

---

## IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION STRATEGIES IN FOSTERING TOLERANCE AND INTERCULTURAL INTERACTION IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY

---

HARIS FIRMANSYAH, THOMY SASTRA ATMAJA, HADI WIYONO

Universitas Tanjungpura, Indonesia

Corresponding author: [harisfirmansyah@untan.ac.id](mailto:harisfirmansyah@untan.ac.id)

### Abstract

Multicultural education is a crucial strategy for fostering tolerance and intercultural interaction within school environments, particularly in highly diverse regions such as Singkawang City. This study aimed to identify the strategies employed by teachers to integrate multicultural education into the curriculum and classroom practices at the senior high school level, analyze the supporting and inhibiting factors in its implementation, and evaluate its impact on students' attitudes toward diversity, tolerance, and cross-cultural engagement. Employing a qualitative approach with a case study method, this research was conducted in three senior high schools in Singkawang. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis. The data analysis technique followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, encompassing data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that teachers applied three main strategies: curriculum integration based on local wisdom, the implementation of participatory learning methods, and the use of multicultural digital and visual media. Key supporting factors included principal commitment, regional policy support, and a socially pluralistic context. However, challenges such as limited teacher training, a lack of inclusive teaching materials, and unstructured program sustainability remained significant. These strategies have been shown to enhance students' multicultural awareness, cross-identity interaction skills, and empathy. The study recommends strengthening context-based teacher training, developing relevant learning resources, and engaging local communities to support the sustainable implementation of multicultural education.

**Keywords:** cultural tolerance; high school; multicultural education; student attitudes; teacher strategy

### Introduction

Multicultural education is a pedagogical approach aimed at creating an equitable, inclusive, and culturally responsive educational system. This approach is not solely oriented toward content delivery but is also intended to foster cross-cultural understanding and mutual respect among students. In this context, multicultural education comprises five key dimensions: content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and the development of an empowering school culture (Banks, 2008). Furthermore, education is seen as a political process that reproduces existing social structures; therefore, multicultural education must be designed to promote just and sustainable social transformation (Sleeter & Grant, 2008).

Empirical evidence confirms the practical significance of these principles. Collaboration between schools and communities in integrating local cultures into the curriculum has proven effective in cultivating students' tolerant attitudes (Marhayani et al., 2017), while student involvement in decision-making and cross-identity learning activities has encouraged inclusive behavior and social solidarity (Buwono et al., 2023). These findings reflect the application of equitable pedagogy and the development of an empowering school environment as proposed by Banks.

Mezirow (2009) explained that transformative learning occurs when individuals critically reflect on previously unexamined assumptions, leading to a shift in perspective about themselves and the world around them. This process is not only cognitive but also includes affective and relational dimensions that are essential for fostering social awareness and intercultural responsibility. In multicultural classrooms, transformative learning requires cultural consciousness and critical reflection to be embedded in instructional practice (DomNwachukwu, 2008). Ubadah (2022) further argued that local values can serve as a strong foundation for cultivating contextually grounded and socially relevant education.

To implement such strategies successfully, the role of teachers as facilitators of intercultural dialogue becomes crucial. Teachers who can connect instructional content with students' social realities are more effective in fostering mutual respect and intercultural empathy (Lisa et al., 2024). (Gorski & Dalton, 2020) also emphasized the importance of teachers' competence in facilitating participatory, reflective, and contextual learning, which is key to the success of transformative multicultural education.

Nevertheless, the implementation of multicultural education in Indonesia continues to face several challenges. Abacioglu et al. (2020) reported that many teachers struggle to adopt culturally responsive teaching practices due to limited training, lack of resources, and insufficient institutional support. These barriers become even more complex in socially dynamic environments such as Singkawang.

As a city known for its high level of ethnic and religious diversity, Singkawang presents both tremendous opportunities and significant challenges for multicultural education. The coexistence of Dayak, Chinese, Malay, and other ethnic communities offers potential for enriching intercultural learning experiences (Hummelstedt et al., 2021). However, the city has also experienced episodes of social tension, underscoring the need for educational approaches that are not only informative but also transformative, education that nurtures character development, social consciousness, and tolerance (Okagbue et al., 2022). Mezirow (2009) highlighted that such deep transformations in perspective often begin with disorienting experiences, which can be effectively harnessed through reflective learning in diverse and multicultural settings such as Singkawang.

Unfortunately, most existing studies tend to focus on multicultural education at the junior secondary level or address normative concepts without thoroughly examining how practical strategies are applied in classrooms. Very few studies specifically investigate how senior high school teachers design and implement multicultural education strategies, and how these strategies influence students' attitudes toward diversity, tolerance, and intercultural interaction, particularly within complex multicultural urban contexts like Singkawang.

Based on this background, the present study aims to explore the strategies used by teachers in implementing multicultural education in senior high schools in Singkawang. The specific objectives of this study are: (1) to identify the strategies employed by teachers to integrate multicultural education into curriculum and classroom practices; (2) to assess the supporting and inhibiting factors in the

implementation of multicultural education in schools; and (3) to analyze the impact of these strategies on students' attitudes toward diversity, tolerance, and intercultural interaction.

This research is expected to provide both conceptual and practical contributions to the development of a more inclusive and contextually relevant educational model. Moreover, the findings of this study aim to enrich the academic discourse on multicultural education, particularly in border regions and urban areas with complex social dynamics such as Singkawang.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Multicultural education***

Multicultural education can be understood as a pedagogical approach oriented toward achieving equity, identity recognition, and inclusive participation within culturally diverse learning environments. This concept encompasses five core dimensions, namely content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and the development of an empowering school culture, which together form the foundational framework of multicultural education (Banks, 2008). Through this approach, learning is not merely focused on delivering cultural knowledge but is directed toward affirming students' ethnic, religious, racial, and linguistic identities within an equitable educational system.

According to Sleeter and Grant (2008), multicultural education can be implemented through five progressive approaches, ranging from teaching students with different cultural backgrounds to adopting a social reconstructionist model that is transformative in nature. The latter sees education as a means of cultivating critical consciousness and promoting democratic values in a pluralistic society. Within this framework, education serves as an agent of social change that challenges structural inequalities and fosters learning spaces that are responsive to sociocultural complexity and power dynamics.

Echoing this perspective, DomNwachukwu (2008) emphasized the importance of self-reflection, cultural awareness, and openness to pluralism as fundamental principles of multicultural education. In this context, teachers are expected not only to accommodate students' diverse identities but also to actively reflect on and adjust their own cultural biases, thereby fostering equitable, inclusive, and reflective learning environments. This view reinforces the notion that educational equity cannot be achieved without the ethical and emotional engagement of educators.

Ubadah (2022) further strengthened this discourse by asserting that multicultural education should be understood as a moral strategy that is not limited to curriculum content, but instead rooted in local wisdom embedded in society. Within this framework, education functions as a medium for instilling values such as empathy, appreciation of diversity, and democratic character, not merely as a means of knowledge transmission. Accordingly, the implementation of multicultural education requires a firm value commitment, in addition to pedagogical practices that are adaptive to the cultural and social contexts in which education takes place.

### ***Tolerance***

Tolerance is an active attitude that reflects an individual's openness to accepting and appreciating ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity within a shared society. This concept extends beyond passive acceptance of differences and is rooted in principles of justice, empathy, and the recognition of equal human dignity (Witenberg, 2013). In practice, tolerance must be holistically

cultivated, cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally, through intentionally designed educational processes.

In the educational context, tolerance is closely tied to democratic citizenship and social justice values. A tolerant attitude is reflected in the support for equal rights, regardless of ethnic, religious, or gender backgrounds (Isac et al., 2018). Thus, tolerance forms a critical foundation for fostering active civic participation and egalitarian awareness among students.

Historically, the values of tolerance developed from Enlightenment thought, which emphasized rationality, respect for plurality, and rejection of social exclusion. These ideals laid the groundwork for the formation of inclusive modern societies (Warman, 2016). In today's context, these values are increasingly relevant, especially as societies confront identity-based conflicts and ideological differences.

However, tolerance in democratic systems must not be interpreted as absolute. The practice of tolerance should remain grounded in ethical norms that prevent the rise of intolerance in public spaces (Drerup & Schweiger, 2021). In this regard, openness to diversity should never be used to justify discriminatory behaviors that threaten the principles of freedom and equality upheld in democratic life.

### ***Intercultural interaction***

Intercultural interaction refers to the communicative and social processes between individuals from different cultural backgrounds, playing a crucial role in fostering mutual understanding and collaboration within diverse societies. In educational contexts, such interaction does not occur naturally but is instead the result of intentional and structured learning designed to cultivate cultural awareness, empathy, and reflective thinking. Intercultural competence, the ability to respond to cultural differences with ethical sensitivity, serves as the foundational element for meaningful engagement across identities (Cushner & Brislin, 1995).

This competence is particularly vital in multicultural classrooms, where students from various ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds interact regularly. Through the critical incident approach, Cushner and Brislin (1995) highlighted that cross-cultural understanding often arises from conflict, tension, or miscommunication. When addressed constructively, such moments provide opportunities for authentic learning and personal development. Tensions stemming from differing values, perspectives, or communication styles require emotional maturity and cognitive flexibility to establish healthy intercultural relationships (Cushner et al., 2012).

Empirical studies further emphasize the complexity of implementing intercultural interaction in school settings. Harryba et al. (2013) revealed that cultural bias, misperceptions, and unspoken expectations frequently hinder communication among student groups. This underscores the need for inclusive learning environments in which all students feel recognized and valued. Pedagogical strategies such as heterogeneous group discussions, cross-identity collaborative projects, and the use of culturally relevant digital media have been shown to enhance intercultural engagement (Donoso et al., 2020).

---

**Methodology*****Research design and approach***

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study method to explore the implementation of multicultural education in senior high schools (SMA) in Singkawang City, West Kalimantan. A qualitative approach was chosen because it enabled an in-depth exploration of complex social phenomena such as multicultural education within real-life contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The case study design was selected for its ability to provide a detailed investigation of a specific case within its contextual environment, utilizing multiple complementary data sources such as interviews, observations, and documents (Gerring, 2007).

In line with the interpretive paradigm, the researcher positioned themselves as the primary instrument for both data collection and analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This enabled flexible interaction with the research field, while maintaining sensitivity and reflexivity. The researcher also prepared a positionality statement and reflective notes throughout the study to ensure transparency and integrity.

***Research site and participants***

This study was conducted at three public senior high schools in Singkawang City: SMA Negeri 1, SMA Negeri 2, and SMA Negeri 3. These schools were selected due to their location in a region characterized by high levels of ethnic and religious diversity, particularly among Chinese, Dayak, and Malay communities, and their strong commitment to implementing multicultural education in both classroom practices and school programs.

A total of 18 participants were involved in the study, consisting of 3 principals, 9 teachers, and 6 students. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that participants had direct involvement and deep understanding of multicultural education practices in their respective schools. Principals and teachers were selected based on their roles in policy formulation, curriculum development, and implementation of diversity-oriented teaching strategies. The student participants came from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds and were actively engaged in school programs that promote cross-cultural interaction.

***Data Collection and Analysis***

Data were collected through three primary techniques: semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with principals, teachers, and students to capture their experiences, strategies, and perceptions regarding multicultural education (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Observations took place during classroom sessions and school activities to observe how multicultural practices were enacted in real-time. Additionally, school curricula, teaching materials, and diversity-related policy documents were analyzed to provide contextual support and triangulation (Creswell, 2016).

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014), which includes data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusions. Initial codes were developed from transcript summaries and field notes, then grouped into thematic categories. Visual tools such as matrices and concept maps helped identify emerging patterns.

To enhance credibility and trustworthiness, several validation strategies were applied: source triangulation (using interviews, observations, and documents), peer debriefing, audit trails, and member checking (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking involved

returning interpreted data to the participants for validation, ensuring accurate representation of their perspectives.

## Results

### *Strategies implemented by teachers to integrate multicultural education into the curriculum and classroom practice*

This study revealed that teachers in senior high schools in Singkawang implemented various strategies to integrate multicultural education into the learning process. These strategies were not only conceptual but were also realized concretely in day-to-day classroom activities. Three dominant strategies identified in this study were: (1) local curriculum integration, (2) participatory and cross-cultural learning, and (3) the use of multicultural digital media.

The first strategy, local curriculum integration, was evident in teachers' efforts to embed local cultural content into learning materials. For example, history teachers developed instructional content that highlighted the contributions of Chinese, Dayak, and Malay communities to the historical development of Singkawang. These efforts were not limited to text-based content but also included narratives featuring local events and cross-cultural figures. This practice enriched the learning context and helped students feel that their cultural identities were acknowledged in the classroom. Observations showed the presence of visual media, such as murals, cultural posters, and diversity symbols, displayed in classrooms as part of the learning narrative.

The second strategy, participatory and cross-identity learning, was observed through group arrangements that encouraged intercultural interaction. During group projects, teachers deliberately mixed students from different ethnic backgrounds to create spaces for dialogue and collaboration across identities. One Civics (PPKn) teacher explained that role-playing activities simulating social conflict and its resolution helped students better understand other groups' perspectives and fostered empathy.

The third strategy, the use of multicultural digital media, was a response to modern learning needs. Teachers presented documentary videos about local cultural rituals, used online platforms for group presentations, and assigned digital-based cultural exploration tasks. These practices not only made learning more engaging but also allowed students to view diversity in concrete visual and narrative formats.

**Table 1.** *Supporting Factors*

Factor Types	Descriptions	Quotes from Participants	Field Observations
Leadership Support	Principals facilitated teacher development and innovation	"Our principal supports all cultural initiatives." (Teacher D)	Principals attended multicultural training sessions
Cultural Environment	Diversity is part of students' daily experiences	"We celebrate Chinese New Year and the Prophet's birthday."	Cultural diversity evident during school ceremonies
Local Policy Support	Promotion of local curriculum and cultural activities	"The local education office encourages integration of local culture."	Culture week guides and materials were available in teacher rooms

Table 1 summarizes the three types of strategies implemented, along with examples of their application. In the "Teacher Quotes" column, statements such as "We include Dayak and Chinese history in our local history materials," and "Students created cross-ethnic cultural projects in groups" reflected direct teacher involvement in the learning process. In the "Classroom Observations" column, it was noted that classrooms were decorated with murals promoting tolerance, and group discussions were conducted in a way that encouraged diverse student participation.

These findings demonstrated that the integration of multicultural education in Singkawang went beyond the written curriculum. It was fully manifested in pedagogical practices that engaged students cognitively, affectively, and socially.

### ***Supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of multicultural education***

The implementation of multicultural education in senior high schools in Singkawang was significantly influenced by contextual factors that either supported or hindered its success. Based on field findings, both internal and external factors determined the extent to which multicultural strategies could be implemented effectively.

On the supporting side, the study found that the role of school principals was critical. Inclusive leadership and openness to diversity emerged as key elements. Several teachers reported that their principals actively encouraged teacher training on diversity-related issues and supported the use of local teaching materials that represented Singkawang's ethnic context. Moreover, the city's multiethnic and multireligious sociocultural environment created a relatively conducive atmosphere for the acceptance of diversity. Interviews with students revealed that they were accustomed to observing different cultural and religious practices, even within the school environment. Lastly, support from local government, including the education office, encouraged schools to design contextualized curricula and organize inclusive cultural activities.

**Table 2.** *Supporting factors*

Factor Types	Descriptions	Quotes from Participants	Field Observations
Leadership Support	Principals facilitated teacher development and innovation	"Our principal supports all cultural initiatives." (Teacher D)	Principals attended multicultural training sessions
Cultural Environment	Diversity is part of students' daily experiences	"We celebrate Chinese New Year and the Prophet's birthday."	Cultural diversity evident during school ceremonies
Local Policy Support	Promotion of local curriculum and cultural activities	"The local education office encourages integration of local culture."	Culture week guides and materials were available in teacher rooms

Table 2 illustrates these three supporting factors with concrete examples. For instance, the teacher quote "Our principal supports all cultural initiatives" underscores the importance of leadership. Field observations confirmed that principals were present during cultural activities and encouraged teachers to incorporate local content into their lessons. In daily practice, students actively

participated in school-organized cultural forums, and values of tolerance were embedded in various subjects, such as Indonesian Language and Civics.

Conversely, the study also identified several significant challenges. First, there was a lack of locally relevant teaching materials. Many teachers complained that national textbooks failed to represent the cultural diversity of West Kalimantan. As a result, they had to develop supplementary materials on their own or rely solely on personal knowledge. Second, the limited training in multicultural pedagogy left many teachers feeling unconfident or uncertain when addressing the dynamics of multiethnic classrooms. Third, social fragmentation and intergroup stereotypes persisted, especially in informal interactions such as during breaks. Students tended to associate within their own ethnic or religious groups, creating symbolic distances that were difficult to bridge outside of formal learning activities. Lastly, there was a disconnect between national top-down policies and school-level needs. Many curriculum policies were generic and lacked contextualized implementation guidelines.

**Table 3.** *Inhibiting factors*

Barrier Types	Descriptions	Teacher Quotes	Field Observations
Lack of Local Content	National textbooks exclude local cultural narratives	“Our textbooks don’t reflect our students’ local cultures.”	Local culture was missing from syllabi and lesson plans
Limited Teacher Training	Teachers unprepared for multicultural pedagogy	“I still struggle to manage interethnic conflict.” (Teacher H)	Teachers hesitated during cross-cultural discussions
Social Fragmentation	Students self-segregate along ethnic lines	“Students still group themselves by ethnicity during breaks.”	Observed clustering by ethnicity in informal settings
Policy Disconnect	National curriculum lacks contextual guidance	“There’s no concrete example on how to implement diversity values.”	No clear multicultural strategies present in school implementation

Table 3 summarizes these challenges and illustrates how teachers responded to them. For example, a teacher stated, “Our textbooks don’t reflect our students’ local cultures,” while observations confirmed that lesson plans (RPPs) rarely included explicit local cultural content. Teachers appeared hesitant when facilitating sensitive ethnic discussions. Social polarization based on ethnic lines remained evident in non-instructional settings, particularly outside the classroom.

These findings suggest that the success of multicultural education depended heavily on structural support, teacher readiness, and the alignment of policies with local contexts. On the other hand, the challenges were not merely technical in nature but also reflected cultural, psychological, and institutional dimensions.

### ***The impact of multicultural education strategies on students’ attitudes toward diversity, tolerance, and intercultural interaction***

The multicultural education strategies implemented by teachers in senior high schools in Singkawang had a significant impact on shaping students’ attitudes toward cultural and social diversity

within the school environment. This impact was observed across three key dimensions: increased awareness of diversity, strengthened attitudes of tolerance, and active engagement in intercultural interaction.

First, in terms of diversity awareness, students demonstrated improved understanding and appreciation of the cultures of their peers from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. In interviews, several students reported that prior to engaging in multicultural-oriented learning, they were unfamiliar with cultural symbols such as Cap Go Meh, Imlek (Chinese New Year), and Dayak traditional ceremonies. However, after participating in cross-cultural projects and group presentations, they not only understood these cultural practices but were also able to explain the meanings and values behind them. This understanding was further reflected in classroom observations, where students confidently and enthusiastically presented their research on other ethnic cultures.

Second, regarding tolerance, a shift toward more inclusive behavior among students was observed. Teachers noted that students began forming more heterogeneous study groups and demonstrated mutual respect during discussions and collaborative tasks involving cultural diversity. Some teachers mentioned that students who were previously reluctant to engage in dialogue with peers from different religions or ethnicities had become more open and had even developed new cross-cultural friendships. In classroom activities, students also no longer displayed resistance when sensitive topics, such as differing beliefs or religious practices, were addressed.

Third, in the area of intercultural interaction, students were more actively involved in collaborative activities that embraced diversity. During cultural projects, such as art performances and local tradition presentations, students from various ethnic backgrounds worked together as a single team. They exchanged knowledge about their respective cultures and collaborated on producing content that reflected the cultural richness of West Kalimantan. Teachers also observed that students were more inquisitive and engaged when learning topics were linked to cultural practices they were familiar with or interested in exploring.

Overall, the implementation of multicultural education strategies—centered on the introduction of local cultures, participatory learning methods, and reflective media—had a positive impact on shaping more inclusive student character. Although challenges such as social stereotypes and homogenous peer groups still existed, students generally exhibited improvements in understanding, attitudes, and behaviors that supported harmonious coexistence in a multicultural school environment. These findings affirmed that multicultural education should not only be regarded as instructional content, but also as a practical tool for real social transformation within the classroom.

## **Discussion**

This study showed that multicultural education implemented in senior high schools in Singkawang had transformed from a symbolic approach into a more substantive and contextual strategy. The integration of multicultural content into the curriculum was carried out through a locally-based approach, by embedding historical and cultural narratives of Chinese, Dayak, and Malay communities into History, Civics, and Indonesian language subjects. This aligns with the concept of content integration in Banks (2008) theory, which emphasizes the importance of connecting instructional materials with students' cultural experiences. Barton and Ho (2020) also highlighted that empathy-driven learning through local contexts can serve as a foundation for transformative citizenship education.

The use of participatory learning methods, such as cross-ethnic cultural projects, heterogeneous group discussions, peer teaching, and role-playing, proved that teachers not only delivered content but also created space for identity-based interaction. This strategy aligns with the framework of transformative multicultural education by [Sleeter and Grant \(2008\)](#), which encourages pedagogical practices that foster critical thinking on issues of diversity and inequality. [Karacsony et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Donoso et al. \(2020\)](#) also found that participatory methods can build collaboration and empathy among students from different backgrounds and create space for reflective conflict resolution.

The use of digital media, such as local cultural documentary videos, online platforms, and multicultural visuals in classrooms, served as an effective medium to deliver multicultural values in a more engaging way that touched students' affective domains. [Ivenicki \(2021\)](#) emphasized that digitalization, when combined with reflective and dialogic content, can deepen students' understanding of identity pluralism. [Karanikola et al. \(2022\)](#) also asserted that learning environments rich in visual symbols of diversity can create safe spaces for meaningful cross-cultural interactions.

Nevertheless, there were still challenges that hindered the effectiveness of these strategies. Some teachers stated that they had not received in-depth training on multicultural pedagogy, and most teaching materials were still centered on dominant narratives from the national curriculum. This reflects [Kawashima's \(2025\)](#) concerns about shallow and ceremonial forms of multicultural education. [Abacioglu et al., \(2022; 2020\)](#) also noted that although teachers held positive multicultural attitudes, the lack of perspective-taking skills limited the effectiveness of inclusive and reflective teaching. Similarly, [Rao and Chen \(2020\)](#) emphasized that the mismatch between curriculum content and local socio-cultural contexts created a gap between ideals and practices in the classroom.

Structurally, several factors supported the successful implementation of multicultural education in Singkawang, such as principal commitment, social diversity embedded in daily life, and local policies that encouraged contextual curriculum. These findings are supported by [Casto \(2022\)](#) and [Gyasi et al. \(2021\)](#), who emphasized that the success of inclusive education requires collaboration between policymakers, school leaders, and educational practitioners. Students' exposure to multicultural community environments also contributed to the development of tolerant attitudes, as stated by [Aslan and Aybek \(2020\)](#).

However, social barriers remained in the form of fragmentation in student associations based on ethnicity or religion. Observations showed that some students still formed homogeneous social groups outside the classroom and were reluctant to engage in dialogue involving religious identity. This phenomenon reflects the illusion of inclusivity ([Doucette et al., 2018](#)), where symbolic harmony conceals underlying imbalances or subtle exclusion in social interactions. In this context, multicultural education had not yet fully penetrated students' psychosocial boundaries.

On the other hand, the positive impact of multicultural education strategies was evident in students' changing attitudes toward diversity. Students showed increased multicultural awareness, openness to other identities, and the ability to collaborate across cultures. [Wu et al. \(2023\)](#) demonstrated that a social justice-based multicultural education approach could fundamentally shift students' perspectives. The cooperative learning strategies designed by the teachers in this study also helped foster an inclusive sense of belonging among students and reduced the dominance of certain groups ([Buchs & Maradan, 2021; Syahrul, 2021](#)).

However, this change in student attitudes had not yet fully reached a deep transformative level. Some students still showed resistance to religious dialogue and other sensitive issues. This indicates that the internalization of tolerance values cannot be achieved through short-term learning strategies alone but requires a sustainable approach. [Verkuyten and Thijs \(2013\)](#) emphasized that multicultural

education must combine cognitive and affective dimensions in an integrated manner to effectively reduce ethnocentric attitudes. In this context, affective dimensions such as empathy, critical reflection, and perspective-taking must be explicitly facilitated in every learning process.

Teachers play a central role in creating inclusive and reflective classroom atmospheres. Teachers who possess multicultural competence, high empathy, and pedagogical flexibility have the capacity to act as agents of change. [Chen and Wong \(2022\)](#) and [Erkanlı et al. \(2024\)](#) proved that teachers with strong cross-cultural skills are more effective in shaping tolerant and globally minded students. [Gollnick and Chinn \(2017\)](#) and [Cushner et al. \(2012\)](#) emphasized that tolerance education must be brought to life through social relationships and teachers' modeling in everyday school life.

Finally, the results of this study affirm that the success of multicultural education is highly dependent on systemic support. [Darling-Hammond et al. \(2017\)](#) stated that equitable and inclusive education can only be achieved if supported by school systems that are responsive to local contexts, pedagogically empowered teachers, and communities that instill anti-discriminatory values. In the context of Singkawang, multicultural education has shown great potential in shaping inclusive students. However, to ensure its sustainability and effectiveness, greater investment is needed in strengthening teacher competence, developing contextual learning materials, and reforming policy from the national to the school level.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations/Implications**

This study revealed that the strategies employed by teachers in implementing multicultural education in Singkawang's senior high schools were adaptive to the local context and emphasized cross-identity interaction. The approaches included integrating local cultural values into the curriculum, applying participatory learning methods, and utilizing digital media and visual symbols in the learning environment. These strategies were generally effective in creating inclusive learning spaces and promoting students' active engagement in understanding the cultural diversity around them.

The findings also indicated that the success of multicultural education was strongly influenced by supporting factors such as principal support, responsive local policies, and longstanding social diversity. On the other hand, the implementation of multicultural education faced challenges including limited teacher training in multicultural pedagogy, a lack of locally relevant teaching materials, and continued social grouping among students based on cultural identity. Nonetheless, the positive impact on student attitudes was visible through increased empathy, openness, and their ability to engage in intercultural interaction.

The results of this study provide practical implications for educational institutions and policymakers to strengthen teacher training, enrich culturally grounded teaching materials, and design more contextual policies. In addition, this study opens avenues for further research on multicultural education in more complex contexts, such as faith-based schools, border regions, or minority communities, and to develop sustainable models of intercultural collaborative project-based learning.

### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## References

- Abacioglu, Ceren S, Fischer, A. H., & Volman, M. (2022). Professional development in multicultural education: What can we learn from the Australian context? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 114, 103701. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2022.103701>
- Abacioglu, Ceren Su, Volman, M., & Fischer, A. H. (2020). Teachers' multicultural attitudes and perspective taking abilities as factors in culturally responsive teaching. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 90(3), 736–752. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12328>
- Aslan, S., & Aybek, B. (2020). Testing the Effectiveness of Interdisciplinary Curriculum-Based Multicultural Education on Tolerance and Critical Thinking Skill. *International Journal of Educational Methodology*, 6(1), 43–55. <https://doi.org/10.12973/ijem.6.1.43>
- Banks, J. A. (2008). An Introduction to Multicultural Education. In *Mental Health Practice* (Fifth edit). University of Washington. <https://doi.org/10.7748/mhp.3.5.37.s20>
- Barton, K. C., & Ho, L. C. (2020). Cultivating sprouts of benevolence: a foundational principle for curriculum in civic and multicultural education. *Multicultural Education Review*, 12(3), 157–176. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2005615X.2020.1808928>
- Buchs, C., & Maradan, M. (2021). Fostering equity in a multicultural and multilingual classroom through cooperative learning. *Intercultural Education*, 32(4), 401–416. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2021.1889985>
- Buwono, S., Queiroz, C., Karolina, V., & Xaixanith, T. (2023). Exploring Multicultural Education: A Case Study of Singkawang. *International Journal of Educational Research & Social Sciences*, 4(6), 1051–1058. <https://doi.org/10.51601/ijersc.v4i6.747>
- Casto, A. R. (2022). A Re-Envisioned Multicultural STEM Education for All. *Education Sciences*, 12(11), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12110792>
- Chen, S., & Wong, K. Y. (2022). Assessment of Preservice Music Teachers' Multicultural Personality: Multicultural Music Education Perspective. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13(May), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.726209>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design* (Fourth Edi). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry & research design choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Cushner, & Brislin, R. W. (1995). *Intercultural interactions: A practical guide* (Vol. 9). Sage publications.
- Cushner, McClelland, A., & Safford, P. (2012). *Human diversity in education: An intercultural approach* (7th ed). McGraw-Hill.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Burns, D., Campbell, C., Goodwin, A. L., Hammerness, K., Low, E.-L., McIntyre, A., Sato, M., & Zeichner, K. (2017). *Empowered Educators: How High-Performing Systems Shape Teaching Quality Around the World*. Wiley.
- DomNwachukwu, C. S. (2008). *An Introduction to Multicultural Education From Theory to Practice*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. [https://mail-attachment.googleusercontent.com/attachment/u/0/?ui=2&ik=1e263c3feb&view=att&th=13d25612a9626fe7&attid=0.1&disp=safe&realattid=f\\_hdjhz0ol0&zw&saduie=AG9B\\_P9uGz3gu2w2QqsYxhDti5cG&sadet=1362849307739&sads=De6ed9Ikvp2Islv21eVYWgreoA](https://mail-attachment.googleusercontent.com/attachment/u/0/?ui=2&ik=1e263c3feb&view=att&th=13d25612a9626fe7&attid=0.1&disp=safe&realattid=f_hdjhz0ol0&zw&saduie=AG9B_P9uGz3gu2w2QqsYxhDti5cG&sadet=1362849307739&sads=De6ed9Ikvp2Islv21eVYWgreoA)
- Donoso, A., Ortega, K., & Castillo, P. A. P. (2020). Understanding the meaning of multicultural collaboration in a public-school EFL class. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 22(1), 1–

15. <https://doi.org/10.18251/ijme.v22i1.1929>
- Doucette, B., Sanabria, A., Sheplak, A., & Aydin, H. (2018). The Perceptions of Culturally Diverse Graduate Students on Multicultural Education: Implication for Inclusion and Diversity Awareness in Higher Education. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 10(3), 1259–1273. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.12973/eu-jer.10.3.1259>
- Erkanlı, A., Batman, K. A., & Kaptanoğlu, C. (2024). Examination of primary school teachers' attitudes and views towards multicultural education. *Frontiers in Education*, 9(March). <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2024.1360696>
- Gerring, J. (2007). Case Study Research Principles and Practices. In *Sustainability (Switzerland)*. Cambridge University Press. [http://scioteca.caf.com/bitstream/handle/123456789/1091/RED2017-Eng-8ene.pdf?sequence=12&isAllowed=y%0Ahttp://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2008.06.005%0Ahttps://www.researchgate.net/publication/305320484\\_SISTEM\\_PEMBETUNGAN\\_TERPUSAT\\_STRATEGI\\_MELESTARI](http://scioteca.caf.com/bitstream/handle/123456789/1091/RED2017-Eng-8ene.pdf?sequence=12&isAllowed=y%0Ahttp://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2008.06.005%0Ahttps://www.researchgate.net/publication/305320484_SISTEM_PEMBETUNGAN_TERPUSAT_STRATEGI_MELESTARI)
- Gollnick, D. M., & Chinn, P. C. (2017). *Multicultural education in a pluralistic society* (10th ed). Pearson.
- Gorski, P. C., & Dalton, K. (2020). Striving for Critical Reflection in Multicultural and Social Justice Teacher Education: Introducing a Typology of Reflection Approaches. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 71(3), 357–368. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487119883545>
- Gyasi, J. F., Zheng, L., & Long, M. (2021). Reflecting on the past to shape the future: A systematic review on cross-cultural collaborative learning from 2011 to 2020. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 13(24). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su132413890>
- Harryba, S. A., Guilfoyle, A. M., & Knight, S. ann. (2013). Intercultural interactions: Understanding the perspectives of university staff members, international and domestic students. *International Journal of Learning*, 18(12), 15–34. <https://doi.org/10.18848/1447-9494/cgp/v18i12/47836>
- Hummelstedt, I. P., Holm, G. I. M., Sahlström, F. J., & Zilliacus, H. A. C. (2021). Diversity as the new normal and persistent constructions of the immigrant other – Discourses on multicultural education among teacher educators. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 108. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103510>
- Isac, M. M., Sandoval-Hernández, A., & Miranda, D. (2018). Teaching Tolerance in a Globalized World: Final Remarks. In *IEA Research for Education* (Vol. 4). [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78692-6\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78692-6_8)
- Ivenicki, A. (2021). Digital Lifelong Learning and Higher Education: multicultural strengths and challenges in pandemic times. *Ensaio*, 29(111), 360–377. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-403620210002903043>
- Karacsony, P., Pásztóová, V., Vinichenko, M., & Huszka, P. (2022). The Impact of the Multicultural Education on Students' Attitudes in Business Higher Education Institutions. *Education Sciences*, 12(3). <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12030173>
- Karanikola, Z., Katsiouli, G., & Palaiologou, N. (2022). Teachers' Global Perceptions and Views, Practices and Needs in Multicultural Settings. *Education Sciences*, 12(4). <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12040280>
- Kawashima, T. D. (2025). Changing Attitudes Toward Diversity in Japanese Public Schools: A Study of Multicultural Education Strategies in Higashi-Hiroshima. *Asian Studies*, 13, 343–367. <https://doi.org/10.4312/as.2025.13.sup.343-367>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications.
- Lisa, R., Buwono, S., Barella, Y., Aminuyati, A., & Wiyono, H. (2024). Penanaman Nilai Multikultural

- dalam Mengembangkan Sikap Toleransi Sosial pada Peserta Didik di SMP Negeri 2 Singkawang. *PTK: Jurnal Tindakan Kelas*, 4(2), 305–315. <https://doi.org/10.53624/ptk.v4i2.359>
- Marhayani, D. A., Kariadi, D., & Yanti, L. (2017). Multicultural-Based Education as an Effort of Conflict Prevention for Cidayuma Society In Singkawang. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran*, 50(1), 28–35. <https://ejournal.undiksha.ac.id/index.php/JPP/article/view/10090>
- Mezirow, J. (2009). An Overview of Transformative Learning. *Contemporary Theories of Learning: Learning Theorists in Their Own Words*, 90–105.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). Qualitative Data Analysis A Methods Sourcebook. In *Sustainability (Switzerland)* (Third Edit). Sage Publications, Inc. [http://scioteca.caf.com/bitstream/handle/123456789/1091/RED2017-Eng-8ene.pdf?sequence=12&isAllowed=y%0Ahttp://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2008.06.005%0Ahttps://www.researchgate.net/publication/305320484\\_SISTEM\\_PEMBETUNGAN\\_TERPUSAT\\_STRATEGI\\_MELESTARI](http://scioteca.caf.com/bitstream/handle/123456789/1091/RED2017-Eng-8ene.pdf?sequence=12&isAllowed=y%0Ahttp://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2008.06.005%0Ahttps://www.researchgate.net/publication/305320484_SISTEM_PEMBETUNGAN_TERPUSAT_STRATEGI_MELESTARI)
- Okagbue, E. F., Wang, M., & Ezechikulo, U. P. (2022). Does school bullying show lack of effective multicultural education in the school curriculum? *International Journal of Educational Research Open*, 3(June), 100178. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2022.100178>
- Rao, Z., & Chen, H. (2020). Teachers' perceptions of difficulties in team teaching between local- and native-English-speaking teachers in EFL teaching. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 41(4), 333–347. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2019.1620753>
- Sleeter, C. E., & Grant, C. A. (2008). *Making Choices for Multicultural Education: Five Approaches to Race* (6th Editio). Wiley.
- Syahrul, S. (2021). Integrating Pluralism and Multicultural Education to Prevent Radicalism at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kupang. *Edukasia: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam*, 16(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.21043/edukasia.v16i1.8285>
- Ubadah. (2022). *Pendidikan Multikultural (Konsep, Pendekatan, dan Penerapannya dalam Pembelajaran)* (M. A. Dr. Deri Wanto (ed.); I. Pesantren Anwarul Qur'an. [iqrapalu@gmail.com](mailto:iqrapalu@gmail.com)
- Verkuyten, M., & Thijs, J. (2013). Multicultural Education and Inter-Ethnic Attitudes. *European Psychologist*, 18(3). <https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000152>
- Warman, C. (2016). *Tolerance The Beacon of the Enlightenment* (C. Warman (ed.)). Open Book Publishers. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0088>
- Witenberg, R. T. (2013). *The Psychology of Tolerance Conception and Development*. SpringerBriefs in Psychology. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3789-5>