



INTEGRATING BUDDHIST PRINCIPLES TO MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY IN RURAL COMMUNITIES OF MERBABU MOUNTAIN SLOPES OF INDONESIA

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: Indonesia is a multicultural country that needs multicultural education to foster tolerance and mutual respect in its diverse society. This study examined how Buddhist principles influenced how people in Thekelan Hamlet promoted multicultural education, emphasizing the role of mountainous communities in fostering social harmony. This research was conducted in the Sub-village of Thekelan, the Village of Batur, Getasan Sub-district, Semarang Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. This research aimed to delve into the practice of multicultural education among the people of Thekelan, where the majority were Buddhists. By exploring their perspectives on religious collaboration activities, this study examined the significant influence of the Buddha's teachings in establishing multicultural education.

Methodology: This study adopted qualitative research methodology with a case study approach. The data were collected through observation, interviews, documentation, and focus group discussions (FGD). The observation was conducted in Thekelan, where the activities, culture, and traditions of the rural communities of Merbabu Mountain were observed. Interviews were conducted by selecting key informants from different social and religious backgrounds. The focus group discussion involved key community stakeholders. Finally, the information gathered from observation, interviews, documentation, and focus group discussions was examined and analyzed to determine the influence of Buddhist principles on the people living in Thekelan in promoting multicultural education.

Main Results: The study showed that the Buddha's teachings on respecting other religions, as mentioned in the Upali Sutta and Asoka Inscription, respecting ancestral traditions, as found in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta, and the Buddhist pragmatic concept of truth, as shown in the Simsappa Sutta, influenced the people of Thekelan in promoting multicultural education. This study found that: 1) Awareness and belief in ancestral heritage and universal goodness were manifested in cooperative activities such as Merti Dusun (Hamlet Cleaning), Sedekah Bumi/Saparan (Earth Offering), respect for other religions and their religious holidays, and traditional artistic activities;



2) Strengthening the role of religious and community leaders was critical since they served as role models for the community; 3) Mutual agreement to uphold traditions and culture fostered mutual respect and cooperation within the community; 4) Equality in the universal values of multicultural education included three aspects: Deliberation, religious activities, and communal activities; and 5) Creative and innovative approaches to national celebrations such as the Indonesian Independence Day ceremony on August 17th, Kartini Day (Indonesian Woman Emancipation Day) on April 21st, and cultural carnivals served as important tools for promoting a harmonious society.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: This research included Applied Buddhism, which emphasized how a Buddhist community applied the development of wisdom and morality in accordance with the demands of the time. To realize multicultural education, supportive elements such as principles of tolerance, empathy, awareness development, wisdom development, and social competence development were needed. Therefore, the Buddha's teachings on the importance of practicing and developing *khanti*, *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *sati sampajañña*, and *pañña* became highly relevant. Multicultural education was successfully achieved through the practice of patience or tolerance, boundless loving-kindness, compassion, mindful living, and wisdom development. These principles had been well-practiced by the Buddhist community of Thekelan.

Conclusions: Multicultural education plays a significant role in promoting a peaceful and harmonious society. The traditions maintained by people living in Thekelan Village served as a good example of multicultural education and the importance of maintaining a peaceful and harmonious life in diversity.

Keywords: Multiculturalism Education, Buddhist Principles, Mount Merbabu Community, Indonesia

Introduction

Indonesia was characterized by its pluralism and multiculturalism, exhibiting diversity in religion, ethnicity, regional languages, geography, clothing, food, and cultural practices. The nation comprised over 360 ethnic groups, around 718 languages, and 17,000 islands distributed throughout its archipelago. Indonesia officially recognized six religions: Islam, Catholicism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, in addition to various indigenous beliefs. This diversity served as a significant national asset, providing substantial opportunities for cultural enrichment, social innovation, and advancing individuals intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual dimensions. However, this diversity also presented challenges, as it could have resulted in potential conflicts if not managed effectively (Mazya et al., 2024); (Mappaenre et al., 2023).

Multicultural education effectively addresses these challenges by promoting mutual understanding, tolerance, and respect for cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. It was implemented through learning materials and teaching methods that embraced a multicultural approach (Cathrin & Wikandaru, 2023). This approach aided in preventing and mitigating conflicts and riots stemming from differences, fostering an environment favorable to dialogue. Thekelan Hamlet exemplified effective multicultural education through community tolerance, as evidenced by cross-religious cooperation in daily activities, including the construction of worship places and the joint celebration of religious holidays.



Thekelan Hamlet, predominantly inhabited by Buddhists, exemplified harmonious multicultural coexistence in Indonesia. This community promoted tolerance through collaborative initiatives in religious observances and daily interactions. Muslim residents assisted Buddhist communities during Vesak celebrations, while Buddhists aided their Muslim neighbors in preparing for Ramadan and other occasions ("Peace Message from Thekelan Hamlet," 2019). The values of tolerance were imparted to the younger generation through informal education facilitated by community leaders (Sukarjo & Ukim, 2012). The practices in Thekelan garnered interest from other regions, including Musi Rawas Regency in South Sumatra, which undertook a comparative study to examine tolerance within this hamlet (Interviews with Novianti and Sukamtinah, Mr. Supriyo, and Mr. Sukarmin, May 5-28, 2023). Multicultural education in Indonesia was informed by local practices and its historical heritage, including the periods of the Sriwijaya and Majapahit Kingdoms.

In the *Simsapa Sutta* from the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* (Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2010), the Buddha compared his teachings to a *Simsappa* leaf held in his hand. It was understood that the universal truth was very broad, and only a portion of it was taught by him. Even in the *Kālāma Sutta* of *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, it was stated not to merely adhere to scripture (*Piṭakasampadāya*), demonstrating that the teaching on goodness was not only what was taught in the scripture (Medhacitto, 2019). In the archipelago itself, tolerance and harmony could be seen from the first unified archipelago, namely during the era of the Sriwijaya kingdom in the 7th century, with Buddhism as the spiritual outlook of its people. In the second unified archipelagic state, during the era of the Majapahit kingdom, two religions, Hinduism/Shiva and Buddhism, became the way of life for its people. A great Buddhist poet, Mpu Tantular, laid the foundation for the unity and integrity of the Majapahit people with a poem in *Kakawin Sutasoma* (Mastuti & Hastho, 2019), namely "*Bhīneka Tunggal Ika Tan Hana Dharma Mangrwa*," which meant, "They were indeed different. However, in essence, it was the same. Because there was no ambiguous truth." Through the spirit of respecting differences and unity, the basis of tolerance from Indonesia's historical era served as a foundation for multicultural education.

Objectives

This research aimed to delve into the practice of multicultural education among the people of Thekelan, where the majority were Buddhists. By exploring their perspectives on religious collaboration activities, this study examined the significant influence of the Buddha's teachings in establishing multicultural education. This research investigated how the Buddha's teaching inspired this practice of multiculturalism, emphasizing tolerance, mutual respect, and harmonious living among the people of Thekelan Hamlet.

Methodology

The type of this research was a descriptive study with a qualitative approach. According to Sujdwawo (2011), a qualitative approach refers to a research method that emphasizes collecting and analyzing descriptive data in the form of written and spoken words of the people, as well as observed behavior. According to Moleong (2005), the qualitative descriptive approach was a research



approach where the data collected were in the form of words, pictures, and not numbers. The data could be obtained from interviews, field notes, photos, videotapes, personal documentation, notes or memos, and other documentation. The object of this research was the multicultural education practiced by the people living on the slopes of Mount Merbabu. The study was conducted at Thekelan Hamlet, Batur Village, Getasan District, Semarang Regency, Central Java Province. The techniques used in data collection included observation, interviews, documentation, and focus group discussions (FGD). The observation was conducted in Thekelan, where the activities, culture, and traditions in the rural communities of Merbabu Mountain were observed. Interviews were conducted by selecting key informants from different social and religious backgrounds. Focus group discussions were conducted with key community stakeholders. The key informants included the head of the hamlet, religious leaders, community figures, youth leaders, and women's associations, as described in Table 1 below.

Table 1 List of Key Informants from Various Backgrounds

No	Key Informants	Role	Religion
1.	Mr. Supriyo	Head Hamlet of Thekelan	Islam
2.	Mr. Sukarmin	Head of Wihara Buddhahumika Thekelan	Buddhist
3.	Mr. Tugimin	Thekelan community figure	Buddhist
4.	Mr. Mandar	Buddhist figure	Buddhist
5.	Mr. Satiman	Imam of Baitul Salim Mosque, Thekelan	Islam
6.	Mrs. Cladyna SJ	Community member and kindergarten teacher	Buddhist
7.	Mr. Parlan	Christian figure	Christian
8.	Mr. Mugianto	The leader of Theravada Buddhist youth community	Buddhist
9.	Mr. Yamin	Head of RT 3	Buddhist
10.	Mrs. Asih	Secretary of Theravada Buddhist women community	Buddhist
11.	Mr. Sugimin	The leader of youth community	Buddhist
12.	Mr. Sutopo	Village community figure	Buddhist
13.	Mr. Bungah	Village community figure and the head of RT 2	Christian
14.	Mrs. Tukini	Head of PKK (Family Welfare Program)	Islam
15.	Mrs. Novianti	Member of youth community	Buddhist

The data analysis technique adopted continuous observation, triangulation, and member checks related to multicultural education in the Mount Merbabu community of Thekelan Hamlet. Conclusions were analyzed as input for developing multicultural education in rural areas. The data analysis was conducted based on the theory provided by Miles and Huberman (Sarosa, 2021), taking the following steps: Data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion or verification, as described in Figure 1 below.

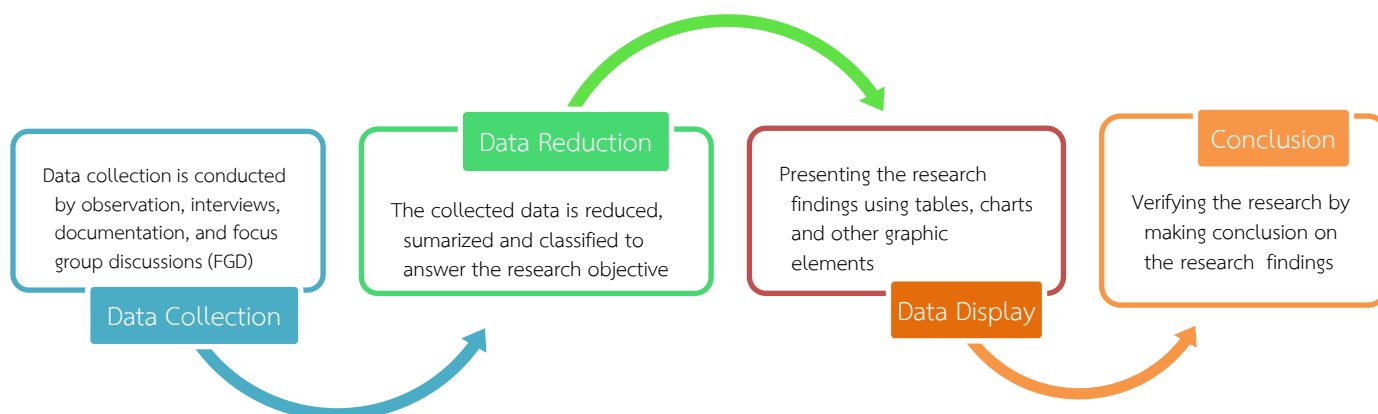


Figure 1 The Process of Data Analysis

Results and Discussion

This research was based on the uniqueness of multicultural education in Thekelan Hamlet. The uniqueness was related to the understanding of diversity in multicultural education that existed in the Merbabu Mountain slope community and served as a reference for learning tolerance. Understanding multicultural education was achieved by integrating the values of culture, customs, and religious diversity. The key aspects of this research were the universal values of culture, customs, and religion, which promoted harmony, tolerance, and unity among the citizens of the Thekelan Hamlet community. This research focused on understanding diversity through multicultural education, namely theological-philosophical understanding, psychological methods, curriculum design, equality of universal values of existing cultural and religious diversity, and creative and innovative methods of multicultural education. This was based on research findings that reflected an understanding of diversity in multicultural education outcomes. An understanding of multicultural education began with the head of the Hamlet, the head of the RT, the head of the PKK, religious leaders, community leaders, the head of the Ngudi Luhur Youth Organization, teachers, youth leaders, and the community. The focus of the research on the outcomes of multicultural education in Thekelan Hamlet supported the development of harmony, tolerance, and unity among citizens. The linkages of Thekelan Hamlet community members contributed to the impact of multicultural education. Harmony, tolerance, and unity among the people, based on the values of culture, customs, and religious diversity, served as important elements that were deeply rooted in multicultural education.

1. The Theological-philosophical Approaches to Multicultural Education in Thekelan

The theological-philosophical concepts of multicultural education in Thekelan Hamlet were reflected in the aspects of awareness of both individual beliefs and the pursuit of universal goodness. These two aspects served as foundational elements for understanding the theological-philosophical



concepts of multicultural education. The theological-philosophical approaches to multicultural education were manifested in activities such as the tradition of preserving ancestral/cultural heritage, mutual-cooperation/community service, merit Dusun/Sedekah Bumi/cleaning hamlet/separate, respecting other religious holidays, and traditional dance performances.

The community members in the village carried out the traditions of ancestral heritage on their own initiative and without coercion. The ancestors of Thekelan Hamlet had left positive habits through cooperation activities. Cooperation was a social activity performed for the benefit of others based on compassion and care for other people. This cooperation was evident in activities such as the construction of places of worship, schools, roads, and public facilities. The Hamlet head or religious leaders coordinated these types of social activities.

Cooperation activities have strengthened the spirit of togetherness and family bonds. In cooperation, the community could gather and work together to complete tasks. Cooperation, communication, and interaction based on mutual respect naturally occur among the community members. These collaborative activities provided opportunities for people to foster understanding and strengthen relationships. This tradition of collaboration has existed since the Majapahit Kingdom era with the motto *Bhineka Tunggal Ika*. *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* was adopted as a pillar of nationality because it fostered an attitude of mutual respect that strengthened unity.

In Indonesian history, tolerance and harmony have been a cultural practice since the era of the Srivijaya Kingdom to the Majapahit Kingdom. The Buddhist principle of tolerance and harmonious living influenced the people in that era. Religious tolerance was evident in the Majapahit Kingdom, where two religions, Hinduism (Shiva) and Buddhism, became the way of life for the people. A great Buddhist poet, Mpu Tantular, laid the foundation for the unity and harmony of the people of Majapahit with a poem in *Kakawin Sutasoma* (Mastuti, D. W. R. & Hastho, B., 2019), namely "*Bhineka Tunggal Ika Tan Hana Dharma Mangrwa*," which meant, "Even if they are different, yet they are one. There is no ambiguous truth." It highlighted unity in diversity. Through the spirit of respecting differences as a form of unity, the basis of tolerance that had existed throughout Indonesian history could be used as a foundation for multicultural education. The theological-philosophical unity in multicultural education in Thekelan Hamlet could be seen from the culture of pilgrimage executed every Kamis (Thursday) Wage, merit Dusun/Sedekah Bumi (Donating for the Earth)/Bersih Dusun (Cleaning Hamlet)/Separate (Village Festival), and Nyadran (Cleaning the Cemetery). The tradition of respect, giving thanks to ancestors and nature, and inviting and sharing with relatives and friends was a cultural heritage that the people of Thekelan Hamlet always observed. This cultural heritage has also existed since the Majapahit era. In the Buddhist tradition, the traditions of Pethokan, Merti Dusun, and Nyadran were forms of puja. The Buddha taught the culture of respecting those worthies of reverence in the *Mangala Sutta*. Basically, the word Nyadran was derived from the word *śraddhā* in Sanskrit, which was gradually pronounced by the Javanese tongue as Nyadran. Nyadran was a form of respect or devotion for ancestors (Budiningsih et al., 2022).



In Java, there were cultural practices that generally began with cleaning ancestral tombs, cooking food, delivering food to family or neighbors, and holding a festivity/Slametan Nyadran. In Thekelan Village, there was also a tradition of honoring ancestors with the Thursday Wage celebration. Kenduri pethokan was a tradition like Nyadran's. The Kenduri tradition was also carried out in commemoration of Buddhist and Islamic holidays in Thekelan, and the Kenduri tradition at the hamlet or Merti Desa was a tradition of cleaning the hamlet, maintaining the environment, and taking care of water sources. In addition to this, they also held a festivity and invited relatives and friends to enjoy the food they prepared. Every 17th of August, the community at Thekelan Hamlet also held a commemoration as an expression of devotion, gratitude, and respect for the national heroes.

The tradition of mutual respect and interfaith harmony in Thekelan Hamlet was manifested in activities such as mutual assistance in the construction of places of worship, assisting religious activities, offering congratulations on celebrating religious holidays, visiting each other, attending invitations, following other religious activities, and participating in various religious events. This tradition of respect and honor embodied the spirit of Bhineka Tunggal Ika. The attitude of the Thekelan Hamlet community aligned with the Buddha's teachings in the Simsappa Sutta, which highlighted that teachings on good deeds and the reality of life were vast. Thus, everyone should respect the religious teachings of others, as truth can be found in all religions.

The culture of Ketoprak, Karawitan, Jaranan, Warrioran, Drumblek, and Drumband in Thekelan Hamlet philosophically and theologically provided an understanding of multicultural education. The culture, embraced by all religious communities, united the people in the village. Culture did not differentiate people from any religious community. In fact, culture could be a unifying factor and a driving force for mutual respect and harmony.

2. Psychological Ways of Multicultural Education in Thekelan

The psychological approach to multicultural education in Thekelan was practiced through the promotion of an inclusive and positive attitude by daily examples and good role models, including the hamlet heads, the heads of Rukun Tetangga (Neighborhood Association), Pemberdayaan dan Kesejahteraan Keluarga (Family Empowerment and Welfare) leaders, religious leaders, community leaders, and Karang Taruna (Youth Organization) Ngudi Luhur leaders. Daily, teachers, youth leaders, and parents or community members provide exemplary behavior, making it highly effective for community members to follow. Psychologically, society learned from the behaviors they observed and heard from government officials, religious figures, and environmental leaders in Thekelan Hamlet.

Attitudes that were developed in Thekelan to understand multicultural education included mutual respect among religious believers, an awareness of doing good for the benefit of the hamlet through caring for citizens and the environment, assisting in the construction of places of worship, supporting religious activities across different faiths, attending invitations to religious activities of other religions, visiting and congratulating people on religious holidays of other faiths, and setting examples by encouraging good behavior. In addition, they advised people not to discuss religion when gathering with other religious communities, communicated with each other, cooperated in preserving cultural



values, customs, and harmony, set examples by doing good first, respected and preserved the traditions and culture that already existed in Thekelan Hamlet, and interacted with fellow citizens.

Education in Thekelan Hamlet was psychologically motivated by the daily behaviors of community leaders, religious leaders, and other influential figures. A positive attitude toward respecting cultural and religious diversity was a form of tolerance that resulted in harmony in Thekelan village. This culture of respect and honor among different religions had been taught by the Buddha in the Upali Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya and the Simsappa Sutta of the Samyutta Nikāya.

The Upāli Sutta of Majjhima Nikāya (Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2009) narrated the story of Upāli, a prominent householder and follower of Nighanta Nataputta. Upāli engaged in a dialogue with the Buddha regarding the law of Kamma. At the end of the dialogue, Upāli arose with belief in the Buddha's teachings and begged the Buddha to accept him as a disciple. The Buddha did not immediately accept him. Instead, he advised Upāli to carefully consider his decision because he had been a student of a great teacher who was highly respected in society. Regarding his desire to become a Buddhist by following the Buddha, the Buddha asked Upāli to think about it and not be in a hurry. The Buddha refused his request three times, and only after the third time did the Buddha finally agree to accept him on the condition that he should continue to respect and support his former religious teacher.

The Simsappa Sutta of the Samyutta Nikāya (Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2010) also explained that the Dhamma was described by the Buddha as very deep, hard to see, hard to understand, peaceful, and special. The Buddha had nothing to hide, but there was a concept called "Undigested and Beyond the Reach of Thought" (Atakkavaccara), which did not need to be taught because it did not solve human problems. When at the edge of the Simsappa forest, the Buddha likened his doctrine to a single Simsappa leaf grasped compared to all the Simsappa leaves in the forest, which he likened to the entirety of his doctrine. From this sutta, it could be understood that his doctrines were vast, so every person should live with respect for others' teachings and the vast truths in the world.

In the third century BCE, there was a Buddhist king named Asoka Vardhana who ruled with a focus on prioritizing the spirit of love, tolerance, and harmony regarding religious life in India. He issued his decree on tolerance and harmony in religious life, known as the Asoka decree, which was inscribed in the Kalinga XXII stone inscription. The Asoka Decree was carved on a stone inscription that was read as follows:

"One should honor the other sects, for by doing so, one increases the influence of one's own sect and benefits the other sects; While by doing otherwise, one diminishes the influence of one's own sect and harms the other sects (Evaṃ Karuṃ ātpapāsāṃdāṃ Ca Vadhayati, Parapāsāṃdasa Ca Upakaroti; Tadaṃñathā Karoto ātpapāsāṃdāṃ Ca Chaṇati, Parapāsāṃdasa Ca Pi Apakaroti)."



"It is not right to praise one's own religion by blaming other religions. The king said that whosoever honors his own sect or disparages that of another man, wholly out of devotion to his own, with a view to showing it in a favorable light, harms his own sect even more seriously (Yo Hi Koci ātpapāsamḍaṁ Pūjayati, Parapāsamḍaṁ Va Garahati-savaṁ ātpapāsamḍabhatiyā Kimti ātpapāsamḍaṁ Dīpayema Iti. So Ca Puna Tatha Karoto ātpapāsamḍaṁ Bāḍhataravā Upahanāti)." (Medhācitto, T. S., Pannaloka, D. & Barua, S., 2024).

Asoka practiced Buddhism and issued decrees to his people to respect the teachings of other religions.

3. Design of Multicultural Education Curriculum in Thekelan

The multicultural education curriculum design in Thekelan was not written. Instead, the culture and customs were agreed upon or maintained within the community (Arphattananon, 2018). The curriculum that sustained multicultural education in Thekelan functioned as a hidden curriculum. This hidden curriculum encompassed a process of learning or direct events that were unplanned or even unnoticed, carried out by community leaders, religious leaders, or other components. However, it had a positive impact on both the process and outcomes of multicultural education.

The curriculum was neither explicitly written nor formally outlined, yet it contributed to success (Mehta & Talwar, 2022). The hidden curriculum described in this study consisted of all activities that had been ingrained through habituation. These activities occurred naturally without deliberate structuring and played a significant role in shaping multicultural education values. The community continuously implemented its existing traditions and cultural practices. Through tradition and culture, attitudes of mutual respect, honor, cooperation, and collaboration emerged, positively influencing tolerance in Thekelan.

It emphasized the importance of cultivating inner peace as a foundation for creating a sense of external harmony. The model also focused on developing sustainable solutions that benefited all stakeholders. By prioritizing these critical dimensions, the model sought to establish a holistic approach that not only addressed individual well-being but also extended to societal and environmental harmony. The integration of coaching principles with Buddhist teachings aimed to provide a transformative framework that transcended personal development, fostering a more comprehensive and enduring peace within individuals and communities. This approach acknowledged the interconnectedness of personal, spiritual, societal, and environmental well-being, highlighting the model's potential to foster a more harmonious and sustainable society. The model incorporated Samma-ditthi as a central component, along with Ariyasacca as iterations, the Heart of Pandit as competencies, and Citta Bhavana for inner peace. These elements established connections with outer peace and promoted a holistic linkage (Tongmun et al., 2024).

The developed model provided innovative and practical insights and applications that benefited the Sangha, communities, and the nation. It advocated for a transition to a two-way communication style for Buddhist monks engaged in propagation, emphasizing citizen's genuine happiness and the alleviation of suffering (Wattanapradith & Issaradhammo, 2023). Religious and



community leaders needed to improve themselves to become facilitators of multicultural education, practicing what they preached. They played a motivational role within the community and encouraged people to comply.

4. The Equality of Universal Values of Multicultural Education in Thekelan

The equality of universal values in multicultural education in Thekelan sub-village tended to fall into three aspects: Deliberation, religious activities, and community activities. Routine deliberation activities were carried out by the head of the hamlet along with the heads of RT (Neighborhood Association) and RW (Citizens Association), community leaders, and religious leaders in Thekelan. These deliberations aimed to communicate activities, discuss village development plans, and maintain tolerance, harmony, and unity. The RT head communicated the results of the hamlet consultation to the local neighborhood family head. Efforts to uphold tolerance and harmony in Thekelan were also conveyed during PKK (Family Welfare Development) and Ngudi Luhur Youth Organization meetings.

The activities routinely held by religious communities in Thekelan served as a means of fostering tolerance. Administrators from each religious group consistently advised visitors and incoming religious leaders not to discuss or criticize other religions when conducting religious services. These efforts proved useful in maintaining the existing tolerance in Thekelan. Each religious leader in the village played a crucial role in preserving tolerance and harmony. The manifestation of religious activities included maintaining harmony among Hamlet residents, fostering tolerance, respecting and honoring other religious teachings, attending invitations to celebrate Buddhist holy days, Halalbihalal (Muslim Tradition of Seeking Forgiveness), breaking fast together, and celebrating Christmas. The invited community members appreciated these gatherings, as they provided an opportunity to listen to the teachings of other religions and gain new knowledge despite their religious differences.

Equality in Thekelan had a positive impact on the activities of its citizens, serving to prevent conflicts. Additionally, religious discussions were avoided during deliberation activities. People helped one another in religious events, followed the examples set by religious and community leaders, and instilled the value of tolerance in children. The principle that activities should proceed smoothly, achieve consensus, and remain oriented toward peace was taught by the Buddha in the MahāParinibbāna Sutta of the Digha Nikāya (Walshe, 2009). In this discourse, the Buddha also advised against changing agreements that remained relevant and non-detrimental, emphasized the importance of respecting and listening to parents, and encouraged reverence for holy places or places of worship. These five teachings constituted part of the seven welfare requirements of a nation as taught by the Buddha. The people of Thekelan had indirectly applied five of the seven sections concerning these welfare requirements. The strength of the people in Thekelan regarding multicultural education was an embodiment of the fourth precept of Pancasila, which states: "Kerakyatan Yang Dipimpin Oleh Hikmat Kebijaksanaan Dalam Permusyawaratan/Perwakilan" (The People are Led by Wisdom in Deliberation/Representation) (Mulyatno, 2022). The values of



Pancasila integrated into Thekelan reflected the spirit of democracy, which was evident in its multicultural education system.

5. Creative and Innovative Methods of Multicultural Education in Thekelan

Creative and innovative methods of multicultural education in Thekelan were reflected in the cultivation of the noble values of Pancasila as Indonesia's state ideology and in fostering a sense of citizenship. Both aspects played a crucial role in forming an understanding of creative and innovative approaches to multicultural education. The cultivation of Pancasila's noble values was demonstrated through activities such as celebrating the anniversary of Indonesia's independence and commemorating Kartini Day. A sense of citizenship was also reflected in the enthusiasm of the people to participate in Independence Day celebrations and cultural parades. The Independence Day ceremony, held every August 17th, was attended by all residents of Thekelan and followed by a cultural performance that included both children and adults. The cultural carnival featured miniature places of worship, Gunung (Symbolic Mountains of Food and Agricultural Products), and artistic performances. The creation of artwork from agricultural products and recycled materials for cultural activities showcased creativity and innovation in fostering a sense of citizenship in Thekelan village. Teenagers and children worked together to create artistic displays, practicing traditional Indonesian art forms.

The Kartini Day ceremony, held every April 21st, was dedicated to the women of Thekelan as an expression of gratitude toward egalitarian and educational heroes. In its initial two years, this event was organized by Theravāda Women of Indonesia (Wandani) in Thekelan Hamlet. Later, the activity was introduced into the PKK (Family Welfare Development) program, and its members responded positively, leading to its continuation by the women of Thekelan Hamlet.

The motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, derived from the book *Kakawin Sutasoma* by Mpu Tantular, had been used by the Majapahit Kingdom as a cultural policy to maintain harmony in religious life (Mastuti & Hastho, 2019). Similarly, the people of Thekelan adopted this principle to live harmoniously. Communities outside Thekelan often described it as a microcosm of Indonesia. The visible values of Pancasila, such as cooperation, mutual respect, preservation of traditions, and tolerance, were genuinely practiced by fostering unity in Thekelan Hamlet. These values embodied the third and fourth precepts of Pancasila-Indonesian unity and democracy guided by the wisdom of deliberations among representatives.

The role of education in the democratization of society was understood in the sense that attendees of different kinds and levels of educational institutions formed and developed capable persons. With their acquired education, they evaluated specific political options in a pluralistic society (Petrovski, V., Mirasciev, S. & Petrova-Gjorgjev, E., 2011). Multicultural education in Thekelan was carried out informally. Informal education provides people with the knowledge and experience of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism in Thekelan was developed from understanding diversity through a theological-philosophical point of view, psychological methods, curriculum design, equality of universal values of the existing cultural and religious diversity, and creative and innovative methods of multicultural education. The five components were interrelated in multicultural education



in Thekelan. Each related component was a unity and became the main characteristic of multicultural education there.

The culture and customs of deliberation, tolerance, harmony, and cooperation were real implementations of multicultural education. Multicultural education reflected the success of informal education there. Thekelan was an integral part of multicultural education's success. Multicultural education cannot be separated from role models and examples from elements in society (Sunarko Ofm, 2016). Multicultural learning that was accustomed to train the community to solve problems. It was reflected in the character of each member of the community.

Originality and Body of Knowledge

The research results and data analysis provided the researchers with a new body of knowledge about the significance of the Buddha's teaching for establishing multicultural education, as depicted in Figure 2.

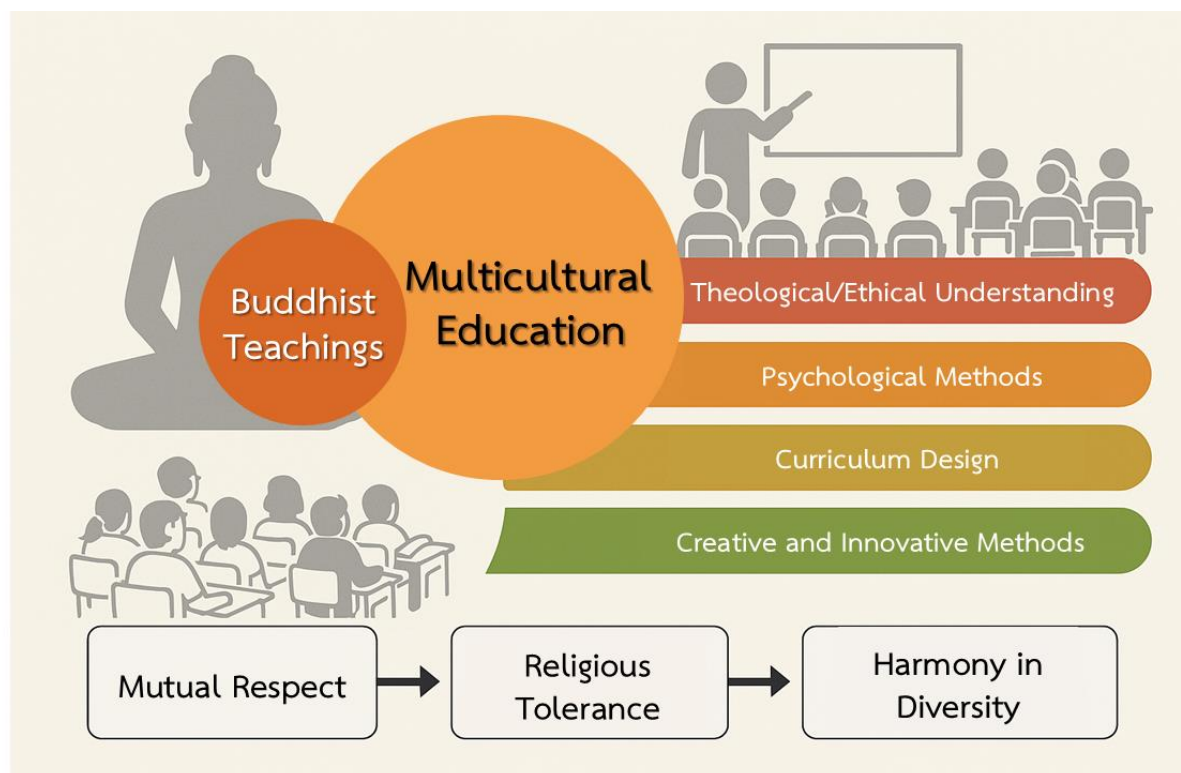


Figure 2 Multicultural Education

Conclusions and Recommendations

Multicultural education was a crucial tool for fostering tolerance and mutual respect in a diverse society. Multicultural education in Thekelan has been preserved through five approaches. Theologically and philosophically, multicultural education in Thekelan encompassed two aspects: Recognizing ancestral heritage and universal goodness, which were reflected in cooperative activities like merit Dusun, respecting religious holidays, and traditional dance performances. This theological-



philosophical understanding fostered tolerance and strengthened attitudes towards cultural and religious diversity. Community and religious leaders played a vital role in modeling behavior and promoting tolerance. The community naturally learned from the leaders' behavior, and strengthening their role practically fostered multicultural values. Traditions and cultures were continuously practiced with mutual respect and cooperation. Thekelan's multicultural education emphasized equality, comprising deliberation, religious activities, and community activities. These activities promoted peace, progress, and respect among religions, fostering cooperation. Creative methods of instilling Pancasila values were reflected in national activities like Independence Day celebrations. Internalizing Pancasila values reinforced harmony and tolerance, impacting Thekelan's progress. Multicultural education thrived naturally in Thekelan, where community values and customs were rooted in ancestral legacies and the implementation of *Bhīneka Tunggal Ika*. Consistent implementation was crucial. Multicultural education that promoted tolerance and unity was a strength, particularly for Thekelan's community and Indonesia as a whole. Religious teachings, especially those rooted in the Buddha's teachings, influenced the way of thinking and the way of life among the people living in Thekelan. *Upali Sutta*, *Simsapa Sutta*, and *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* served as foundations for the practice of respecting other religions, the pragmatic concept of truth, and preserving ancestral traditions, promoting harmonious living in a diverse society. The Buddhist principles influenced the people in the Sub-village of Thekelan to promote multicultural education. It reflected how Buddhism was applied by a Buddhist community in accordance with the demands of the present time. For multicultural education to be successfully implemented, it needed supportive elements such as principles of tolerance, empathy, awareness development, wisdom development, and social competence development. Therefore, the Buddha's teachings on the importance of practicing and developing *khanti*, *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *sati sampajañña*, as well as *paññā* became very relevant. With the practice of patience or tolerance, boundless loving-kindness, compassion, mindful living, and wisdom development, multicultural education was successfully achieved. These principles had been practiced very well by the Buddhist community of Thekelan. Based on this study, future research should focus on the integration of multicultural education into the national curriculum, promoting students' development of mutual understanding of diversity and fostering tolerance. Multicultural education was suggested as an effective way to foster a harmonious society; Therefore, the government should take appropriate measures by formulating policies to ensure that all institutions promote multiculturalism. Future research could observe the impact of multicultural education on students' attitudes, behavior, and academic performance, including the challenges and solutions in implementing multicultural education in different regions.

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