahmah*) are universal values of Islam that are in line with the goals of multicultural education. Islam views diversity as *sunatullah*, which is the decree of Allah SWT which shows His greatness and wisdom in creating humans with different backgrounds. Differences are not a source of division, but a means to get to know each other and strengthen human relations.These values are historically reflected through the Charter of Medina, which is a clear example of the application of a multicultural society in the history of Islam. Through this charter, the Prophet PBUH upheld the principles of justice, equal rights, and freedom of religion for all residents of Medina, both Muslims and non-Muslims. The spirit of the Medina Charter can be used as an inspiration in the development of a multicultural curriculum in Indonesia, namely building an education system that respects differences but is still based on the values of justice and brotherhood (Mursalin et al., 2024).

Multicultural education is not solely a tool for teaching, but also a process of character formation and social personality that upholds diversity. A curriculum that combines multicultural values has a crucial role in creating an inclusive, harmonious, and equitable learning atmosphere. Universal values in Islam such as justice (*al-'adl*), equality (*musāwah*), and compassion (*rahmah*) can be the moral foundation for the development of a curriculum that respects cultural and religious plurality.The development of a curriculum based on multicultural values is not only an academic demand, but also a moral and social need of the nation. In the face of the dynamics of globalization that often gives rise to cultural identities and differences, education based on multicultural values is a solution and strategy to strengthen unity while fostering a tolerant friendship character. A curriculum that instills the values of tolerance, justice, equality, and respect for differences is expected to produce a generation with noble character, open-mindedness, and ready to play an active role in building a harmonious and civilized plural society.

2. METHODS

This research applies a qualitative approach with the type of library research. This approach was chosen because it is able to explore a deep understanding of the phenomenon of multicultural values in the context of curriculum development through descriptive, contextual, and non-numerical data. According to (Sari et al., 2023) Literature research is a method that focuses on searching, collecting, and analyzing various written sources, such as scientific journals, articles, research report books, and official documents that are in line with the theme of multiculturalism and curriculum development.
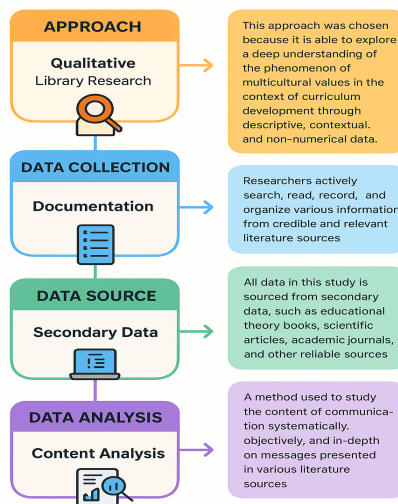

Figure 1. Stages of research methods

The data collection technique used is documentation, where researchers actively search, read, record, and organize various information from credible and relevant literature sources. In this study, the researcher functions as the main instrument (*human instrument*) that is directly involved in the process of searching and studying the content of each library source studied. All data in this study is sourced from secondary data, such as educational theory books, scientific articles, academic journals, and other reliable sources that discuss multicultural values and their application in the curriculum system.The data analysis technique used is *content analysis*, which is a method used to study the content of communication systematically, objectively, and in-depth on messages presented in various literature sources. Berelson and Kerlinger cited (Rukminingsih et al., 2020), content analysis allows researchers to identify key themes, classify information, and comprehensively interpret the meanings contained in the text. Through this approach and method, researchers can find patterns of conception of how multicultural values can be effectively integrated in the development of the educational curriculum in Indonesia.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Multicultural Values

Etymologically, the term *multiculturalism* comes from the word *multi* which means many, and *cultural* which means culture. This term denotes a condition of society that has a diversity of ethnicities, cultures, languages, customs, and value systems. Terminologically, *multicultural* is defined as the attitude of accepting and treating all people fairly regardless of cultural, ethnic, gender, language, or religious differences (Albina et al., 2024). Thus, multiculturalism is oriented towards the creation of a harmonious, just, and peaceful life in the midst of existing differences. According to Hilda Hernandez quoted by (Ubadah, 2022), Multiculturalism is a perspective that recognizes the social, political, and economic realities faced by individuals in culturally diverse societies. Multiculturalism not only views differences as something that must be accepted, but also as wealth

that needs to be cared for and managed. Thus, this concept encourages mutual respect, appreciation, and cooperation among community groups with different backgrounds. In this context, multiculturalism is an important foundation for the creation of social integration and peace between groups. The teachings of Islam itself provide a strong basis for the growth of multiculturalism values. In the Qur'an, Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13 it is explained that Allah SWT created human beings of nations and tribes to know each other. This verse shows the recognition of man as part of the Divine will. From this verse there are several basic multicultural values, namely: (1) Democracy, which is the principle of justice and equality in various areas of life, including cultural, social, and political. (2) Tolerance is an attitude of mutual respect and respect between fellow humans. (3) Pluralism, which is the recognition and acceptance of diversity without eliminating the cultural identity or beliefs that each individual has (Mochtar & Rasyid, 2022).

These values are the basis for the realization of a peaceful, just, and harmonious society. In the social context, multicultural values serve as a guideline in building respectful and supportive relationships between heterogeneous members of society. *Nilai* (value) or *qimah* in Arabic, is basically something that is considered important, valuable, and useful in human life (Ubadah, 2022). These values are not only related to morals, but also reflect one's view of the world and others around them. Therefore, the application of multicultural values is very important to form the character of an open, just, and humane society. The importance of multiculturalism values is also recognized globally. UNESCO cited (Ubadah, 2022) Since 1994 it has emphasized the importance of education and social policies that foster multicultural awareness. The recommendations affirm that the world community needs to: (a) develop the ability to recognize and accept differences, (b) strengthen solidarity between individuals and groups, and (c) promote peaceful conflict resolution. This shows that multiculturalism is not just a cultural concept, but also a social strategy to create world peace.

Rahmi & Tang, (2024) stated that there are several main values in multiculturalism that must be developed in social life, namely: (1) The value of mutual respect, which is the awareness to recognize the rights and dignity of every individual regardless of cultural, religious, linguistic, or ethnic background. Respect means accepting diversity as a satisfying reality of social life.(2) The value of tolerance is the ability to respect differences and build a peaceful life together, despite different views or beliefs.(3)The value of unity, which is the importance of maintaining togetherness in differences to strengthen the identity and integrity of the nation. In the Indonesian context, this value is closely related to the spirit of friendship and the motto *of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*.(4) The value of mutual cooperation is the spirit of cooperation and solidarity in facing various social challenges. This value reflects the local wisdom of the Indonesian people who prioritize togetherness and concern for others. (5) The value of inter-ethnic solidarity, namely mutual trust and support between ethnic groups as a form of awareness that diversity is the strength of the nation, not a source of division.

Through the application of these values, multiculturalism becomes a means to build a more just, peaceful, and civilized social life. Multicultural values play a role not only in building social harmony, but also in strengthening national identity and solidarity between citizens. In the pluralistic Indonesian context, multiculturalism has a strategic meaning as a foundation of friendship to maintain unity in the midst of cultural, linguistic, and religious differences.Thus, the values of multiculturalism not only teach the importance of respecting differences, but also foster an awareness of shared responsibility in maintaining social harmony. Values such as tolerance, unity, mutual cooperation, and solidarity between ethnicities need to continue to be instilled in every aspect of life so that people are able to coexist peacefully and complement each other. Multiculturalism is ultimately a reflection of the moral and spiritual maturity of a society that upholds the values of humanity, justice, and peace.

3.2. Multicultural-Based Curriculum Development Strategy

Understanding and respecting cultural diversity is an important aspect in the formation of an inclusive national character. Rahmadi quoted (Sibaweh et al., 2024) Explaining that understanding and appreciating cultural diversity and values in a multicultural society is an important element in the development of the educational curriculum. The application of multicultural values in the curriculum is a strategic step to create an inclusive, fair, and relevant education system for all students. Through such integration, learning not only teaches cognitive knowledge, but also instills human values that value difference and social justice. The application of multicultural values in the curriculum means an effort to adjust and integrate values from various cultures and ethnicities into the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating learning in the school environment.

Furthermore, Hamid Hasan quoted by (Suniti, 2014) explained that the development of a multicultural-based curriculum must be carried out through several strategic steps. Here's the explanation:

a. There is a need for a change in philosophy from uniform to more flexible and adjusted to the function and goals at each level of education. At the basic education level, for example, curriculum paradigms that are still conservatively oriented such as essentialism and perennialism need to be directed towards more progressive curriculum philosophies, such as humanism, progressivism, and social reconstruction. This approach focuses on education as a process of developing students' human potential, both as individuals and as part of the global community.

b. Theory about curriculum content**.** The curriculum should not only focus on presenting facts, theories, and generalizations, but should also include contextual morals, values, procedures, processes, and life skills. This makes the curriculum more meaningful and in line with the socio-cultural reality of students.

c. The learning theory used must consider the cultural, social, economic, and political diversity of students. This means that the curriculum should not only rely on individualistic and value-neutral theories of learning psychology, but need to be based on a learning theory that views students as social, cultural, and political creatures who actively interact with their environment.

d. The learning process needs to be adapted to the social reality of the community. Individualistic and competitive learning must be replaced with a collaborative and cooperative approach, so that students are used to working together in diversity. Through a positive group learning process, each student can develop their potential while learning to appreciate the differences in their friends' backgrounds, cultures, social, and economies.

e. The evaluation of learning in a multicultural curriculum must be comprehensive and cover all aspects of students' abilities and personalities. The evaluation tools used need to be diverse according to the character of the learning objectives, for example through *classroom-based assessments* which include portfolios, observation notes, interviews, projects, and performance assessments (*performance tests*). In this way, assessment focuses not only on the academic aspect, but also on the formation of social attitudes and skills.

In addition, the multicultural curriculum development strategy must also be aligned with the goals of national education. (A. Wahyudi & Elhefni, 2017) explained that several strategic steps need to be taken to realize multicultural-based national education, namely: (a) Curriculum development, namely curriculum updates so that the emphasis on learning focuses on essential, contextual materials, and has an evaluation system that suits the needs of students. (b)Improving the quality of professionals in the field of education. This is done by improving pre-service and in-office education programs for teachers, so that they can effectively implement multicultural values in the classroom. (c) Development of an education management system, by strengthening the role of schools and educational institutions as centers for the cultivation and development of social values based on

Pancasila. (d) Strengthening the education system with implementation focused on multicultural community service and civil society development. (e)Equalizing the views of the community, where parents, community leaders, and formal leaders need to have the same understanding of the importance of support for the implementation of the functions and goals of national education that respects diversity.

In a more specific context, the application of a multicultural curriculum also needs to be realized in the field of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Banks quoted by (Jumarni et al., 2025) proposes four important dimensions that can be used in the development of a multicultural PAI curriculum, namely: (1) Content integration, which is the unification of various cultural and group diversity in learning materials to enrich students' understanding of Islamic concepts and values in the context of universal humanity (Karadona & Sari, 2025). (2) The process of knowledge construction, which encourages learners to understand how culture can influence religious views and practices in various social contexts. (3) Equity pedagogy, which is a learning approach that adapts teaching methods to the diversity of students, so that all students, regardless of social, economic, or cultural differences, can achieve optimal academic achievement (Rahma et al., 2024). (4)Prejudice reduction, which is an effort to reduce social and religious prejudice through learning activities that foster tolerance, empathy, and mutual respect between religious communities.

Through the development of this multicultural PAI curriculum, it is hoped that students will not only understand the teachings of Islam literally, but also be able to internalize the universal values of Islam that are in line with the spirit of multiculturalism, such as justice, compassion, brotherhood, and tolerance. Thus, Islamic religious education can function as a character formation medium that is inclusive, open, and oriented towards social peace.Overall, the development of a multicultural-based curriculum, both in the general context and in the field of PAI, is an important strategy to form a more humanist and contextual education system with the reality of a pluralistic Indonesian society. This curriculum not only prepares students to be intellectually intelligent, but also to have social awareness, empathy, and the ability to coexist peacefully. By incorporating the values of humanity, justice, and togetherness into every component of education, the multicultural curriculum can become an important pillar in building a civilized, democratic, and socially just nation in line with the spirit of Pancasila and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika.

3.3. Challenges and Solutions in the Implementation of Multicultural-Based Curriculum

Cultural, religious, ethnic, and racial diversity is a social reality that cannot be separated from human life in the modern era. This diversity is a wealth that nourishes the identity and civilization of a nation, but on the other hand it also presents complex challenges. According to Albina (2020), differences in religion, ethnicity, race, skin color, and social background often cause conflicts, both in the form of potential social tension, discrimination, and violence. Almost all over the world, conflicts stemming from identity differences are still common, ultimately threatening the harmony and social cohesion of society.It is in this context that multicultural education becomes very important. Education is not only a tool to transfer knowledge, but also a forum for character formation that is able to foster mutual understanding and respect for differences. Through a multicultural-based curriculum, participants are directed to have a critical awareness of diversity and be able to coexist peacefully in a pluralistic society. However, although the goal of multicultural education is ideal, namely to instill the values of understanding, tolerance, and inclusion, its implementation in the field still faces significant obstacles. According to Dovidio & Kawakami cited (Sibaweh et al., 2024) There are several challenges in implementing a multicultural-based curriculum, namely: (1) Lack of adequate resources. Textbooks, learning materials, and teacher training relevant to the multicultural approach are still very limited. An effective curriculum should feature diverse cultural, linguistic, and social experiences, so that students are able to comprehensively understand the reality of diversity. Unfortunately, these limited resources make it difficult for many schools to implement

multicultural values in a concrete way. (2)There is resistance or rejection from some parties to the application of a multicultural approach. Some people consider multicultural education as a threat to certain cultural identities or religious values. In fact, the main goal of multicultural education is not to standardize, but rather to respect and enrich the identity of each individual within the framework of inclusive friendship. Therefore, sensitive and participatory communication is the key so that multicultural education can be accepted by all levels of society. (3) Lack of understanding and awareness of the importance of multicultural education. Many students, teachers, and parents do not understand that multicultural education not only adds insight, but also strengthens social solidarity and prevents intercultural conflicts. (4) Climate risks that are too narrow also need to be anticipated. A multicultural approach that only highlights surface aspects such as traditional clothing, culinary, or art, without delving into cultural values, history, and contributions, can cause students' understanding to become superficial and stereotypical. (5) Evaluation of learning in the context of multicultural education. Traditional assessment approaches that focus on cognitive aspects are often insufficient to assess the extent to which students understand multicultural values such as tolerance, empathy, and social skills.

These challenges are increasingly evident in the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Candra et al. Quoted J. Wahyudi, (2024) noted that many PAI teachers have realized the importance of a multicultural approach, but its application in the field is still influenced by various factors. The main obstacle lies in the lack of training and resources that support the implementation of multicultural values into the PAI curriculum. Teacher training still focuses on the normative aspects of religion without providing in-depth insights into the importance of cultural and religious diversity. As a result, teachers often feel less prepared to apply multicultural values to the learning process. Resource constraints also exacerbate the situation. PAI teachers often face difficulties in obtaining appropriate teaching materials, including textbooks and learning media that reflect the reality of social diversity. In addition, some teachers still have a narrow understanding of the concept of multiculturalism, and it is not uncommon for them to still maintain stereotypical views of other cultures or religions. This can certainly hinder the formation of an inclusive and tolerant learning atmosphere (J. Wahyudi, 2024).In order to face these challenges, synergistic cooperation is needed between the government, educational institutions, teachers, and the community. (Sibaweh et al., 2024) emphasized that the success of multicultural education cannot be achieved without cross-sectoral cooperation. The government needs to provide adequate training and resources for teachers, while educational institutions need to strengthen curricula and training programs that emphasize the importance of multicultural values.

For PAI teachers, capacity building through training, seminars, and thematic discussion forums is an important step to expand understanding of diversity (Karadona et al., 2022). Collaboration between teachers also needs to be improved, both within one school and between schools, so that they can share experiences and effective multicultural learning strategies (J. Wahyudi, 2024).In addition to challenges, there are many opportunities that can be used to strengthen educational multiculturalism in schools. One of the main opportunities is through cross-cultural activities that involve students from various backgrounds to interact and work together. This activity can be in the form of social projects, cultural exchanges, or extracurricular activities that foster a spirit of togetherness in diversity. Through such activities, students learn to appreciate differences and develop tolerant attitudes towards different cultures and beliefs (Aisyah et al., 2024).

Figure 2. Result

In the context of Islamic education, Tsuroya is quoted as Aisyah et al., (2024) emphasized that multicultural education based on Islamic boarding schools also has a great opportunity in fostering a more open and tolerant student character. Pesantren that instill the values of moderation, mutual cooperation, and solidarity across social backgrounds can be a model for the implementation of multicultural education in the religious environment (Arqam et al., 2025). Islamic boarding school activities that involve local and cross-ethnic cultural elements are able to strengthen relationships between students and reduce the potential for social conflicts in the educational environment.

In addition, according to Sobron and Bayu quoted Aisyah et al., (2024) explained that the use of technology and innovative learning methods is also a great opportunity. Through the use of digital technology, teachers can access global learning resources that introduce diverse cultures, languages, and traditions. Online *and* blended *learning* allow students to gain a broader, more in-depth, and contextual learning experience about diversity.Furthermore, a multicultural narrative-based learning approach can be applied to overcome the emergence of exclusive and intolerant narratives in public spaces. By displaying inspiring stories about diversity, students are invited to understand that differences are not a threat, but a power that enriches a shared life. Thus, multicultural education serves as a strategic means to counter narrow views that can trigger social tensions and create a more open society and live in harmony in the midst of diversity.Therefore, the implementation of multicultural-based policies requires cooperation and joint commitment from all relevant parties. Teachers must act as agents of change who instill the value of tolerance and respect differences in every learning process. Through integrated efforts, the education system is expected to produce a generation that is not only intellectually superior, but also wise in facing diversity and able to live in harmony in a pluralistic society.In the broader philosophical sense, multicultural values embody the ethical vision of humanity that emphasizes the dignity of every individual regardless of their background. These values are rooted in the universal moral principle that all human beings are equal before God and possess the same fundamental rights to be respected and treated with justice. This understanding aligns with the Islamic concept of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy to all creation), which promotes compassion, equality, and harmony among people. Hence, multiculturalism can be seen as a moral manifestation of Islamic teachings that encourage the acknowledgment and appreciation of diversity as part of divine wisdom.

Moreover, multicultural values play a critical role in shaping national identity in plural societies like Indonesia. The cultural diversity that exists within the Indonesian archipelago spanning languages, ethnicities, and traditions demands an inclusive value system that unites rather than divides. The spirit of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) serves as a living reflection of multiculturalism, emphasizing that unity can only be achieved when diversity is accepted and celebrated. By integrating multicultural values into various aspects of public life education, policy-making, and interfaith relations Indonesia can strengthen its social cohesion and national resilience in the face of global challenges such as radicalism, intolerance, and discrimination.In the context of education, the internalization of multicultural values becomes a transformative effort to build inclusive character and global citizenship. Education that is infused with multicultural perspectives not only prepares students to coexist peacefully in a diverse society but also encourages them to become active participants in promoting social justice and equality. Teachers serve as facilitators who help students reflect on social realities, question stereotypes, and build empathy toward others. This process helps learners move beyond mere cognitive understanding to the affective and behavioral levels, where tolerance and respect become personal commitments rather than abstract ideals.

Furthermore, in the era of globalization and digital connectivity, the importance of multicultural values becomes even more urgent. Exposure to global information and cross-cultural interactions demands critical awareness and open-mindedness to prevent the spread of prejudice,

misinformation, and cultural bias. Therefore, strengthening multicultural values is not only a matter of moral education but also a necessity for maintaining peace and mutual understanding in the digital society. Multicultural mindset enables individuals to interpret diversity constructively, encouraging dialogue instead of division, and collaboration instead of conflict.In essence, the cultivation of multicultural values is a long-term investment for social harmony and national stability. It requires continuous efforts through education, public discourse, and policy initiatives that affirm equality, justice, and humanity. When these values are truly internalized, they will form the ethical foundation for building a peaceful, democratic, and civilized nation. Multiculturalism thus becomes not merely a theoretical concept but a living practice that upholds the shared dignity of humanity, aligning with the moral ideals of both religious teachings and universal human values.

4. C ONCLUSION

Multicultural values are the main foundation in building an education system that is able to foster mutual respect in the midst of diversity. Values such as tolerance, unity, justice and mutual cooperation are the basis for forming the character of students who are inclusive and have social personalities. The multicultural-based curriculum development strategy emphasizes the importance of integrating these values into every aspect of learning, both in planning, process, and evaluation, so that education can reflect the reality of a pluralistic Indonesian society. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, a multicultural approach encourages students to understand the teachings of Islam universally, by prioritizing the values of moderation, compassion, and brotherhood between people. However, its implementation is still faced with various challenges such as limited resources, lack of teacher training, and social resistance to changing perspectives. Therefore, synergy is needed between the government, educational institutions, and the community to optimize the implementation of the multicultural curriculum in order to form a generation that is intelligent, empathetic, and able to coexist peacefully in the midst of differences.

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