INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SOCIETY, CULTURE & LANGUAGE

The Influence of Multicultural Education in the Preservation of Local Culture: A Case Study in Elementary Schools in Aceh

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Abstract This study was conducted to examine the integration of multicultural education within Acehnese culture, highlighting its implementation, challenges, and solutions as applied in elementary school learning materials in Aceh. A qualitative approach was used to gain a deeper understanding of the integration of multicultural education in the region. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with key informants. The findings reveal several challenges faced by school principals, including limited teacher training, a rigid multicultural education framework, a lack of parental awareness or engagement, and inconsistent education policies. To address these challenges, it is necessary to develop a more flexible and inclusive curriculum and to encourage collaboration among teachers, parents, and the wider community. Additionally, it is important to strengthen institutional support and educational policies that promote multicultural values in schools, fostering cultural pride and community tolerance. Enhancing multicultural education will help students preserve their cultural heritage while also developing the competence needed to thrive in a diverse society.

Keywords: *Multicultural education, Curriculum, Acehnese culture, Social culture, Aceh*

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Received: March 2025
Revised: May 2025
Accepted: May 2025
Published: June 2025

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1. Introduction

Multicultural education is an approach that increases understanding and awareness of the cultural diversity of society (Kumagai & Lypson, 2009). Cultural diversity is not only an integral part of a nation's identity but also a valuable asset that must be preserved (Saputra, 2024). Indonesia's rich cultural heritage, encompassing its various ethnicities, religions, races, and customs, reflects its social and cultural wealth, which should be taught and passed down to future generations (Setyono & Widodo, 2019). In this context, multicultural education serves as a crucial tool to ensure that individuals understand, appreciate, and protect this diversity. Aceh Province, known for its rich culture and history, holds great potential for preserving local traditions through multicultural education (Schröter, 2010). The province's diverse customs, arts, languages, and traditions form a

https://doi.org/10.22034/ijscl.2025.2053929.3930

cultural heritage that must be safeguarded, particularly in primary education. Primary education plays a vital role in shaping students' character, personality, and cultural awareness (Wahyuni et al., 2020). Introducing multicultural education at the primary school level can significantly contribute to preserving local cultures while fostering mutual respect among different cultural groups. This approach ensures that students not only embrace their own heritage but also develop an appreciation for the broad cultural diversity within society.

Nevertheless, considering Aceh's strong cultural traditions, there are a number of obstacles to the younger generation's retention of local customs, especially in primary education (Samad, 2015). A significant obstacle is educators' lack of comprehension of regional cultural diversity. Many Acehnese educators lack the necessary tools or skills to successfully include multicultural ideals in their lessons (Razali et al., 2024). The theoretical foundation of multicultural education taught in educational institutions and its actual implementation in classrooms are therefore at odds. Cultural learning is restricted and less successful when it lacks a solid basis in local cultural diversity. According to Yoon and Lubienski (2017), some communities and parents believe that an educational system that emphasizes the national curriculum marginalizes their local culture. Thus, students' cultural identification is weakened, and their understanding of their own heritage may decrease as a result of the lack of integration between national and local curricula (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008).

In many cases, education in Aceh remains centered on general knowledge, sidelining local values that could help students connect with their cultural roots. Despite their hard work, many Acehnese educators lack access to training programs or specific resources on local culture that would enable them to effectively teach intercultural education (Sabrina & Sansrisna, 2017). This research examines how local culture-based multicultural education affects younger generations' (specifically Aceh's elementary students) preservation of their culture despite all the difficulties. To be specific, this study intend to:

1. Know how local culture-based multicultural education is applied in elementary schools in Aceh.
2. Identify how local culture in Aceh is integrated into the curriculum and learning process at the primary school level.
3. Analyze the main challenges faced in the implementation of local culture-based multicultural education in Aceh.
4. Develop solutions to overcome challenges in the implementation of local culture-based multicultural education in Aceh.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Multicultural Education and Challenges, its Relevance in Aceh

In terms of culture, customs, education, and language, Aceh is a province rich in cultural diversity. This cultural resource is important to be preserved for future generations (Ismail et al., 2016). A multicultural system in schools in Aceh can help students better understand and appreciate local identity and emphasize the value of preserving cultural history (Abdullah et al., 2024; Shah & Lopes Cardozo, 2014). The introduction of multicultural education is hindered by opposition from the community and parents, who feel that the educational system is ignoring their local culture (Abdullah et al., 2024). Multicultural education seeks to manage societal diversity by embracing and appreciating differences across cultures, races, ethnicities, beliefs, and other social groupings (Banks, 2014). By focusing on both cognitive learning and the formation of social values that encourage respect for diverse cultures, this idea seeks to improve the knowledge of diversity through inclusive education. According to Banks (2014), all students, regardless of their backgrounds, should be empowered through intercultural education. From a young age, multicultural education acts as a bridge to inculcate high cultural values in children (Mariyono, 2024a).

Wibowo (2020) highlights a tension within multicultural education between promoting a strong national culture and preserving local cultural values. In some cases, the emphasis on national identity and culture within the education system tends to overshadow or marginalize local traditions and heritage. The concept of multicultural education is one of the concepts that introduces culture and its heritage (Mariyono, 2024b). According to Parkhouse et al. (2019), increasing knowledge and tolerance can be

applied by developing and teaching multicultural education to students since elementary school education is the foundation of intercultural tolerance. Lewthwaite (2007) claims that there are concerns regarding local culture that will clash with the implementation of the applicable national education curriculum. The implementation of multicultural education is very important in preserving regional traditions and culture and increasing local knowledge that represents the cultural diversity of the region (Sari et al., 2024). Research by Sakti et al. (2024) suggests that introducing multicultural education into primary schools might improve students' understanding of variety in society and boost their sense of local cultural identity. Similarly, Gay (2013) showed that teaching pupils about local cultural values greatly improves their comprehension of social variety.

According to Purnamasari (2019), teachers are crucial instructional agents when it comes to integrating multicultural ideals into the classroom, but there is a gap between multicultural education theory and its actual implementation because many instructors lack the necessary training to teach local cultures. It is found that most educators continue to use a teaching methodology that prioritizes the national curriculum over regional cultural components, which means that students are less exposed to their own cultural history, weakening their ties to regional customs and values (Ikhwan, 2024; Schröter, 2010)

In many cases, the national curriculum largely ignores the culture and traditions of the local area. The lack of community concern for the integration of the concept has also resulted in the neglect of multicultural education in the community, despite the fact that the locals are very aware of it. The distance between children and their cultural identities makes multicultural education even more important in these places. Therefore, the effectiveness, support, and implementation of multicultural education in schools are needed as a basis for introducing elementary school students to maintain culture and tolerance, fostering inclusivity in global education.

2.2. Integration of National and Local Curriculum

The successful implementation of culture-based multicultural education depends on integrating intercultural tolerance, grounded in local cultural values (Anugrah et al., 2024). The balance between the curriculum and regional culture may have a positive impact on the application of teaching materials. Schools can make learning more relevant to students' daily lives. Mariyono (2024b) shows that the integration of national and local education programs affects the effectiveness of intercultural education. When the curriculum provides enough time to study local cultures in areas such as history, art, and language, students' perspectives on diversity can be broadened while strengthenin regional identity (Jamilah et al., 2024). However, bringing regional culture into schools is not without obstacles. One of the main obstacles is the rigidity of the national curriculum, which prioritizes broad academic courses and scientific understanding while usually leaving little room for cultural studies (Baijnath & Butcher, 2023).

Although regional cultures are formally taught through local content subjects, many schools are under-funded or underdeveloped or regard these subjects as secondary priorities. Furthermore, educational policies and teacher-education programs may not always meet the requirements of intercultural education (Papadopoulou et al., 2022). The absence of teaching materials relevant to multicultural education and local culture and educators who lack mastery of the multicultural education system has allowed the concept of cultural understanding to be graded at the lowest level in the education plan. Without media, teaching materials, facilities, and the right learning aids, multicultural education may struggle to create practical and engaging courses while leveraging local expertise. To address this issue, collaboration between local communities, educators, and policymakers is essential to develop a culturally inclusive education approach (Roiha & Sommier, 2021). Educational institutions are strongly advised to strengthen cooperation with local cultural actors, historians, and cultural specialists in addition to developing contextual learning tools.

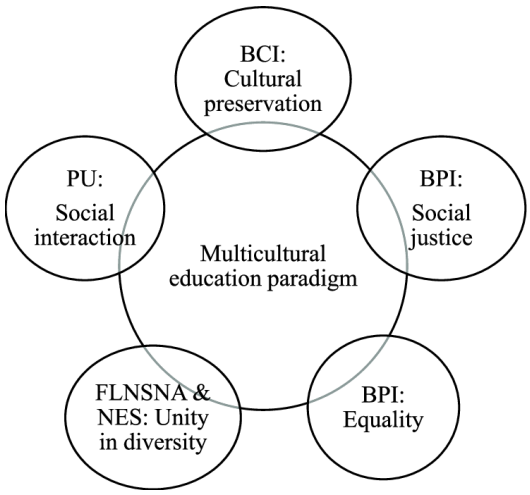
2.3. The Role of Resources in Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is an important part of the education system in Indonesia that must be studied and developed as a local cultural body (Sakti et al., 2024). The inadequate human resources in the multicultural field are an obstacle to accurately understanding the significant local cultural context.

According to Yulianto (2020), the provision of textbooks as a learning medium in accordance with culture improves teachers' ability to teach the concept of multicultural education (Oberste-Berghaus, 2024). On the other hand, some instructors may have limited experience or understanding of cultural diversity and the concepts behind multicultural education (Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Sulfemi, 2019). Azhari and Albina (2024) added that inadequate funding for cultural education leads to less-than-ideal implementation, especially in elementary schools.

Aceh Province, as a special region in Indonesia, needs enhanced multicultural teaching in its elementary schools. This can be achieved through special interventions such as enriching local cultural content and integrating it within a multicultural curriculum framework (Fransisca, 2023). Practical statistics are needed for locally based intercultural education that contributes to cultural preservation (Zamroni et al., 2024). The existence of all the needs for the development of multicultural education can play a big role in the successful implementation of the culture-based curriculum in Aceh.

Figure 1
Multicultural Education Paradigm in Indonesia (Jayadi et al., 2022)



The multicultural education paradigm (Figure 1) is a framework that emphasizes inclusivity, diversity, and social equity within education. It consists of five interconnected components. Cultural preservation (BCI) highlights the importance of maintaining and valuing cultural heritage, encouraging students to appreciate and sustain their traditions. Social interaction (PU) focuses on fostering positive relationships among individuals from different cultural backgrounds, promoting mutual respect and understanding. Unity in diversity (FLNSNA & NES) emphasizes that while cultural, linguistic, and ethnic differences exist, they should be embraced as a source of strength rather than division. Social justice (BPI) advocates for fairness and equal treatment of all cultural groups, addressing discrimination and marginalization in educational settings. Lastly, equality (BPI) ensures that every student has access to educational resources and opportunities regardless of their background. Together, these principles form a foundation for an education system that nurtures inclusivity, promotes harmony, and prepares students to thrive in diverse societies. The interconnection between cultural pluralism, diversity, and uniqueness is represented through language and identity, serving as significant markers of historical, sociocultural, and political heritage embedded within communities.

Based on this background, this study aims to explore how multicultural education is integrated within the unique cultural context of Aceh, particularly in elementary schools. By examining the experiences of school principals, this research seeks to identify the challenges and opportunities in implementing multicultural education that respects both national and local cultural values. The study also aims to provide recommendations for developing a more flexible, culturally responsive curriculum and fostering stronger collaboration among schools, families, and communities. Ultimately, the goal is to support students in appreciating their cultural heritage while equipping them with the skills to thrive in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world.

3. Methodology

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of revealing the influence of multicultural education in the preservation of local culture in elementary schools in Aceh, especially in the Aceh Besar region. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for digging deeper into the understanding and experience of school principals in implementing multicultural education and how it affects the preservation of local culture at the primary school level. The design of this study focuses on elementary schools in Aceh Besar that have the characteristics of a rich, multicultural society. The researchers conducted an in-depth exploration of how school principals manage multicultural education based on the preservation of local culture.

3.1. Participants

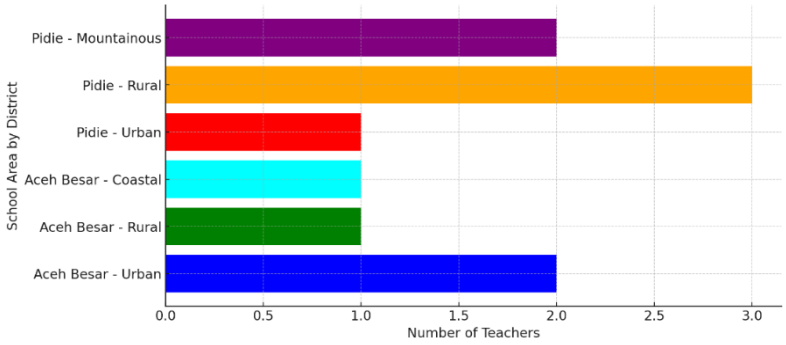
The sample of this study consisted of 10 school principals (from Aceh Besar and Pidie Regency) who were selected through purposive sampling based on certain criteria, namely, schools that have programs or initiatives related to multicultural education and local cultural preservation (Table 1). The selected respondents had at least 16 years of classroom experience, which offers valuable perspectives from seasoned educators working in many sociocultural and geographic situations and serves as the foundation for the investigation of multicultural education integration in primary schools.

Table 1
Distributions of Respondents

No	Initials Name	Age	Gender	Teaching Experience (Years)	Educational Background	Subject Taught	School Location	School Area
1	A.R.	35	M	16	Bachelor in Education	Social Studies	Indrapuri	Urban
2	M.S.	40	F	19	Bachelor in PGSD	Civics	Kota Jantho	Urban
3	N.F.	42	F	18	Bachelor in Education	History	Seulimeum	Rural
4	R.D.	50	M	25	Master in Education	Arts & Culture	Lhoknga	Coastal
5	S.H.	45	F	20	Bachelor in Education	Islamic Studies	Krueng Barona Jaya	Urban
6	F.A.	38	M	18	Bachelor in PGSD	Social Studies	Sigli	Urban
7	Y.Z.	44	F	22	Bachelor in Education	Indonesian Language	Geumpang	Rural
8	B.T.	42	M	18	Master in Education	Local Content	Tangse	Mountainous
9	K.M.	39	F	20	Bachelor in Education	Civics	Glumpang Baro	Rural
10	J.L.	33	M	18	Bachelor in Education	Islamic Studies	Keumala	Rural

Table 1 presents data on 10 principals, highlighting their demographics, educational backgrounds, subjects taught, and school locations. The school principals' ages ranged from 33 to 50 years, with an equal gender distribution of five males and five females. Their teaching experience varied between 16 to 25 years, indicating a highly experienced group. Regarding educational qualifications, six principles held a Bachelor's in Education, two had a Bachelor's in PGSD, and two had a Master's in Education, suggesting that most principles had a strong foundation in education, with some pursuing advanced degrees.

Figure 2
Distribution and District School Area



The distribution pattern (Figure 2) highlights that rural areas in Pidie receive more teachers compared to other locations, while urban schools in Aceh Besar also have a notable number of educators. In contrast, the lower number of teachers in coastal and mountainous areas may reflect challenges in teacher placement, possibly due to accessibility or lower student populations. This distribution provides insights into the ways that regional culture is preserved in many geographic contexts and illuminates the variety of educational settings in which educators implement intercultural education.

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1. Semi-Structured Interviews

The primary instrument used for data collection in this study was semi-structured interviews conducted exclusively with school principals. This method allowed for in-depth and flexible conversations to explore their perspectives on the implementation, challenges, and solutions related to multicultural education in Aceh. The interview consisted of open-ended questions that were designed to capture detailed insights about how multicultural education is integrated into the curriculum and school environment.

1. How does the school manage multicultural education based on local culture?
2. How is local culture integrated into the learning process?
3. What are the main challenges in the implementation of multicultural education based on local culture?

3.2.2. School Documents

In addition to interviews, school documents were analyzed to gain a deeper understanding of how multicultural education is formally implemented across different schools. These documents included teaching schedules, subject descriptions, and curriculum outlines, which provided information on the subjects taught by school principals, such as Social Studies, Civics, History, Arts and Culture, Islamic Studies, and Local Content.

3.3. Procedure

3.3.1. Data Collection

This study employed two primary data collection techniques: semi-structured interviews and document analysis. These methods were chosen to allow for both consistency in core questions and flexibility in follow-up queries, enabling researchers to explore participants' perspectives on the integration of multicultural education within the local cultural context. The interviews focused on topics such as curriculum implementation, challenges in multicultural teaching, and strategies for preserving local culture through education. In addition to interviews, document analysis was conducted to supplement and validate the interview data. The documents reviewed included school regulations, curriculum plans, lesson schedules, and records of local cultural programs and initiatives. These documents were collected

from each participating school and were used to understand how multicultural and local cultural content was formally integrated into teaching materials and school policies.

3.3.2. Data Analysis

For the data analysis, all interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and then analyzed using thematic analysis. The researchers read through each transcript multiple times to become familiar with the data, coded the transcripts line by line, and grouped the codes into broader themes that reflected common patterns across participants. Themes were developed inductively and focused on the application of multicultural education, perceived challenges, policy and curriculum support, and the role of schools in cultural preservation.

Document data were also coded thematically, with attention paid to how often local cultural elements appeared in the curriculum, the types of local traditions emphasized, and the consistency of these elements across different schools. The findings from the document analysis were triangulated with interview data to enhance the reliability and validity of the study. This comprehensive approach allowed the researchers to identify key themes related to the integration of multicultural education and its impact on preserving Aceh's local cultural heritage.

4. Results

4.1. Implementation of Multicultural Education Management

How Does the School Manage Multicultural Education Based on Local Culture?

We found numerous tactics employed by Acehnese schools to oversee multicultural education in compliance with regional norms. All things considered, the curriculum and extracurricular activities employ several important techniques to assist students in recognizing, understanding, and appreciating Acehnese culture. History and Civics are just a few of the subjects taught at Acehnese schools, which include local culture. The results examined multiple dimensions of participant responses regarding the implementation of a multicultural education-based curriculum. Table 2 includes the major themes.

Table 2
Major Themes for the Implementation of Multicultural Education

Theme	Description
Integration in Curriculum	Embedding local history, customs, nationality, civic, and values into subjects
Cultural Skill Development	Promoting cultural understanding through extracurriculars like traditional dance.
Contextual Learning	Teaching local culture in ways that relate to students' daily lives.
Local Content Emphasis	Specific lessons and subjects are designated to focus on regional heritage.

These responses specifically addressed how Acehnese history, customs, and cultural values are integrated into the basic education systems of Pidie and Aceh Besar regencies. A.R., as a respondent, claimed that the school is committed to helping students understand Acehnese culture in a way that is more relevant to their daily lives.

> *Aceh's history, customs, and cultural values are integrated into History, Indonesian, and Civic Education to be studied by students. Practical skills in traditional dance are part of the students' activities to promote local culture and help students understand and appreciate their cultural heritage.*

This concept allows students to learn and gain appreciation for the learning activities obtained in extracurricular activities, as well as in the learning materials. By integrating local culture into the classroom, learning critical academic concepts also gains a greater appreciation for their backgrounds. The statement was supported by other respondents. According to Y.Z.,

> *The local cultural and natural conditions in the environment need to be incorporated into learning materials and curriculum for multicultural education. The curriculum is adapted to local knowledge; for example, teaching students about Aceh's natural habitats, such as the*

Leuser and Beach forests, and the coastal culture of the Acehnese people, and being given learning based on Acehnese folklore.

There is a need for schools to facilitate a variety of culture-based extracurricular activities to enable students to develop their practical skills, understand the cultural conditions and development of their region early in school, and gain a deeper understanding of Acehnese culture through hands-on experience. As stated by M.S.,

Acehnese culture can be planted in the concept of multicultural education and also in extracurricular activities rooted in Acehnese culture. The Saman dance and the production of regional handicrafts are parts of Aceh's cultural activities that deserve to be studied."

S.H. continued that *"students are invited to get to know local arts and traditions by actively participating in regional art performances, such as playing traditional musical instruments or having theater performances that raise Acehnese folklore."*

Furthermore, by inviting indigenous elders to share their understanding of Acehnese culture, the school fosters experiential learning. One of the most effective ways to increase people's awareness of local culture is to provide lectures and discussion sessions that focus on Aceh's history and cultural values. Students' cultural learning experiences are strengthened when traditional leaders directly exhibit key events or rituals, providing them with personal knowledge of the practices. According to N.F.,

Traditional leaders are invited to give students lectures and hold discussion sessions about Acehnese history and social values in order to impart cultural insights. Traditional leaders are usually encouraged to engage in actual demonstrations of important ceremonies or rituals to provide students with a better knowledge of the area's cultural practices.

Schools in Aceh provide instructors with multicultural education-focused workshops and seminars in order to assist in the smooth administration of multicultural education. Cultural diversity and the application of tolerance values need to be applied in teaching to encourage students to learn in a multicultural environment. The multicultural education curriculum will train educators and students to maximize cultural concepts in daily life activities in their environment. R.D. mentioned that,

The government needs to hold multicultural education workshops on multicultural education to support curriculum development and implementation. This would have a positive impact on students and can foster classroom tolerance and awareness of cultural diversity in their area.

In addition, the intercultural student exchange program is a step toward achieving an understanding of multicultural-based education. The school provides cultural exchange programs with other regions, and students from all backgrounds are welcome to share their cultural experiences. F.A. states that,

Students are given the opportunity to visit schools or other regions both inside and outside Aceh with the aim of understanding the culture and character of other regions through intercultural student exchange programs in Indonesia. Students have the opportunity to visit schools outside of Aceh and learn about their culture. The program may provide the Acehnese cultural experience, promote brotherhood between regions, and expose students to Indonesia's cultural diversity.

The above statement is supported by K.M., that this event provides a forum to promote Acehnese culture to the wider community.

The government or education policy-making institutions need to conduct annual cultural events where students can demonstrate many parts of Acehnese culture. These activities will deepen students' knowledge and promote better cultural exchanges between communities and schools.

Ethnic diversity in the life of the community is an inseparable part. Students need to know it from an early age in elementary school to gain basic knowledge of diversity in the community and increase students' sense of tolerance between fellow citizens and in the community. Another approach for schools is to emphasize the importance of tolerance in education. Using project-based learning, teachers

encourage students to cooperate in multicultural groups. According to B.T., this strategy educates students to embrace variety and create friendships with classmates from various cultural backgrounds.

> *Through discussions and case simulations on ethnic diversity in social life, the school emphasizes the need for tolerance in education. Teachers utilize project-based learning practices that foster collaboration in multicultural groups to teach students about differences and create empathy for others.*

The school emphasizes the preservation of regional languages, among other cultural components, by imposing the "Aceh Language Day" policy, which requires instructors and students to use Acehnese in everyday interactions. The purpose of this strategy is to preserve and improve students' understanding of their original language. To help students better comprehend the local language, the school provides reading materials and an Acehnese dictionary. As stated by J.L.,

> *Instruct students to use the local language on a daily basis, both at home and in the classroom. As part of the school's Acehnese Language Day policy, students and staff speak in the regional language for one whole day every week. The school provides reading materials and an Acehnese dictionary to help students better understand their home language.*

Acehnese schools have successfully integrated multicultural education management based on local culture using a number of tactics that include curriculum, extracurricular activities, teacher training, and cultural exchange programs. These projects aim to promote tolerance among diverse ethnic groups, enhance pupils' knowledge of cultural diversity, and instill a feeling of pride in local culture.

4.2. The Role of Local Culture in Learning

How is Local Culture Integrated into the Learning Process?

This research reveals various ways in which schools in Aceh manage multicultural education based on local culture, which includes the integration of Acehnese culture in learning and extracurricular activities (Table 3). Schools in Aceh integrate local culture into subjects such as Indonesian, History, and Civic Education to introduce Aceh's history, customs, and cultural values.

Table 3
Major Themes for the Role of Local Culture in Learning

Theme	Description
Cultural Contextualization	Local culture is used as a context to explain abstract concepts in subjects like Social Studies and Civics.
Moral and Character Building	Cultural stories, values, and customs are used to develop student character and behavior.
Community Engagement	Involvement of parents and community figures in cultural education activities.
Curriculum Enrichment	Local traditions and wisdom are embedded to enrich the content of learning.

For example, folklore is used in Indonesian learning, where students read, discuss, and rewrite stories with different perspectives, as well as participate in drama exercises that explore the cultural and moral values contained in the stories. One of the respondents was A.R., who said that *"The school integrates folklore into Indonesian subjects as reading materials and literary analysis. Students read, discuss, and rewrite folklore from different perspectives."* In addition, traditional dance arts such as the Saman and Seudati dances are taught in art lessons to introduce the value of togetherness and cooperation in Acehnese culture, which is practiced in school performances or cultural competitions. As explained by M.S.,*"Traditional dance art is used in art education to introduce local cultural heritage. Students not only learn dance movements but also understand the history and meaning behind the dance."*

Traditional games, such as stilts and toping, are also included in physical education, teaching social skills, sportsmanship, and cultural values through activities that invite students and teachers to participate actively. N.F. added his opinion that,

> *Traditional games such as stilts and toping are taught to students as part of physical education and recreation at school. The game not only serves as entertainment but also teaches social skills, sportsmanship, and the cultural values inherent in it.*

As a step to introduce local culture, schools need to encourage teachers to give homework about customs in their area, whether it is related to weddings, customary activities, or customary law systems, which may strengthen their understanding of the traditions in their area. R.D. stated that *"Students need to do data collection or trace traditions in their area, such as traditional ceremonies, collaborative traditions, or customary law systems."*

An understanding of local culture is also needed for students to interact with traditional leaders, and schools need to coach students by inviting traditional stakeholders to share their knowledge about Acehnese customs. K.M. stated that,

> *Traditional organizations such as the Aceh Traditional Council, Acehnese cultural activists, and traditional leaders in the environment need to be facilitated to provide students with an understanding of the importance of traditional preservation in the region and accommodate the input of these experts to be elaborated in the multicultural education curriculum.*

To introduce and enhance students' awareness of their own cultural identity, Acehnese schools have effectively incorporated local culture into a variety of academic subjects and extracurricular activities. Developing practical skills, gaining a thorough grasp of local cultural values, and fostering a greater sense of pride in Aceh's cultural history are the main goals of these initiatives.

4.3. Challenges and Solutions in Multicultural Education Management

What Are the Main Challenges in the Implementation of Multicultural Education Based on Local Culture?

According to Acehnese local culture, this study identifies a number of difficulties schools confront in implementing multicultural education (Table 4).

Table 4
Major Themes for Challenges and Solutions in Multicultural Education

Theme	Description
Lack of Teacher Competence	Many educators lack knowledge or training to integrate multicultural values with local culture.
Inadequate Resources	Limited teaching materials and cultural references hinder effective multicultural education.
Curriculum Constraints	National curricula sometimes leave little room for local cultural integration.
Community Support Limitations	Inconsistent support from parents and community leaders in promoting cultural education.
Solutions Through Collaboration	Schools develop partnerships with local cultural figures and train teachers on cultural integration.

One of the biggest problems is that educators frequently lack the necessary expertise to teach multicultural ideals in the context of vibrant local cultures, which leads to a lack of thorough awareness of local cultural variety. A.R. disclosed that,

> *Professional educators' lack of thorough awareness of local cultural variety is the biggest obstacle. There is a disconnect between theory and reality since many educators lack the training necessary to impart intercultural principles within the framework of vibrant local cultures.*

Another barrier is opposition from the community and parents who believe that their local culture is being overlooked in an educational system that places a higher priority on the national curriculum. M.S. clarified that,

> *The community and parents are opposed because they believe that the educational system, which places more emphasis on the national curriculum, ignores their local culture. This may result in a lack of support for the local culture-based multicultural education program.*

The unclear integration of local and national curricula is another difficulty. Due to space constraints in a more centralized curriculum, schools frequently struggle to create instructional materials that are pertinent to the local culture. N.F. claimed that,

> *The national and local curricula do not clearly integrate with one another. Because of the limited space in a more centralized curriculum, many schools are unable to create instructional materials that are pertinent to local culture.*

Multicultural education is inefficient in fostering intercultural acceptance because of the limited understanding of local culture, which frequently merely emphasizes cultural symbols without exploring the ideas and values that underlie them. R.D. included his remarks that,

> *Knowing local culture is sometimes restricted to cultural symbols without exploring the profound ideals and ideologies that underlie them. Because of this, multicultural education is useless for fostering intercultural respect.*

Furthermore, as S.H. clarified, variations in how local culture is taught in each area frequently result in inconsistent multicultural education implementation.

> *Inconsistencies in the implementation of multicultural education may arise from variations in how local culture is taught in different regions. Instructors frequently find it difficult to adapt their methods to the local environment.*

One of the biggest obstacles to successfully teaching local cultural variety is the lack of resources, including textbooks, teacher preparation programs, and auxiliary facilities. F.A. added that *"Another issue is the lack of resources, both in the area of educational materials, instruction for educators, and buildings to facilitate teaching about indigenous cultural diversity effectively."*

Another key problem is the distinction between official and informal education, which restricts the learning process of local culture to traditional contexts and is less incorporated into school education. As Y.Z. pointed out, "*One of the obstacles is the gap between both formal and informal schools, which makes the local cultural process of learning more limited to the customary context and less blended in school education."*

On the other hand, there are students, parents, and the community who have a negative response to culture-based education in Aceh because they think that the national education system that is implemented ignores their culture and customs and cannot be integrated into global education. According to B.T.,

> *The less positive opinions of students and parents, as well as part of the community, are due to their cultural shifts. While the belief that the application of the curriculum has no place for understanding and preservation of local customs, it is believed that the curriculum applied is less relevant to the needs generated by globalization and technological improvement.*

Furthermore, K.M. noted that this shift in thinking toward cultural education and the preservation of customs occurred among educators and the community. Therefore, synergy and understanding of the value of local culture-based education are needed.

> *To understand the importance of local culture-based education, teachers, the government, and cultural activists need to work together to provide a comprehensive policy for understanding of the importance of applying multicultural education to students to maintain that culture in the future. Without strong policy support, the implementation of multicultural education based on local culture will be difficult to achieve.*

The lack of evaluation and research on the effectiveness of local culture-based multicultural education is also a challenge that needs to be considered. J.L. closed with,

> *There is a lack of evaluation and research on the effectiveness of multicultural education based on local culture. Many regions do not have enough data to see the long-term impact of the implementation of this education model on understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity.*

What Are the Solutions Implemented to Overcome These Challenges?

Increasing training for teachers is the main solution agreed upon by A.R. and N.F. A.R. stated that,

> *"The main solution is to increase training for teachers so that they better understand and can integrate local cultural values into learning. Educators need to be trained to not only get to know local culture theoretically but also be able to teach it in a way that is relevant and interesting to students."*

Meanwhile, N.F. added that,

> *A more flexible curriculum should be designed that allows for adjustment to local culture. The government can provide clearer guidance on how to integrate local cultural values into existing subjects without compromising the quality of education.*

M.S. and K.M. agreed on the importance of involving the community and parents in local culture-based education. M.S. opined that,

> *The community and parents should be involved in the multicultural education process. Through more intense dialogue and collaboration, the community can understand that local culture-based education can enrich their children's knowledge and not override the national curriculum.*

In his statement, introducing the use of technology in the teaching of local culture, F.A. suggested that "*Technology should be used to teach local culture. For instance, give younger children access to interactive and captivating local cultural content through social media, movies, or educational applications."*

As B.T. suggested, it also encourages initiatives to target students through a more engaging strategy. *Create educational initiatives that target young learners by demonstrating a variety of local cultures through engaging activities, songs, and arts.* S.H. and R.D. agreed that engaging directly with the local people is essential to understanding local culture. S.H. suggested that,

> *A network of cooperation between local communities, cultural organizations, and schools should be created in order to provide a more comprehensive educational curriculum. This can be achieved by asking local speakers from cultural activists and customary institutions who have cultural expertise to provide educational materials to students.*

F.A. agreed that including local culture in various disciplines has an important role in countering negative understanding of diverse regional cultures, and collaboration with various institutions is a space for students to gain a better understanding of the importance of maintaining and preserving culture in the dimension of multicultural education. This can be achieved by incorporating local cultural components into classes in learning history, Indonesian, and cultural arts.

Teaching culture and customs with contemporary technology is indispensable in education. Respondents recommended collaborative solutions between educators, communities, and governments, as well as the use of technology and practical teaching approaches. These efforts aim to make local cultural education more accessible and applicable to the local environment. More collaboration between educational institutions and academics is needed to evaluate the impact of local culture-based education.

5. Discussion

This study focuses on the many approaches used by Acehnese schools to manage intercultural education through local culture at elementary schools, especially in basic education in Aceh Besar and Pidie

districts. The policy to include an understanding of Acehnese culture and customs in school learning media is highly recommended to integrate Acehnese cultural values. Practical skills in traditional dance, singing regional songs, and explaining the history of Aceh are part of the development of knowledge and culture for elementary school students. Cultural material-based extracurricular programs greatly support students in continuing to develop and get to know their culture (Saputra, 2024). elementary school students can learn and share Acehnese customs through cultural groups. Extracurricular activities are essential, with programs such as the Saman dance instruction and regional handicrafts that provide hands-on experience.

Teacher training is also a key component, concentrating on integrating multicultural values and encouraging inclusion (Wahyuni et al., 2020). The cultural exchange program between Aceh helps students better understand Indonesia's cultural diversity while strengthening relations between regions. The school also promotes tolerance through project-based learning and conversations regarding cultural diversity, allowing elementary school students to collaborate in multicultural settings. Local culture is applied through curricular and extracurricular activities in the learning process. Elementary schools also provide opportunities for students to interact with traditional stories. Art activities that contain local culture also need to be developed, such as the Saman and Seudati dances, highlighting the cultural significance of each movement.

There are significant challenges in implementing multicultural education in Aceh, especially in incorporating local culture into the curriculum at elementary schools. One of them is the lack of teacher preparation in intercultural education, which makes educators unable to incorporate different cultural viewpoints into their lessons. Another challenge is parents' negative understanding of the concept of national education, who do not care much about their culture and customs. This reluctance is exacerbated by institutional constraints in the school system, which typically considers cultural subjects as secondary, emphasizing traditional arts such as dance and folklore over deeper cultural knowledge. Another challenge is variability in the implementation of multicultural education across regions, with some regions receiving more support and resources than others (Purnamasari, 2019). Limited funding resources allow schools to accommodate requests from other institutions to implement an education system that ignores local culture and customs. Due to limited financial and material resources, the school has problems implementing successful programs that take advantage of Aceh's rich cultural heritage.

Curriculum flexibility, community involvement, technology integration, and legislative support in Aceh are proposed as alternative approaches to effectively address the challenges faced in multicultural education (Sabrina & Sansrisna, 2017). A more flexible curriculum allows the inclusion of cultural education learning while maintaining the quality of national education and fostering the trust of parents, community, and institutions of cultural and customary actors. Collaboration with parents and the community fosters cultural acceptance, and interactive media enhances cultural learning. Combining extracurricular activities and the cultural education system in schools strengthens the school's cultural education framework. Schools make significant efforts to preserve and develop local culture through education. These initiatives ensure that cultural heritage is still an integral part of learning.

Apart from issues such as teacher preparation, curriculum rigidity, and parental concerns, various solutions, including improved training, curriculum flexibility, and technology integration, Policies that strengthen and foster collaboration between educators, communities, and policymakers help ensure the long-term viability of multicultural education. Incorporating local culture into education in Aceh demonstrates a strong commitment to preserving cultural identity while promoting intercultural awareness. The school uses curricular and extracurricular strategies to ensure that students have a thorough awareness of Acehnese customs through subjects, hands-on activities, and community involvement. Acehnese schools offer an inclusive learning environment where students develop global culture and competencies by blending traditional preservation with current educational goals.

Disclosure Statement

The authors claim no conflict of interest.

Funding

The research did not receive any specific grants from funding agencies.

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