

PREPARING STUDENTS AS AGENTS OF SOCIAL CHANGE: ANTI-RACISM AND ANTI-ETHNOCENTRISM EDUCATION THROUGH A SOCIAL JUSTICE-BASED CURRICULUM

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse the role of anti-racism and anti-ethnocentrism education within a social justice-based curriculum framework as an effort to prepare students to become agents of social change. The background of this study is based on the urgency of building critical awareness and inclusive attitudes amid increasing social challenges resulting from racial and ethnic discrimination. The method used is library research through a systematic review of academic literature, previous studies, educational policy documents, and examples of curriculum implementation in various contexts. The results of the study indicate that integrating anti-racism and anti-ethnocentrism values into the curriculum can strengthen students' social awareness, empathy, and critical thinking skills regarding issues of injustice. The success of implementation requires participatory learning strategies, support from competent teachers, and an inclusive school environment. This study recommends strengthening teacher training, selecting multicultural teaching materials, and formulating education policies that prioritise social justice to ensure the sustainability of positive impacts on society at large.

Keywords: anti-racism education, anti-ethnocentrism, social justice-based curriculum, social change agents, literature review.

Introduction

In an era of globalisation and increasingly intense cross-cultural interconnection, the world community is faced with the reality that ethnic, cultural, and racial diversity are an integral part of social life. However, the phenomena of racism and ethnocentrism remain significant social issues, both at the individual and structural levels (, 2024) ; (Juliani & Aslan, 2024) ; (Mariska & Aslan, 2024) . Racism, as a form of discrimination based on race, and ethnocentrism, as the attitude of judging other cultures based on one's own cultural standards, can lead to social fragmentation, prejudice, and conflicts that hinder the realisation of an inclusive and harmonious society. In the context of education, this issue is not only reflected in interactions among students but also in teaching materials, school policies, and teaching practices that are not yet fully responsive to diversity (Mukhopadhyay, 2024) .

Education plays a strategic role in shaping the mindset, attitudes, and behaviour of the younger generation. Schools, as formal institutions, are the most effective spaces

for instilling values of equality, justice, and respect for diversity. Through the right approach, education can function as an instrument of social transformation, where students are not merely recipients of knowledge but active agents of change striving to achieve social justice (Arnadi et al., 2024); (Haryanto & Kusmiyati, 2022). However, this requires a curriculum design that explicitly integrates anti-racist and anti-ethnocentric perspectives, enabling students to identify, critique, and change discriminatory practices in their environment (Bozkurt, 2024).

A social justice-based curriculum is one of the conceptual and practical breakthroughs that can address these challenges. This approach not only emphasises academic achievement but also empowers students to understand and overcome existing injustices in society. In practice, this curriculum embraces diverse perspectives, values different life experiences, and facilitates critical discussions on issues of discrimination, inequality, and human rights. As a result, a social justice-based curriculum has the potential to produce a generation with critical consciousness and social skills to bring about positive change (Wood, 2022).

The phenomenon of racism and ethnocentrism in education often stems from biased historical understanding, homogeneous teaching materials, and pedagogical practices that do not take into account the cultural diversity of students. For example, textbooks that highlight the contributions of majority groups while ignoring or minimising the role of minority groups can indirectly perpetuate negative stereotypes (Tsiougkou, 2025). As a result, students from marginalised groups feel undervalued, while students from dominant groups tend to maintain a sense of cultural superiority. This is where the importance of anti-racist and anti-ethnocentric education lies: it is not merely about providing information, but about dismantling discriminatory value structures.

Anti-racism and anti-ethnocentrism education requires a reflective, participatory, and transformative learning process. Teachers are not merely conveyors of information, but also facilitators of cross-cultural dialogue and role models of inclusive behaviour. Learning materials must reflect diversity, highlight narratives from various groups, and teach empathy and conflict resolution skills. Through this approach, students are encouraged to acknowledge privilege, understand others' experiences of discrimination, and develop solidarity that transcends the boundaries of identity groups. (Utomo, 2024).

In the context of Indonesia — as well as Southeast Asian regions such as Sabah, Malaysia — the urgency of anti-racism and anti-ethnocentrism education is increasingly relevant given the high ethnic and cultural heterogeneity. Although this plurality is a source of wealth, history also shows that horizontal conflicts between groups can arise if there is no shared awareness of mutual respect. Social justice-based education serves as both a preventive and promotional mechanism that can strengthen social cohesion, reduce prejudice, and build trust across communities (Baumeister & Leary, 2020).

The implementation of a social justice-based curriculum requires a strong theoretical foundation. Concepts such as Paulo Freire's *Critical Pedagogy* emphasise the importance of liberating students from oppressive knowledge and encouraging critical awareness to change social realities. Similarly, James Banks' *Multicultural Education* theory emphasises the need to integrate diverse perspectives into all components of education, from subject matter and teaching processes to evaluation and school policies. This theoretical foundation will be examined in this study to strengthen the implementation recommendations of ". However, integrating anti-racist and anti-ethnocentric values into the curriculum is not always straightforward. Challenges may arise from resistance among teachers or school administrators who do not fully understand the concept of social justice, resource limitations, or national education policies that prioritise conventional academic achievements (Setiawan, 2022) . Therefore, implementation strategies must be tailored to the socio-cultural context of each region and complemented by intensive teacher training.

From a social perspective, the effective implementation of anti-racism and anti-ethnocentrism education will have a long-term impact on the quality of interactions between citizens. Students who are accustomed to an inclusive perspective at school will carry this attitude into their social lives. They will be better prepared to address global issues such as migration, religious diversity, and social injustice with an open and constructive attitude (Williams, 2024) .

Based on the above discussion, this study aims to examine in depth the concept and implementation of a social justice-based curriculum in fostering anti-racist and anti-ethnocentric values among students.

Research

This study utilises a literature review method, which involves systematically examining various academic literature, research reports, educational policy documents, and other relevant sources that discuss anti-racism, anti-ethnocentrism, and social justice-based curriculum. Data collection was conducted through the search for primary and secondary sources from scientific journals, books, international organisation reports, and national regulations related to the research topic (Elijah & Aslan, 2025) . These sources were then analysed qualitatively using content analysis to identify theoretical concepts, implementation principles, and strategies for integrating anti-racism and anti-ethnocentrism values into the curriculum. The analysis also compared various models and best practices from relevant international and local contexts, enabling the formulation of conceptual findings and practical recommendations for the development of educational policies and practices in Indonesia .

Results and Discussion

Anti-Racism and Anti-Ethnocentrism Education in the Context of Social Justice

Anti-racism and anti-ethnocentrism education is an important part of efforts to build a fair and inclusive society. Racism and ethnocentrism, which refer to discrimination based on race and cultural biases that value one's own culture as superior to others, have negative impacts on social cohesion and the development of harmony among groups. Education can serve as a primary tool in dismantling these discriminatory structures by fostering critical awareness and tolerant attitudes among the younger generation (Banks & Banks, 2021).

Within the framework of social justice, education aims not only to transfer academic knowledge, but also to equip students with values of equality, respect for diversity, and the ability to recognise injustice. Social justice in the context of education means providing equitable access, treatment, and resources, as well as promoting cultural transformation that rejects all forms of discrimination, including racism and ethnocentrism (Culp, 2025).

Racism and ethnocentrism are often embedded in social structures and education systems indirectly, through teaching materials, unconscious stereotypes, and policies that are not responsive to diversity. Therefore, anti-racism and anti-ethnocentrism education must be designed in such a way as to dismantle these biases and foster a more open and inclusive understanding. (Efendi, 2024).

Anti-racism education is not merely about teaching the absence of discrimination; it encourages students to recognise, critique, and combat racist practices that still exist in society and within themselves. This requires a reflective learning process, where students become aware of their privileges and social positions, and actively participate in striving for social change that is fair (K. Sari, 2023). Meanwhile, anti-ethnocentric education focuses on developing the ability to appreciate and understand cultural diversity without prejudice. By rejecting ethnocentrism, students are encouraged to view other cultures with an open mind, respect differences, and avoid cultural superiority that can trigger conflict and social segregation (Wijaya & Nursanti, 2023).

The theoretical foundations of anti-racist and anti-ethnocentric education are largely derived from critical pedagogy and social theory, which view education as a tool for liberation and social transformation. Paulo Freire, with his concept of *Critical Pedagogy*, emphasises the importance of education that liberates students from oppression and injustice, while James Banks, in *Multicultural Education*, prioritises the integration of diversity in all aspects of education (Banks & Banks, 2021).

The concept of social justice requires the redistribution of educational resources and fair treatment for all groups, especially those who have been marginalised. Anti-racist and anti-ethnocentric education plays an important role in ensuring this through

inclusive curricula that accommodate the narratives and experiences of minority groups (Wijaya & Nursanti, 2023).

In practice, anti-racism and anti-ethnocentrism education must prioritise participatory and dialogic approaches, where students and teachers can openly discuss issues of discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes. Learning activities based on discussion, case studies, and self-reflection will strengthen students' understanding and empathy towards experiences different from their own (Pitoyo, 2023).

One of the main challenges in this education is resistance from groups or individuals who feel threatened by efforts to dismantle racist and ethnocentric values. Therefore, anti-racism and anti-ethnocentrism education also requires clear policy support, adequate teacher training, and a conducive school environment for developing social justice values (Castro, 2025).

In the context of Indonesia and Southeast Asia, which is known for its ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity, anti-racism and anti-ethnocentrism education is particularly urgent. Past horizontal conflicts have emphasised the need for education that can strengthen social cohesion and promote tolerance among various groups in society (Harvey, 2025).

A social justice-based curriculum that integrates anti-racist and anti-ethnocentric values can serve as an effective model for preparing students as agents of social change. This curriculum teaches students to recognise structural injustice and develop the social skills and critical awareness needed to address social inequality (Gorski & Swalwell, 2021).

In the context of learning, inclusive material includes multi-perspective history, introduction to diverse cultures, and respect for human rights and diversity. Teachers play a central role as facilitators who guide students in critical and empathetic learning processes, while also serving as models of anti-discriminatory attitudes (Ikhlas et al., 2024); (Puspitasari & Aslan, 2024).

The effectiveness of anti-racism and anti-ethnocentrism education should also be evaluated, not only in terms of academic achievements but also changes in students' attitudes, understanding, and social behaviour. In this way, education will bring about real and sustainable change in society (Gorski & Swalwell, 2021).

Overall, anti-racism and anti-ethnocentrism education in the context of social justice is not merely an idealistic demand, but a real necessity in facing the challenges of plurality and social injustice. Through inclusive and transformative education, the younger generation can be prepared to become agents of change capable of creating a more just, harmonious, and mutually respectful society.

A Social Justice-Based Curriculum to Prepare Agents of Social Change

A social justice-based curriculum is an educational approach designed to create equality, inclusivity, and advocacy for marginalised groups in society. In the context of

preparing students as agents of social change, this curriculum places social justice values as the main foundation that guides the entire learning process and the development of student competencies (Klein, 2023).

One of the main characteristics of a social justice-based curriculum is its focus on empowering students to recognise and criticise injustices in social, economic and political systems. This curriculum not only teaches factual knowledge, but also instils critical awareness and an active attitude towards bringing about change for a more just society (Sevincer & Arikan, 2023).

The integration of anti-racism and anti-ethnocentrism values into the curriculum is an important aspect in shaping students' understanding of various forms of discrimination and inequality that exist. This encourages students to view diversity not as an obstacle, but as a social asset that must be respected and preserved (M. Sari, 2020).

The social justice-based curriculum approach also emphasises contextual learning that is relevant to students' real lives, so that teaching materials and methods are designed to suit their experiences and social environment. Thus, the learning process becomes more meaningful and motivates students to actively contribute to social change (Ladson-Billings, 2022).

The teaching strategy in this curriculum involves participatory, dialogic, and reflective methods, which enable students to discuss social issues openly, broaden their perspectives, and develop empathy. Teachers act as facilitators who help students understand the complexities of injustice while exploring creative solutions (Mgbara, 2025).

A social justice-based curriculum also focuses on developing social and emotional skills, such as cross-cultural communication, conflict resolution, and cooperation in diversity. These skills are essential for shaping agents of change who can interact effectively and inclusively in society (Lamsal, 2024).

To support the successful implementation of this curriculum, the role of teachers is crucial. Teachers must have a deep understanding of social justice and pedagogical competencies to effectively deliver anti-racist and anti-ethnocentric content. Therefore, teacher training and professional development are top priorities in this curriculum (Jones, 2022).

A supportive school environment is also an important factor in strengthening social justice values. Schools should be safe and inclusive spaces where all students feel accepted, respected, and have equal opportunities to develop without discrimination or prejudice. Examples of social justice-based curriculum implementation can be found in programmes that incorporate real-life case studies, social projects, and community collaboration as part of the learning process. This approach helps students apply their knowledge and values of justice in their daily lives. (May & Sleeter, 2020).

This curriculum also encourages the use of diverse and representative learning resources, including literature, media, and narratives from various social and cultural groups. This enriches students' knowledge and eliminates the dominance of a single narrative that can lead to bias. Assessment in a social justice-based curriculum not only measures academic achievement but also assesses students' attitudinal development, critical awareness, and social skills. Formative and reflective assessment are essential components to ensure that the goal of fostering change agents is achieved. .

This curriculum has great potential to create long-term positive impacts, both at the individual and social levels. Students equipped with social justice values and skills will be better prepared to face complex challenges in a pluralistic society and become drivers of constructive change (Tubagus et al., 2023) ; (Aslan & Pong, 2023) . However, challenges in implementing a social justice-based curriculum cannot be ignored. Cultural resistance, resource constraints, and rigid educational structures can act as barriers. To address these challenges, a collective commitment from all stakeholders, including the government, educational institutions, teachers, parents, and the community, is required. (Ladson-Billings, 2022) .

Overall, a social justice-based curriculum is an important and relevant framework for preparing students to become agents of social change who are able to advocate for values of equality and inclusivity. Through this transformative education, future generations can contribute to building a more just, harmonious, and civilised society.

Conclusion

Anti-racism and anti-ethnocentrism education within the framework of social justice is an important foundation for creating an equal and inclusive society. Through critical understanding of various forms of discrimination, education can dismantle structural biases that are deeply rooted in schools and society. This approach positions students not merely as recipients of knowledge but as individuals with social awareness and a moral commitment to upholding the values of equality, tolerance, and respect for diversity.

A social justice-based curriculum is a potential instrument for preparing students as agents of social change. With the integration of anti-racism and anti-ethnocentrism values, this curriculum promotes participatory, reflective, and contextual learning that encourages students to identify problems of injustice and seek constructive solutions. The role of teachers, school environment support, and the s of inclusive teaching materials are key factors in the successful implementation of this curriculum to change students' perspectives and behaviour.

Overall, the implementation of anti-racism and anti-ethnocentrism education integrated into a social justice-based curriculum has great potential to shape a generation that not only understands diversity but is also capable of advocating for the rights of marginalised groups and leading positive social change. The success of this

concept depends on the commitment of all stakeholders—government, schools, teachers, students, and the community—to create an education system that is truly fair, equitable, and inclusive for a harmonious future.

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