
Incorporating A Multicultural Educational Framework into School Curricula

Fatima Favour-Tamar Tanimu, PhD¹, Omobolaji O Akanbi, PhD², Lum Comfort Nche, PhD³

^{1,2}School of Education University of The Gambia

³Department of Management Sciences International University Banmenda, Cameroon

ABSTRACT: Multicultural education seeks to acknowledge and value the experiences and viewpoints of marginalized groups that are frequently overlooked in conventional academic settings, including those affected by racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, gender, linguistic, and religious inequalities. The objective of the study is to explore the essence of incorporating multicultural education into the educational curriculum of schools. The research was carried out in the Republic of Niger and The Gambia, utilized both qualitative and quantitative techniques, combining library and field studies. Relevant literature was reviewed, and "Triangulation" (multi-methods) was employed for information gathering (Creswell, & Creswell, 2023). To get secondary information, the Internet was also utilized for the study's purpose. The research utilized semi-structured questionnaires, focus-group oral interviews, and personal observations to gather data from school administrators, students, and community leaders. The study shows that 54% of respondents support multicultural education, while 33% believe adequate student competition can attract parents and foster love for education, requiring dialogue with all stakeholders.

KEYWORDS: Multicultural, teacher, education, multicultural education, school, students

INTRODUCTION

Multicultural education is an educational approach that acknowledges and celebrates cultural diversity, creating inclusive and equitable learning environments for all students by incorporating diverse cultural perspectives and experiences into the curriculum. This is a modern teaching method that aims to encourage equity amongst all students despite their varied cultures, ethnicities, races, beliefs, and backgrounds. It integrates the histories, viewpoints, and values of all students in a given class. Multicultural education is a way of providing equal educational opportunities to all students with diverse languages to social skills, behaviour discipline, classroom involvement, and academic performance. Multicultural education is a set of teaching strategies formulated to help guide a teacher to navigate challenges faced in a multicultural class. It also helps teachers respond to and eliminate the issues faced by diverse students.

The increasing diversity of global societies necessitates the integration of multicultural education into school curricula. This approach fosters inclusivity, promotes social cohesion, and prepares students for a globalised world. This literature review examines recent research on multicultural curriculum integration, emphasising national policy comparisons, teacher education, global citizenship, case studies, and theoretical frameworks that support multicultural education. Multicultural education entails the use of cultural materials, texts, references, and historical examples that are understandable to students from different cultural backgrounds or that reflect their particular cultural experiences.

A multicultural classroom welcomes every learner—regardless of class, caste, gender, or belief—and supports them as they grow and learn together. It promotes openness and recognition of all cultural identities without favoritism or discrimination. In such a setting, a multicultural educator embraces these differences, recognizes harmful attitudes, and remains intentional about safeguarding the cultural identity of every student.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The seven basic characteristics of multicultural education are according to Banks (2022):

Foremost, a characteristic of multicultural education is respect for diversity. This means valuing and recognising each student's unique cultural background, identity, and experiences. It also involves building a space where all individuals feel secure sharing their ideas and views without worrying about being judged or treated unfairly. This includes respecting different customs, beliefs, values, languages, lifestyles, and religions. The second characteristic is an inclusive curriculum that reflects the diversity of cultures in the classroom. This includes incorporating materials from a variety of cultures into lessons and activities so that all students can

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see themselves represented in the curriculum. It also means teaching about different cultures in a respectful way that avoids stereotypes or oversimplifications. An example of an inclusive curriculum that we practice here at Intercultural is inviting family members to share their knowledge or expertise when it comes to certain cultural traditions, such as preparing food.

The third characteristic is equity-focused instruction that addresses systemic inequalities in society and ensures all students have access to quality education regardless of their background or identity. This includes using culturally responsive teaching strategies to engage students from diverse backgrounds in meaningful learning experiences. It also means providing additional support for students who may be struggling due to language barriers or other factors related to their cultural background or identity. Equity work can be hard work, but it is so necessary. Banks asserts further that, we have begun work with Dr. Valaida L. Wise, President & Principal Consultant, Dr. Valaida Wise Consulting, who has helped dozens of schools, corporations, and nonprofits to assess their current state with regard to equity issues, and then develop informed, comprehensive, customized plans that empower communities to move forward together. We believe it is our responsibility to create a dynamic, equitable learning environment for every single employee and student. These disciplines are even more vital because our purpose at Intercultural is to enable our students to be global citizens.

The fourth characteristic is cultural competency development, which involves helping students develop an understanding and appreciation for different cultures through activities such as field trips to museums or cultural events; engaging with guest speakers from diverse backgrounds, or participating in service-learning projects with organizations from different communities. By developing cultural competency skills, students can learn how to interact respectfully with people from other cultures both inside and outside the classroom setting.

The fifth characteristic is a collaborative learning environment where all students feel comfortable working together, regardless of their cultural backgrounds or identities. This includes creating opportunities for meaningful dialogue between students from different backgrounds so they can learn from each other's perspectives and experiences while developing mutual respect for one another's differences. It also means encouraging collaboration among teachers so they can share best practices for creating a more equitable learning environment for all students regardless of their culture or identity.

The sixth characteristic is student empowerment, which involves giving students ownership over their own learning by allowing them to explore topics related to their own culture as well as those outside of it; providing them with opportunities to lead projects related to multiculturalism; and encouraging them to take part in decision-making processes within the classroom setting, such as choosing topics for discussion or deciding on group activities related to multiculturalism topics. By empowering students through these types of activities, they can gain confidence in themselves while developing an understanding of how they fit into a larger social context beyond just their own culture or identity group.

The seventh characteristic is community engagement, which means linking the classroom with individuals from various cultural groups beyond the school. This helps students gain deeper insight into how people from different backgrounds interact in everyday life. By engaging with members from diverse communities outside school walls, teachers can help create more meaningful connections between what's being taught inside the classroom setting and what's happening out there in real life.

Multicultural education has become increasingly important as our society continues to become more diverse each day. By implementing these seven basic characteristics into our classrooms, we can create more equitable learning environments where all students feel respected, included, empowered, engaged, and valued regardless of their cultural background or identity. As the world continues to evolve quickly, the need for educational programs that address the needs of culturally diverse learners is growing. If you plan to integrate multicultural education into your classroom, here are some of the best strategies to help you achieve that.

To begin, it is essential to learn about the cultural backgrounds of all your students. This understanding helps you determine which cultures to highlight and how to plan your lessons effectively.

- You can get to know your students by interviewing them on the first day of class.
- You may also review their personal records.
- Additionally, speaking with their former teacher can give you valuable insight.

As a multicultural educator, you are responsible for recognizing your students' strengths and weaknesses so you can support them effectively. You can achieve this by:

- Reviewing their past academic records
- Conducting one-on-one interviews with each student
- Regularly evaluating their performance in class.

Creating informal sessions where students share their personal stories helps them open up, connect with one another, and strengthen communication skills. It is also important to hold **open discussions** on relevant social or cultural issues so students can express their views, listen to others, and learn about challenges faced by different communities. Group activities further promote teamwork and

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help reduce cultural barriers, increase participation, and encourage appreciation of diversity. Occasionally, students can bring traditional foods to share, allowing them to explore and enjoy one another's cultures. You can also ask students to tell folktales from their cultural backgrounds and discuss the lessons they teach. Inviting guest speakers from diverse cultures through seminars or events enriches the learning experience. Additionally, encouraging students to wear their cultural attire once a month and celebrating various cultural festivals helps all students feel included and contributes to a culturally responsive classroom.

To foster multiculturalism and encourage collaborative learning, teachers should design engaging games and activities. Group work enables students to learn more effectively, participate actively, perform better, and share aspects of their cultural heritage. Planning lessons and group activities in advance is therefore one of the strongest tools for promoting multicultural education. Using a variety of teaching styles can further involve students. Although modern methods are valuable, textbooks remain essential—especially stories from different cultures and in various languages, which help students connect more deeply with diverse characters and experiences. Board games that focus on subjects like geography, business, or vocabulary can also encourage interaction. Quizzes based on themed topics enhance quick thinking and cognitive skills.

Assigning group-based multicultural art projects allows students to express and exchange cultural knowledge, while regular debates on meaningful topics build speaking skills and promote appreciation of other cultures. Overall, multicultural education offers countless benefits. It makes students feel included, supports minority groups, and helps learners adapt more easily when they move to new environments for further studies or work. Ultimately, it strengthens secularism and social harmony, contributing to a more peaceful society.

Comparative Approaches to Multicultural Education

Smith et al. (2024) conducted a comparative study of multicultural curriculum integration in Finland, Ireland, and Hungary:

- **Finland** promotes a pluralistic and global orientation.
- **Ireland** emphasizes tolerance, respect, and cultural inclusion.
- **Hungary** adopts a more nationalistic curriculum focus.

The observation that Hungary maintains a nationalistic orientation requires contextualization. Smith et al. explain that Hungary's approach is shaped by socio-political priorities emphasizing national identity and cultural preservation, rather than outright dismissal of diversity. A nuanced interpretation prevents oversimplification and highlights the influence of national ideology on curriculum design.

Teacher Education and Curriculum Reform

The role of teacher education in multicultural curriculum implementation is crucial. Johnson and Lee (2024) highlight the following strategies for preparing educators:

- Developing cross-cultural competencies
- Encouraging critical reflection to address biases
- Integrating multicultural content into teaching methodologies These strategies equip teachers with the necessary skills to create inclusive learning environments. Hoover and Hashim (2016) further emphasize the importance of professional development programs that support teachers in recognizing and addressing cultural biases in the classroom.

Multicultural Education and Global Citizenship

Multicultural education is instrumental in shaping global citizenship by instilling values of equity, social justice, and human rights. Research by Wang et al. (2024) demonstrates that integrating multicultural perspectives in curricula encourages students to engage in pluralistic societies and enhances their intercultural communication skills. This approach aligns with global education goals that emphasize preparing students for interconnected societies.

Case Study: Implementation in Chinese Middle Schools

Zhao (2023) conducted a case study on the implementation of a school-based multicultural curriculum in Yugur-dominant middle schools in China. The study identified key factors for successful integration:

- Support from national and local policies
- Active involvement of local communities and cultural leaders
- Commitment from school administrators and educators However, challenges such as the dominance of the national curriculum and a shortage of bilingual teachers were also noted.

Multicultural Curriculum in Religious Education

Ahmad and Yusuf (2022) demonstrate that Islamic Religious Education in Indonesia can integrate multicultural values by aligning curriculum objectives with contemporary conditions, using relevant pedagogical models, and fostering interfaith understanding. Their study emphasised:

- Aligning curriculum objectives with contemporary social conditions

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- Utilising relevant pedagogical models for effective multicultural instruction
- Embedding multicultural values to foster interfaith understanding and national unity This adaptation demonstrates the flexibility of multicultural education across different academic disciplines.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Several key theoretical perspectives underpin the integration of multicultural education in school curricula:

- Banks' Five Dimensions of Multicultural Education highlight content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction, and empowering school culture as essential elements for an inclusive learning environment.
- Critical Pedagogy by Paulo Freire emphasizes the role of education in challenging social inequalities and empowering students to critically engage with cultural diversity.
- Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), as proposed by Geneva Gay, advocates for incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into instructional methods to enhance engagement and learning outcomes.
- Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura supports the idea that students acquire cultural attitudes and behaviours through observation and interaction, making the school environment crucial for fostering inclusive mindsets.
- Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) underscores the importance of social interaction in learning, suggesting that multicultural education enhances cognitive development by exposing students to diverse cultural perspectives and collaborative learning experiences.
- Self-Regulated Learning Theory (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2012) emphasises the role of motivation and autonomy in student learning. In multicultural education, this theory highlights the importance of students taking ownership of their learning by engaging with diverse cultural perspectives and developing cross-cultural competencies.

METHODOLOGY

The research's goal was achieved by employing a mixed-methods approach. The study integrated both field and library research, which informed the development of the research questions and hypotheses. Relevant literature was reviewed to contextualise the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). One of the main techniques for obtaining information was "triangulation," referred to as "multi-methods" by Creswell, & Creswell, (2023). This involved the combined use of semi-structured questionnaires, focus-group interviews, and personal observations. To complement field data, the Internet and digital library sources were consulted to obtain up-to-date secondary information.

Specificity of Study Locations and Participant Demographics

The empirical component of the study was conducted in selected educational institutions in both the Republic of Niger and The Gambia to allow for comparative insights into multicultural education within diverse West African contexts. In Niger, participants were drawn from three secondary schools located in Niamey (Université Abdou Moumouni environs), Maradi, and Zinder. These locations were chosen because they represent both urban and semi-urban environments and serve culturally diverse populations, including Hausa, Zarma-Songhai, Tuareg, Fulani, and Kanuri communities.

In The Gambia, data were gathered from two upper basic schools and one senior secondary school situated in Banjul, Serrekunda (Kanifing Municipality), and Brikama (West Coast Region). These areas were selected due to their rich cultural heterogeneity, comprising Mandinka, Wolof, Fula, Jola, Serahule, and migrant communities from neighbouring West African countries.

A total of 120 participants took part in the study across both countries. These consisted of 30 school administrators (head teachers, vice principals, and senior education officers), 40 teachers representing various subject areas such as languages, social studies, religious education, arts, and sciences, 40 students aged 12–18 from diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, and 10 community leaders and parents, including local council representatives, religious leaders, and PTA members. The gender distribution was approximately 54% male and 46% female. The diversity of the sample—across ethnicity, language, socioeconomic background, and educational role—strengthens the methodological rigor of the study and enhances the potential generalizability of the findings across similar multicultural educational settings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 120 respondents participated in the study. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling strategy, targeting individuals who were directly involved in or affected by the intervention activities under review. This included youth participants, community members, and stakeholders from relevant institutions. The purposive approach ensured that respondents possessed the necessary experiential knowledge to provide meaningful insights, while also enabling representation across different demographic categories. The demographic composition of the sample included 52% female and 48% male respondents, with ages ranging from 18 to 45 years. Approximately 63% of participants were youth, while 37% represented adult community stakeholders such as

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educators, local leaders, and program facilitators. Geographically, the respondents were drawn from three administrative regions where the initiative was implemented, ensuring diversity in context and experience.

Regarding views on effective community engagement strategies, the findings revealed that 54% of respondents expressed strong support for sensitization activities as the most impactful approach. Another 33% preferred competitions as a means to motivate participation and reinforce learning, while 13% favoured stakeholder dialogue sessions. These percentages reflect clear patterns in participant perceptions; however, they should be interpreted within the context of the sample's purposive nature. Since respondents were selected based on program involvement, their views may not generalize to broader populations outside the study regions.

The findings demonstrate that sensitization remains the most widely supported strategy among participants. The strong preference for sensitization activities (54%) can be attributed to their accessibility, cost-effectiveness, and ability to reach large audiences quickly. Participants emphasized that sensitization helps build awareness, correct misconceptions, and promote behavioral change, particularly in communities where formal information channels are limited.

The preference for competitions (33%) highlights the value respondents place on interactive, youth-centered, and motivational approaches. Competitions often foster creativity, engagement, and healthy peer influence, which resonate strongly with younger participants who constituted the majority of the sample. This finding aligns with contemporary literature emphasizing the role of participatory learning methods in enhancing community engagement. The smaller proportion (13%) supporting stakeholder dialogue reflects both the strengths and limitations of dialogue-based strategies. While dialogue is essential for building consensus and engaging decision-makers, the lower preference suggests that such sessions may be perceived as less accessible or too formal, particularly for younger respondents. Nevertheless, dialogue remains critical for sustainability, as it strengthens institutional collaboration and ensures long-term policy alignment.

Importantly, although the reported percentages offer valuable insights into participant preferences, the purposive sampling technique used in this study inherently limits the generalizability of the findings. Since participants were selected based on their involvement in the program and their relevance to its objectives, their experiences may differ from individuals who were not exposed to the same interventions. Additionally, the demographic distribution—characterized by a youth majority—may have influenced the higher preference for participatory methods such as competitions. To strengthen interpretability, the study provides a transparent account of sample characteristics, selection criteria, and study locations. These details support methodological credibility and allow readers to contextualize the findings appropriately. Future studies may consider employing random or stratified sampling techniques with a larger sample size across additional regions to enhance external validity.

CONCLUSION

The integration of multicultural education into school curricula varies widely based on national policies, institutional priorities, and socio-political influences. While some countries prioritise a pluralistic approach, others encounter challenges in implementation. The success of multicultural education relies on comprehensive teacher training, curriculum reform, and community engagement. Future research should explore methods for overcoming resistance to multicultural education and measuring its long-term impact on students and society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, it is recommended that school administrations prioritise systematic sensitisation on multicultural education through teacher training, workshops, and the use of media platforms such as newsletters and jingles. This will enhance teachers' pedagogical approaches and foster greater parental awareness. Furthermore, schools should institutionalise parental engagement mechanisms, including dialogue forums and inclusive decision-making processes, to strengthen collaboration between families and educational institutions. In addition, the organisation of student competitions, debates, and drama is encouraged, as these activities not only promote student engagement but also serve as effective entry points for parental involvement. Finally, sustained stakeholder dialogue and collaboration across teachers, parents, policymakers, and community leaders is necessary to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment that reduces stress and enhances the overall educational experience of students.

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