



Development of a Multicultural Education Model through Value Inquiry for Promoting Multicultural Attitudes in Prospective Elementary School Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The problem and the aim of the study. Multicultural education plays a crucial role in fostering tolerance and appreciation for diversity among prospective elementary school teachers. This study aims to develop a multicultural education model based on the Value Inquiry approach to enhance the multicultural attitudes of pre-service elementary school teachers. The proposed model is designed to help students identify, reflect upon, and evaluate multicultural values encountered in daily life and integrate these values into classroom teaching practices.

Research methods. This study employed a Research and Development (R&D) design over a five-year period to develop a multicultural education model based on the Value Inquiry approach. A total of 80 prospective elementary school teachers from State University of Surabaya and Majalengka University participated in the trial. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires measuring empathy, tolerance, and cultural sensitivity, and were analyzed using paired t-tests to assess differences before and after the intervention. In addition, qualitative data were obtained from observations, interviews, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and were thematically coded to capture participants' experiences and feedback.

Results. Findings indicate that the implementation of the Value Inquiry model significantly improved the multicultural attitudes of pre-service elementary school teachers. The highest score was obtained in tolerance ($M = 4.18$), followed by empathy ($M = 4.12$) and cultural sensitivity ($M = 4.05$), with all domains showing significant improvements compared to the pre-treatment phase ($p < 0.01$). Participants reported that the model helped them become more open to differences and better able to reflect multicultural values in their lesson planning. However, challenges remained regarding limited course time and difficulties in connecting multicultural values to contextual case studies. Qualitative data from observations, interviews, and FGDs confirmed that students became more critical and collaborative in discussing diversity issues, developed inclusive mindsets, and enhanced ethical awareness in social interactions. Revisions to the model, based on feedback from lecturers and students, resulted in improvements such as a more systematic reflection guide, more proportional time allocation, and the integration of local case studies to strengthen the relevance and application of multicultural values in practice.

Conclusion. This study successfully developed and evaluated a multicultural education model based on Value Inquiry that effectively enhances cultural sensitivity, tolerance, and empathy among prospective teachers. The integration of inquiry-based learning, reflection, and collaborative problem-solving enabled pre-service teachers to engage deeply with diversity issues and develop inclusive thinking. The model is recommended for broader adoption in teacher education programs, supported by instructor training, implementation guidelines, and further evaluation to assess its long-term impact.

KEYWORDS

multicultural education, value inquiry, multicultural attitudes, pre-service teachers, elementary school

For Citation: Rodiyana, R., Siswanto, M. B. E., Yanto, A., & Anam, R. S. (2026). Development of a Multicultural Education Model Through Value Inquiry for Promoting Multicultural Attitudes in Prospective Elementary School Teachers. *Perspektivny nauki i obrazovania = Perspectives of Science and Education*, (1), 261–276. <https://doi.org/10.32744/pse.2026.1.16>

Received: 24 August 2025 | Approved: 28 September 2025 | Published: 28 February 2026



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INTRODUCTION

International initiatives in education led by UNESCO, the Council of Europe, and Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization consistently emphasize the importance of multicultural and inclusive learning as a foundation for fostering peace, human rights, and global citizenship. UNESCO, through the Education 2030 Framework for Action, asserts that education must serve as an instrument to build just, peaceful, and sustainable societies by integrating the values of diversity and inclusion into the curriculum [1]. Meanwhile, the Council of Europe promotes intercultural education as a key strategy to combat intolerance and discrimination while strengthening social cohesion amid globalization [2]. In line with this, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) has also advanced multicultural education through the promotion of inclusive curricula, intercultural exchanges, and teacher development programs aimed at strengthening regional solidarity while respecting cultural diversity [3]. These frameworks highlight the urgency of fostering empathy, tolerance, and intercultural competence, while positioning education as a transformative force for social justice, social cohesion, and the advancement of global citizenship.

Referring to these international frameworks, multicultural education in Indonesia faces considerable challenges in managing the complexity of social diversity encompassing ethnic, religious, racial, and social group differentiation. As a nation rich in cultural plurality, Indonesia requires pedagogical approaches that systematically internalize the values of tolerance, mutual respect, and appreciation of diversity in every aspect of the educational process. Mariyono's findings emphasize that multicultural education in Indonesia plays a vital role in fostering mutual respect among different ethnic, religious, and cultural groups [4]. In this context, inclusive education plays a strategic role as a medium for shaping students' intercultural competence, enabling them to adapt and contribute productively within a multicultural society. The phenomenon of diversity, which previously manifested more dominantly in the macro-social landscape, has now become increasingly prominent within educational spaces, demanding a comprehensive understanding of multiculturalism principles, particularly for prospective teachers [5].

Strengthening the professional capacity of prospective teachers constitutes a key strategy in addressing the complexity of student diversity within the classroom. The ability to identify, understand, and manage differences in cultural backgrounds represents an important indicator of pedagogical readiness that is responsive to pluralism [6]. Academic competence needs to be balanced with an inclusive attitude orientation so that future educators can enact pedagogical practices that are not merely instructional but also culturally transformative [7]. Therefore, a conceptually and contextually structured design of multicultural education can form an epistemological and affective framework that supports the development of an inclusive mindset. This is in line with research on multicultural attitudes and differentiated instruction in teacher education programs in China, which highlights the importance of linking multicultural awareness with actual pedagogical practices in the classroom [8]. This serves as a crucial foundation for creating a learning ecosystem that upholds the values of diversity and social justice.

The primary goal of multicultural education is to cultivate an inclusive perspective that enables learners to manage diversity constructively and foster mutual respect within the learning community. However, the preparedness of prospective teachers in Indonesia remains limited in understanding diversity-related issues. A meta-analysis on the paradigm of multicultural education in Indonesia emphasizes that although multicultural principles such as social justice, equality, cultural preservation, and the motto "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" have been embedded in the constitution and educational policies, their implementation still faces limitations within higher education practices [9]. This reality underscores the need for a comprehensive evaluation of curricula and teaching practices to ensure that multicultural values are not merely normative but are genuinely internalized in the attitudes, pedagogical competencies, and professionalism of prospective teachers in Indonesia. The urgency of multicultural education from a curricular perspective is now receiving broader attention, in line with the growing awareness of its relevance to the process of shaping the professionalism of future educators [10].

The success of implementing educational models that integrate the principles of multiculturalism largely depends on the competence of educators in creating an inclusive, participatory, and adaptive learning environment that responds to the plural backgrounds of students. Multicultural education not only contributes to shaping students' character to be tolerant and appreciative of differences but

also serves as an essential foundation for strengthening social cohesion within a diverse society. This is in line with research on multiculturalism in the world system, which emphasizes the importance of inter/multicultural education models grounded in social justice, not only preparing students to live in plural societies but also fostering cosmopolitan awareness and global citizenship [11]. The urgency of implementing this approach becomes particularly crucial at the elementary school level, as this stage represents the formative period for children's values, attitudes, and worldview. This is in line with research on multicultural learning in Taiwan's elementary schools, which emphasizes the importance of helping children understand, respect, and appreciate ethnic, linguistic, gender, religious, and social class diversity, while simultaneously fostering awareness of equality and tolerance in social interactions [12]. Therefore, prospective elementary school teachers need to be comprehensively prepared to implement multicultural values through pedagogical strategies that are concrete and contextual, rather than merely conceptual.

This endeavor requires the design of an educational model specifically directed toward prospective elementary school teachers, enabling them to implement relevant strategies in instilling multicultural values among students. One potential strategy that can be applied is the Value Inquiry approach, a learning method that emphasizes value reasoning and self-reflection in the exploration of social and cultural issues. This approach encourages active student engagement in critical discussions on the values of diversity while simultaneously reinforcing reflective processes regarding personal attitudes and behaviors [13]. The Value Inquiry-based learning process not only broadens multicultural awareness but also supports the development of students' capacity to understand, accept, and appreciate diversity within educational settings and social dynamics in a more reflective and constructive manner. This is in line with research on the internalization of multicultural values, which shows that fostering diversity attitudes can be achieved through systematic value integration processes, such as the values clarification technique and value analysis model, enabling students to accept other groups equally regardless of cultural, ethnic, gender, linguistic, or religious differences [14].

Departing from this urgency, the present study aims to develop a multicultural education model based on the Value Inquiry approach, specifically designed to strengthen multicultural attitudes among prospective elementary school teachers. This model is developed as an effort to bridge the gap between theory and practice in multicultural education, ensuring that it does not merely end with conceptual understanding but also fosters the capacity for implementation in real learning situations. Through this developed model, the education system is expected to produce teachers who not only possess theoretical literacy in multicultural values but are also skilled in internalizing these values within the design of daily instructional practices. The development of this model is highly strategic in preparing educators who are adaptive and responsive to the complex and multicultural dynamics of Indonesian society. Therefore, the focus of this study encompasses: identifying the current condition of prospective teachers' multicultural attitudes; designing a learning model that aligns with their needs; and evaluating the effectiveness of the model in enhancing multicultural attitudes through its application in training classrooms.

As far as this research plan has been developed, there exists a research gap concerning the lack of learning models that specifically integrate the Value Inquiry approach in strengthening multicultural attitudes among prospective elementary school teachers in Indonesia. Previous studies have addressed multicultural education from various perspectives: [4] emphasizes curriculum reform, teacher training, and community engagement; [9] identifies multicultural paradigms in the constitution and policies but notes that their implementation remains limited; [15] views multicultural education as a means of resolving cultural conflicts; while [16] highlights pluralism in elementary schools through multicultural curricula and multilingual programs. However, the main focus of these studies is still normative and policy-oriented, thereby giving little attention to concrete pedagogical strategies in classrooms, particularly for prospective elementary school teachers. This study seeks to fill this gap by designing a Value Inquiry-based learning model that is contextual and applicable in shaping the multicultural competence of future teachers.

On the other hand, although the Inquiry-Based Learning approach has been adapted in various forms, existing studies still reveal certain limitations. Study [17] demonstrates cross-institutional collaborative practices supported by technology, but their success largely depends on student readiness and tutor moderation. The systematic review [18] confirms that Inquiry-Based Learning positively impacts critical thinking skills, motivation, and academic achievement, although it still requires adequate instructional support. Study [19] emphasizes the effectiveness of collaborative

lesson study in enhancing intercultural teaching capacity, yet it faces time constraints and a lack of coordinated training. In social studies education, [20] identifies core practices of Inquiry-Based Learning to strengthen teacher preparation, while the meta-synthesis [21] highlights that its implementation still tends to remain teacher-centered. Thus, although the effectiveness of Inquiry-Based Learning has been recognized, the specific application of the Value Inquiry approach to strengthen multicultural attitudes among prospective elementary school teachers remains very limited, indicating the need for developing a contextual and applicable learning model.

The novelty of this research lies in the development of a Value Inquiry-based learning model designed for prospective teachers to formulate effective strategies for instilling multicultural attitudes in students. This approach enables an in-depth exploration of social values through reasoning and reflection, fostering not only mastery of subject matter but also the formation of character and social skills relevant to a pluralistic society. The model is designed for application in real contexts to enhance learning engagement and strengthen the connection between educational experiences and everyday life. Through field trials and quantitative analysis, this study evaluates the effectiveness of the model in equipping prospective teachers with the capacity to instill multicultural values in students in a transformative manner. Beyond addressing the gaps in the literature on multicultural education in Indonesia, this research also offers a conceptual contribution to pedagogical approaches that are both contextual and globally applicable. The findings of this study are expected to foster more inclusive learning processes, reinforce the foundations of multiculturalism within the education system, and provide a basis for further research as well as educational policies that are responsive to diversity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Multicultural education is a comprehensive approach that aims to create equal learning opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and social-class backgrounds. The primary goal of multicultural education is to reform schools and other educational institutions so that all students—regardless of their background—can experience educational equity and be empowered to achieve success. In transforming multicultural education policy and practice: expanding educational opportunity, it is emphasized that multicultural education must be transformed to remain relevant to the complexities of the modern world, which is marked by racism, narrow nationalism, mass migration, and social stratification, so that curriculum reform and school practices can genuinely expand educational opportunities for all groups [22]. The fundamental principles of multicultural education include fostering tolerance, commitment to social justice, and respect for and protection of human rights [23]. This approach encourages the creation of inclusive learning environments where students learn to value cultural pluralism while critically examining issues of discrimination and inequality [24].

In the Indonesian context, multicultural education becomes increasingly significant given the nation's high level of ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity. The national motto, "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" (Unity in Diversity), serves as a philosophical foundation for fostering tolerance and peaceful coexistence. However, the implementation of multicultural education continues to face challenges, particularly in classrooms still marked by prejudice, stereotypes, and social divisions. This is reinforced by the evolution of multicultural education and its impact on immigrant education in the United States, which highlights that although multicultural education has made progress, persistent challenges such as discrimination, polarization, and nativist sentiments demand continuous efforts to promote empathy and respect among diverse communities [25]. Thus, the development of a multicultural perspective is not merely an academic discourse but a social necessity for strengthening cohesion and mutual respect.

Multicultural attitude refers to an individual's disposition toward cultural diversity, encompassing beliefs, emotions, and behaviors toward people from different backgrounds. In teacher education, fostering a positive multicultural attitude is of vital importance. As highlighted in multicultural attitudes of prospective teachers: the influence of multicultural ideology and national pride, multicultural ideology is positively related to prospective teachers' multicultural attitudes, while excessive national pride may hinder them, indicating that initial teacher education programs should reinforce multicultural ideology while also considering the role of nationalism [26]. Teachers are not merely transmitters of knowledge but also serve as role models, whose values and behaviors

significantly influence students. When prospective teachers internalize multicultural values, they are better equipped to manage culturally diverse classrooms, confront prejudice, and implement inclusive pedagogical practices [27].

Although awareness of multicultural education in universities is growing, numerous studies indicate that many prospective teachers still lack critical awareness and sensitivity when dealing with complex social and cultural issues. This is consistent with the findings in building global bridges and fostering global competence: the role of multicultural education in Higher Education Institutions, which emphasize that multicultural education is not merely a pedagogical approach but also a catalyst for social change that equips students with global competence, cross-cultural skills, and the ability to contribute to international collaboration [28]. This gap underscores the need for more transformative educational experiences—ones that not only convey theoretical knowledge but also encourage prospective teachers to engage emotionally and reflectively with issues of diversity. Teacher education programs must provide opportunities to confront personal biases, understand structural inequalities, and cultivate empathetic and inclusive perspectives [29].

The Value Inquiry approach is an educational method that emphasizes critical thinking, value reasoning, and ethical reflection. As discussed in ethics, values and values-based practice in educational psychology, a values-based approach provides an ethical framework that strengthens educational practice by integrating ethics, values, and shared decision-making in increasingly complex educational contexts [30]. This is consistent with the findings in the role of philosophical inquiry in helping students engage in learning, which demonstrate that the application of philosophical inquiry can enhance adolescents' academic engagement, encourage active participation, and build inclusive learning environments through a community of inquiry [31]. Value Inquiry actively involves learners in exploring, questioning, and articulating their personal values through discussions of complex moral and cultural issues. This approach enables deeper learning by helping students connect abstract concepts with real-life experiences.

In classroom practice, this approach may involve activities such as group discussions, debates, case studies, and reflective journals focused on ethical dilemmas or significant cultural situations. As demonstrated in using case studies in engineering ethics education: the case for immersive scenarios through stakeholder engagement and real-life data, the use of immersive case studies with real data can encourage students to reflect on broader ethical issues, moving beyond individual decision-making to also consider power relations, equity, and the social mission of the profession [32]. Through such methods, learners are encouraged to analyze multiple perspectives, articulate the reasoning behind their viewpoints, and consider the consequences of the decisions they make. This reflective process is crucial in fostering moral autonomy and social empathy—two essential qualities in multicultural environments. By cultivating the habit of questioning values within learning contexts, students can develop both the intellectual and emotional capacities necessary to appreciate diversity and to address ethical challenges in a pluralistic society [33].

The integration of the Value Inquiry approach into multicultural education offers an effective means of bridging theoretical concepts with their practical application. While multicultural education emphasizes the transmission of cultural knowledge, raising awareness of prejudice, and promoting inclusivity, Value Inquiry contributes by enabling learners to internalize and personalize these dimensions more profoundly. This is in line with the findings in striving for critical reflection in multicultural and social justice teacher education: introducing a typology of reflection approaches, which highlight the importance of critical reflection in shaping social justice-oriented educators and propose a typology of five reflection approaches that can deepen prospective teachers' multicultural awareness [34]. Through engagement in value exploration, students not only learn about diversity but also cultivate a reflective understanding of their own values in relation to others. Such self-awareness is essential for confronting internalized prejudice and fostering openness and respect.

Furthermore, Value Inquiry reinforces critical consciousness—a concept popularized by Paulo Freire—which entails the recognition of social injustice and the commitment to act against it. The study exploring of inquiry skills of teacher students: biology, physics, and elementary school teacher education shows that the inquiry skills of prospective teachers, particularly in elementary teacher education programs, are still at a low level, indicating the need for training and habituation to improve them. This underscores the importance of integrating value inquiry approaches into learning so that prospective teachers can develop adequate critical consciousness [35]. Applied within multicultural

education, this means that students are no longer passive recipients of cultural information but active participants in shaping inclusive and democratic learning spaces. This integration aligns with the broader goal of education as an instrument of social transformation and emphasizes that intercultural understanding must be grounded both intellectually and emotionally [36].

This study proposes a conceptual model that integrates the foundational elements of multicultural education with the pedagogical processes of Value Inquiry. The model is designed to encompass three interrelated components: (1) cognitive understanding of multicultural principles, (2) reflective engagement with personal and social values, and (3) practical application through teaching simulations or field experiences. These components are framed within a cycle of inquiry, dialogue, reflection, and action. Within this model, prospective teachers are first encouraged to explore key concepts in multiculturalism, such as equity, cultural identity, and anti-discrimination. This is followed by structured Value Inquiry sessions employing case studies or real-life scenarios that contain cultural dilemmas. Through guided reflection and dialogue, prospective teachers are invited to articulate their beliefs, confront personal biases, and develop alternative perspectives.

The process then advances to the implementation phase, where these insights are applied in micro-teaching activities or field practice, using inclusive instructional strategies and receiving feedback. This theoretical framework serves not only as a foundation for curriculum development but also as a guide for evaluating the effectiveness of multicultural education programs. By emphasizing the integration of knowledge, reflection, and practice, the model aspires to cultivate educators who are not only competent in managing diversity but also capable of becoming agents of justice and inclusion within school environments.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopts a Research and Development (R&D) approach over a five-year period, with the aim of designing, implementing, and evaluating a multicultural education model based on the Value Inquiry approach. The Research and Development (R&D) method was chosen for its advantages in producing educational models that are practical and directly applicable, while also allowing for iterative improvements based on field feedback [37]. This approach is highly relevant to educational innovation, as it enables researchers not only to test the feasibility of the model in real contexts but also to measure its effectiveness in shaping students' multicultural attitudes [38]. In line with this, the R&D method also provides a systematic framework for the development of curricula and learning models that are grounded in actual field needs [39].

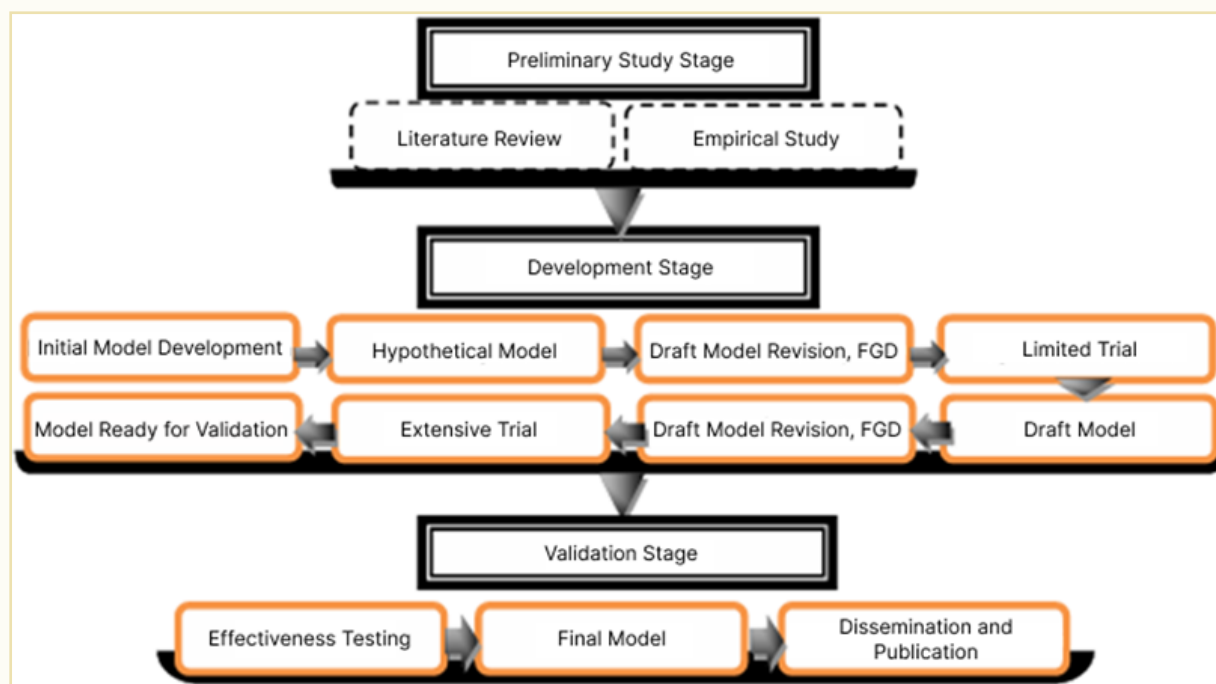


Figure 1 Flow of research and development stages

The research process followed a structured framework, beginning with a preliminary study to explore the theoretical and empirical aspects of multicultural education as well as the Value Inquiry approach [22]. This stage was followed by the development phase, in which the initial model was designed based on literature review and field data [40]. The draft model then underwent a series of revisions based on input from Focus Group Discussions (FGD) involving education experts and practitioners [41]. Once a robust version of the model was established, it was tested in real classroom settings [42]. The subsequent stages included validation of the model's effectiveness and dissemination of the research findings [38]. The design of the model emphasized social and humanistic values, encouraging students to engage in dialogue, reflection, and collaborative problem-solving around real-world issues related to diversity and inclusion [39].

The research team consisted of members from diverse disciplines, each with specific responsibilities to ensure the smooth implementation of the project. The principal investigator, Roni Rodiyana, was responsible for overall coordination, managing the research design, directing model development, and supervising classroom implementation. M. Bambang Edi Siswanto from State University of Surabaya contributed to the design and implementation of the educational model, assisted in data analysis, and served as a co-author of the research report. Ari Yanto from Majalengka University was involved in the development of instruments, field implementation, and data management. Rif'at Shafwatul Anam from Universitas Terbuka supported the development of the theoretical framework, conducted in-depth data analysis, and contributed to the writing of academic articles. Through this systematic and collaborative research process, the study aims to produce a tested and adaptable multicultural education model, grounded in the Value Inquiry approach, that can foster future educators who are critical, inclusive, and socially conscious in the Indonesian context.

RESULTS

The development process of the multicultural education model based on Value Inquiry was carried out through several key stages, beginning with a preliminary study followed by observations, interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs). This approach ensured that the model was grounded in real conditions, as well as in the needs and expectations of both students and lecturers within teacher education programs. The preliminary study included a literature review and field observations at two partner institutions, namely Universitas Negeri Surabaya and Universitas Majalengka. This stage was crucial for identifying the challenges faced by prospective teachers in understanding and applying multicultural values in both learning and teaching practice.

A total of 60 students were observed during the classroom learning process, with particular attention given to their responses to multicultural issues. The observations revealed a low level of awareness regarding cultural diversity and limited participation in discussions related to social and cultural differences. The understanding demonstrated by students tended to be mono-cultural and was not yet able to connect the material with the realities of diversity in society. During the interview stage (March 26, 2025), involving 20 students and 10 lecturers, there emerged a strong interest in more inclusive and experience-oriented learning approaches. The current teaching practices were perceived as insufficient in providing space for personal reflection or critical discussion of issues related to diversity and social justice. From the lecturers' perspective, although there was an awareness of the importance of multicultural education, a systematic framework or learning model to effectively integrate these values into the curriculum was still lacking.

These findings were further reinforced through a focus group discussion (FGD) involving 15 participants, consisting of lecturers and stakeholders in the field of education. The FGD emphasized the importance of a learning model that is not only rich in content but also pedagogically interactive. The participants recommended the integration of case-based learning, group dialogue, reflective journaling, and direct engagement with community issues.

Based on these inputs, an initial model was designed consisting of four main components:

1. **Inquiry-Based Multicultural Modules:** Developed around key themes such as identity, prejudice, and social justice. Each module begins with a case study, followed by inquiry-based exploration and group activities.

2. Reflective Practice Activities: Assignments that require students to reflect on their own cultural biases and their impact on teaching perspectives.
3. Collaborative Projects: Group tasks oriented toward addressing diversity-related challenges in real classroom contexts.
4. Assessment and Feedback: A multi-layered assessment model that includes self-reflection reports and peer evaluations, ensuring continuous feedback and personal growth.

Table 1 Summary of research inputs

Respondent Group	Number of Participants	Key Findings	Suggested Components
Students (Observation)	60	Limited awareness of cultural diversity and low engagement with multicultural content in classes.	Multicultural case discussions, interactive activities.
Students (Interview)	20	Students expressed a desire for more inclusive and real-world learning experiences.	Use of real-world issues, personal reflection assignments.
Lecturers (Interview)	10	Lecturers noted the lack of structured models to guide multicultural education practices.	Clear guidelines for integrating Value Inquiry in course design.
FGD Participants	15	Consensus on the need for interactive methods like case studies and group discussions.	Collaborative learning, issue-based modules, flexible content.

The underlying rationale of this model is the conviction that values such as empathy, tolerance, and inclusivity must be internalized through active engagement rather than mere instruction. By involving prospective teachers in processes of inquiry, dialogue, and reflection, the model seeks to transform mindsets rather than simply transfer knowledge. This Value Inquiry-based multicultural education model will be piloted in teacher education classrooms and refined through iterative testing, feedback collection, and expert validation. The following subsection will discuss how this draft model was revised based on pilot implementation and how it evolved into a final model ready for broader application.

The pilot implementation of the Value Inquiry-based multicultural education model was conducted at two institutions: Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA) and Universitas Majalengka (UNMA). The trial aimed to evaluate the practical application of the model, assess its impact on students' multicultural attitudes, and collect feedback for refinement. A total of 80 prospective teachers participated in the trial, with 40 students from UNESA and 40 from UNMA. These students were enrolled in courses such as Civic Education or Philosophy of Education, which provided an appropriate context for applying the Value Inquiry model. The implementation lasted for six weeks, with weekly sessions that included case-based discussions, reflective exercises, and collaborative problem-solving tasks.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the model in enhancing students' multicultural attitudes, a standardized multicultural attitude questionnaire was administered before and after the trial. This instrument measured attitudes across three domains: (1) cultural sensitivity, (2) tolerance, and (3) empathy.

Table 2 Quantitative results (pre- and post-questionnaire data)

Domain of Attitude	Pre-Test Mean Score (UNESA)	Post-Test Mean Score (UNESA)	Pre-Test Mean Score (UNMA)	Post-Test Mean Score (UNMA)
Cultural Sensitivity	67.4	82.1	64.8	80.2
Tolerance	70.2	85.5	68.9	84.0
Empathy	65.1	81.3	63.5	79.7
Total Average	67.6	82.9	65.7	81.3

The data in Table 2 indicate a significant improvement in students' multicultural attitudes following the implementation of the Value Inquiry-based model. Each of the measured domains – cultural sensitivity, tolerance, and empathy – showed a marked increase across both institutions. At Universitas Negeri Surabaya, the average post-test score rose from 67.6 to 82.9, while at Universitas Majalengka it increased from 65.7 to 81.3. These figures demonstrate a meaningful enhancement of attitudes within the relatively short six-week intervention period.

The substantial improvement in cultural sensitivity reflects students' heightened awareness of cultural identities and differences. In terms of tolerance, the gains indicate a greater readiness to accept diverse perspectives and respect the values of others. Meanwhile, the increase in empathy suggests a deeper emotional engagement with the lived experiences of individuals from different cultural backgrounds. The use of structured reflection, real-life cases, and collaborative inquiry proved effective in transforming abstract values into personally meaningful experiences.

These results were statistically supported by paired t-test analysis ($p < 0.01$), confirming that the changes were not coincidental but rather the outcome of deliberate pedagogical intervention. The data validate the design principles of the model and affirm its impact on both the cognitive and affective dimensions of learning.

Table 3 Sample of individual student score gains

Student Code	Domain	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Gain
UNESA-S03	Cultural Sensitivity	66	81	+15
UNESA-S03	Tolerance	68	85	+17
UNESA-S03	Empathy	63	80	+17
UNMA-S11	Cultural Sensitivity	62	78	+16
UNMA-S11	Tolerance	70	86	+16
UNMA-S11	Empathy	64	81	+17

Table 3 presents illustrative cases of individual student score improvements, highlighting the personal transformations that occurred throughout the program. Students from both institutions demonstrated consistent patterns of growth. For instance, student UNESA-S03 experienced an increase of 15 to 17 points across all domains, while student UNMA-S11 exhibited similar progress. Such consistent gains reflect the personal impact of the learning process, indicating that the model is effective not only at the aggregate level but also in fostering individual developmental trajectories.

These student cases further reveal that the learning journey was both affective and cognitive in nature. Through structured group discussions and personal reflective assignments, students engaged in self-examination of their identities and empathically connected with the experiences of others. These tasks encouraged them to confront biases and articulate their thoughts with greater depth. The process appears to have triggered enduring internal changes in their values and attitudes.

Such transformations are especially critical in teacher education, as future educators must be equipped to navigate the diversity inherent in classroom contexts. The Value Inquiry model thus supports not only the transfer of knowledge but also the cultivation of character – an often overlooked yet indispensable dimension of educational practice.

The engagement data in Table 4 illustrate the week-to-week development of students' classroom behaviors. Verbal participation, initially relatively low in the first week (2.5), increased steadily to reach 4.6 by the sixth week. A similar trend was observed in critical thinking and openness to diverse perspectives. This growth indicates that students became more confident and willing to engage in dialogue, pose questions, and consider alternative viewpoints.

In the early weeks, students tended to hesitate in expressing their opinions or challenging dominant perspectives. Many were uncertain about how to frame their thoughts on sensitive issues such as ethnicity, religion, and social inequality. However, consistent exposure to inquiry-

based activities and case-based learning gradually enabled them to engage more comfortably in controversial discussions. The reflective journal component further supported this process by helping them to process emotions and prepare more thoughtful contributions to classroom dialogue.

Table 4 Weekly engagement levels (mean score out of 5)

Week	Verbal Participation	Critical Thinking	Collaboration	Openness to Diverse Views
1	2.5	2.2	3.0	2.4
2	3.1	2.9	3.4	3.0
3	3.6	3.7	4.1	3.8
4	4.0	4.2	4.3	4.2
5	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.5
6	4.6	4.7	4.8	4.7

By the sixth week, the learning environment had evolved into a dynamic space for collaborative inquiry. Students demonstrated not only increased engagement but also signs of mutual respect, active listening, and a willingness to revise their views – key indicators of multicultural competence. The rise in collaboration scores likewise suggests that group structures helped cultivate trust and a sense of shared responsibility for inclusive learning.

Table 5 Student interview themes and representative quotes

Theme	Description	Sample Quote
Self-awareness	Recognition of personal bias	"I didn't realize how biased I was until the reflections."
Emotional discomfort	Cognitive dissonance due to value conflict	"It was challenging, but that's how I grew."
New perspectives	Understanding the marginalized	"I never thought about how it feels to be the minority."
Increased empathy	Greater emotional attunement to others	"Now I try to listen more before judging."

The themes in Table 5 were derived from semi-structured interviews with 16 participating students. These themes illustrate the internal transformations experienced by the students. The excerpts reveal that students were pushed out of their comfort zones, leading to deeper self-awareness and an enhanced understanding of social dynamics. The discomfort they encountered was not a sign of failure but rather evidence that meaningful learning had taken place – particularly when they were confronted with ingrained biases and assumptions.

The students began to articulate their views with greater nuance and demonstrated openness to exploring diverse cultural perspectives. Interestingly, many of them had never previously engaged with issues such as marginalization or social privilege within an educational context. This model not only introduced such issues but also provided the space and tools to process them on both personal and relational levels. The qualitative data complement the quantitative improvements, adding a human dimension to the evaluation. This underscores that the model does not merely improve scores, but also cultivates character, empathy, and reflective citizenship – fundamental qualities for future educators.

The feedback presented in Table 6 highlights the iterative nature of the model's development. Input from faculty members, students, and external evaluators contributed to refining the final version of the model, ensuring greater usability and pedagogical responsiveness. The implementation of reflective guidelines, time allocation adjustments, and visual aids addressed initial barriers to participation and comprehension.

Table 6 Summary of feedback and resulting revisions

Source	Feedback	Revision Implemented
Lecturers (UNESA)	Students confused by open-ended questions	Added scaffolding with reflection prompts
Lecturers (UNMA)	Time constraints for deeper discussion	Developed pacing guide with recommended timing
Evaluator (UT)	Local context adaptation needed	Included optional regional case studies in the module
Student feedback	Difficulty navigating inquiry phases	Provided visual process map and checklist

These revisions underscore the importance of collaborative design and responsiveness in educational innovation. Rather than imposing rigid structures, the model evolved in accordance with classroom realities and learner needs. Its capacity to adapt to local cultural contexts through the localization of case studies further enhances the model's relevance within Indonesia's diverse educational landscape. By refining the model based on practical feedback, this study ensures that it remains contextual, realistic, and scalable. Such modifications increase the likelihood of adoption, sustainability, and integration into broader teacher education curriculum reforms nationwide.

DISCUSSION

The development of a multicultural education model based on the Value Inquiry approach carries significant implications for the design, implementation, and evolution of teacher education curricula in Indonesia. In an increasingly globalized and culturally diverse society, educators face the challenge not only of delivering subject matter but also of equipping students with the capacity to navigate the complexities of pluralism, identity, and coexistence. This model provides both a theoretical and practical framework aimed at embedding inclusive values into the foundation of teacher training. The emphasis on value inquiry, self-reflection, and lived experience extends learning into the cognitive, emotional, and ethical dimensions – dimensions that are often overlooked in traditional content-based approaches.

This approach is in line with Reframing teacher education around inclusion, equity, and social justice, which emphasizes that teacher education should not only focus on classroom-based pedagogical competencies but must also be directed toward a broader, value-centered approach that empowers teachers as agents of change to create a more inclusive, equitable, and just society [43]. This approach is also consistent with the orientation of teacher education grounded in social justice and diversity awareness as prerequisites for democratic education in the 21st century. This approach aligns with research showing that value-based learning can foster empathy and critical thinking skills in multicultural contexts [44]. This approach is also supported by Insights into teachers' intercultural and global competence within multicultural educational settings, which highlights the importance of intercultural teacher training in preparing them to face the challenges of multicultural classrooms by equipping them with the appropriate skills, knowledge, and attitudes to build global competence [45].

The primary contribution of this model lies in its capacity to transform how prospective teachers engage with diversity – not as an abstract academic subject, but as a real-world dynamic that demands reflective and deliberate responses. Through the integration of modules addressing issues of identity, structural inequality, stereotypes, and social justice, the model stimulates teacher candidates to critically examine their own biases and personal assumptions. This approach is particularly relevant in the Indonesian educational context, where cultural and religious heterogeneity characterizes the student population. As emphasized in examining the role of critical inquiry for transformative practices, multicultural teacher education needs to extend beyond formal coursework into broader venues that provide opportunities for collaboration and ongoing critical reflection to be truly transformative [46]. This aligns with fostering multicultural appreciation in pre-service teachers through multicultural curricular transformation, which argues that re-conceptualizing teacher education programs through multicultural curricular transformation fosters multicultural appreciation and equips pre-service teachers with the competencies necessary to address diverse school demographics effectively [47].

The implications of this model also extend significantly when viewed from the perspective of curriculum development. It challenges the dominant structures in teacher education that often rely on rigid syllabi and prescriptive lesson plans. Instead, it offers a flexible inquiry-based modular framework that can be applied across courses and institutions. This approach aligns with the concept of curriculum as inquiry, which positions students as active subjects in the learning process rather than mere recipients of knowledge [48]. By organizing learning around questions rather than answers and prioritizing real-life experiences over rote memorization, this model redefines the meaning of meaningful learning in teacher education. This is consistent with investigating the dynamics of contemporary pedagogical approaches in higher education, which emphasizes the paradigm shift in higher education toward more holistic, flexible, and student-centered approaches, including the integration of active learning, project-based learning, and digital technologies [49]. Furthermore, navigating global dynamics in teacher education highlights that teacher education must be able to respond to global dynamics such as technology integration, inclusivity, 21st-century competencies, sustainability, and crisis preparedness, ensuring that teacher education systems remain adaptive and globally relevant [50].

Practically, this model provides a set of tools that can be directly adopted by curriculum designers and lecturers, consisting of complete modules that include activities, discussion guides, reflective exercises, and assessment rubrics aligned with national education standards as well as global best practices. Such ease of integration reduces institutional resistance and accelerates curriculum innovation, consistent with developing a model for integrating professional practice and evidence-based teaching practices into BME Curriculum, which demonstrates that practice-based modules can accelerate pedagogical adoption by more effectively connecting theory with professional practice [51]. The potential of this model is also consistent with cultural competence in education, which emphasizes that cultural competence must be fostered through curriculum development, teacher training, community engagement, and the use of technology to create inclusive learning environments that value diversity [52]. Moreover, the modular and flexible design of this model allows for cross-disciplinary integration and the development of adaptive and reflective teacher competencies, thereby supporting the transformation of teacher education in line with the principles of practice-based professional learning [53].

At the national policy level, the Value Inquiry model directly supports government programs such as the Merdeka Curriculum and Kampus Merdeka by emphasizing student-centered, character-based, and socially relevant learning. This model encourages students to think critically, engage in collaborative inquiry, and confront real-world dilemmas, thereby concretizing policy objectives and bridging the gap between policy idealism and classroom practice. This is in line with research on Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL), which has been proven to enhance critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and peer collaboration [18]. The model is also consistent with the study how to promote 21st-century skills through community-driven social studies education, which demonstrates that connecting classroom learning with community contexts fosters 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, adaptability, and collaboration, while also increasing student motivation and engagement [54]. Thus, the Value Inquiry model is not only aligned with national priorities but also empirically validated as an effective means of bridging educational policy with classroom practice.

Although initially developed for primary teacher education, the core principles of the Value Inquiry model can be applied across various academic disciplines. Fields such as educational leadership, religious studies, communication, sociology, and health sciences can benefit from this model's emphasis on values, dialogue, and social inquiry. This allows for horizontal curriculum integration, whereby different university departments adopt pedagogical approaches that highlight ethical engagement and social responsibility. Such a shift has the potential to position universities as centers of value-based inclusive education, fostering a campus culture that emphasizes justice, empathy, and intellectual openness. In line with the notion that values-based inquiry is proven effective in enhancing interdisciplinary understanding, cross-field collaboration, and students' ethical reflection [30], the application of these principles across disciplines supports the development of social and moral competencies relevant to both global and professional contexts.

This model also makes a significant contribution to the professional development of lecturers and facilitators. During its trial implementation, many educators reported that applying this model encouraged critical reflection on their own teaching practices. Managing inquiry-based and value-oriented discussions required them to move beyond conventional lecture methods, while

simultaneously creating space for open dialogue, uncertainty, and emotional engagement. Such professional transformation becomes particularly relevant in educational systems where the majority of educators are still trained under traditional pedagogical approaches. By providing a structured yet adaptive framework, the model empowers lecturers to act not only as subject-matter experts but also as facilitators of learning who are ethically grounded and emotionally sensitive. In the long term, its application holds the potential to initiate institutional teaching culture change, where reflection, inclusivity, and collaboration become the norm of pedagogical practice. Reflective and value-based practices are expected to enhance both the pedagogical and ethical competencies of lecturers, while simultaneously fostering institutional cultural transformation in higher education.

Through this model, the classroom becomes pedagogically richer as it fosters trust, openness, and mutual respect. The use of case studies, group reflection, and personal narratives enables students from diverse backgrounds to voice their experiences, challenge stereotypes, and develop a shared understanding of complex social issues. This approach is highly relevant in Indonesia, where religious intolerance, gender discrimination, and ethnic marginalization continue to affect both the education system and social life. By normalizing discussions of such issues in teacher education, the model prepares future educators to facilitate similar dialogues in their own classrooms. The implementation of this model can strengthen an inclusive and democratic school culture.

The empirical success of this model – demonstrated through both quantitative and qualitative data – provides a strong evidence base for curriculum reform. Significant improvements in empathy, tolerance, and cultural sensitivity confirm the model's effectiveness in shaping attitudes and values. These outcomes are not only of academic importance but also of social and ethical significance. They illustrate that educational institutions, with the right tools and commitment, can actively shape the character and moral development of future teachers. For policymakers, this evidence is crucial in strengthening arguments for investment in values-based education. For universities, it represents a best-practice model that can be adapted and expanded.

The broader implications of this model lie in its contribution to educational equity and social transformation. By preparing teachers to recognize and confront inequalities, the model plays a role in reducing achievement and access gaps in education. Culturally competent teachers are more likely to create inclusive environments, identify and mitigate bias, and serve as advocates for their students. In the long term, such practices can drive systemic improvements in educational equity and social cohesion. Thus, this multicultural education model grounded in Value Inquiry is not merely a curricular innovation – it is also a vehicle for building a more just, empathetic, and pluralistic society, beginning with those who will educate the next generation.

CONCLUSION

This study has successfully developed and evaluated a multicultural education model based on the Value Inquiry approach, designed to enhance the multicultural attitudes of prospective elementary school teachers. Grounded in empirical findings from observations, interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs), the model demonstrates strong effectiveness in fostering cultural sensitivity, tolerance, and empathy. The integration of inquiry-based learning, reflective activities, and collaborative problem-solving enables students to deeply engage with issues of diversity and cultivate an inclusive mindset. Quantitative and qualitative results from trials conducted at two universities reveal significant improvements in students' attitudes and critical awareness, thereby affirming the pedagogical value and applicability of this model.

Looking ahead, it is recommended that this model be more widely adopted in teacher education programs across Indonesia, with necessary contextual adjustments. Educational institutions should provide adequate training for lecturers to implement the model effectively, including supporting materials and time guidelines to ensure smooth integration. Further longitudinal research is also advised to evaluate the long-term impact of the model on teaching practices in real classrooms. Aligned with Indonesia's commitment to advancing equity and educational inclusion, this Value Inquiry-based model offers a practical, scalable, and meaningful approach to preparing culturally competent and socially responsible educators.

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Rif'at Shafwatul Anam, 2026

The author's declared no conflicts of interest