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Cultural Diversity in The Workplace: Teachers' Lived Experiences in Ampatuan, Maguindanao Del Sur

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Abstract

Aim: Cultural diversity in the workplace is increasingly recognized as a key factor influencing organizational dynamics, productivity, and employee satisfaction. Within educational institutions, diverse cultural backgrounds among teachers can significantly impact their professional experiences and classroom environments. This study described teachers' lived experiences amidst cultural diversity in the workplace in Ampatuan, Maguindanao del Sur.

Methodology: This study employed a qualitative-phenomenological research approach to explore workplace cultural diversity, focusing on elementary public school teachers' experiences of Christian, Muslim, and Lumads.

Results: Four main themes emerged: Pedagogical Challenges Amid Diversity, Lack of Cultural Awareness, Communication, and Inclusivity, Adaptive and Inclusive Teaching Practices, Cultural Understanding for Inclusive Relationship. The findings highlight that adaptive and inclusive teaching practices, development of cultural competence, collaboration with families and communities, effective strategies to overcome language barriers, and strong teacher support systems are essential in addressing these challenges.

Conclusion: Teachers in culturally diverse classrooms face challenges such as language barriers, limited professional development, and inadequate resources, which hinder effective instruction and student learning. Addressing these issues requires systemic support through equitable resource allocation, targeted administrative training, and active parental engagement. Enhancing teachers' cultural competence via specialized professional development, fostering collaboration with families and communities, and implementing inclusive, culturally relevant curricula are essential strategies. Additionally, establishing mentorship programs, Professional Learning Communities, and leadership training for administrators supports sustained growth and equitable policies. Together, these comprehensive efforts create inclusive learning environments that improve student engagement, academic outcomes, and a sense of belonging.

Keywords: *cultural diversity, workplace, teachers, phenomenology*

INTRODUCTION

Cultural diversity profoundly shapes teaching practices and student outcomes across educational settings. Teachers' interactions with students and colleagues from diverse cultural backgrounds influence their professional experiences and classroom environments, affecting inclusivity and instructional effectiveness. Recent research highlights that many teachers feel underprepared to support culturally diverse learners effectively, with over half holding negative attitudes toward students' critical thinking abilities influenced by cultural identity, underscoring the need for culturally responsive teaching and targeted professional development (Davies et al., 2023; Parkhouse, Lu, & Massaro, 2019). These findings align with international scholarship advocating for teacher education programs that develop cultural competence to enhance equity and student engagement (Ladson-Billings, 2021).

Globally, educational disparities persist, especially in underprivileged communities, as evidenced by international assessments such as PISA (OECD, 2022). Factors including limited resources, socioeconomic inequality, and insufficient support systems contribute to low academic achievement (Dela Cruz, 2022; Thomas & Müller, 2021). In the Philippines, these challenges are exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic's disruption of traditional learning,

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rural digital divides, and persistent socioeconomic barriers (DepEd, 2023; Salazar, 2022). Addressing these systemic issues requires policy reforms, increased educational investment, and context-specific interventions that promote equitable learning opportunities.

Within this national context, the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) faces pronounced educational challenges. Standardized test results reveal a significant performance gap between BARMM and other Philippine regions (DepEd Order No. 24, s. 2022). Contributing factors include limited access to quality education, scarce resources, socioeconomic hardships, inadequate teacher training, outdated learning materials, linguistic diversity, and unequal resource allocation (Lema & Sulong, 2022). These interconnected issues perpetuate educational inequities and hinder student achievement in the region.

Recent local studies emphasize the multilingual and multicultural complexity of BARMM classrooms, where teachers face challenges related to language barriers and limited professional development opportunities, which affect instructional quality and student outcomes (Semila, Señal, & Baculio, 2025). While the Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education-BARMM (MBHTE-BARMM) has introduced adaptive learning materials and inclusive policies, evaluations suggest that more culturally responsive teacher support and training are needed to address the region's unique context (Espinosa et al., 2024).

Schools in culturally diverse municipalities such as Ampatuan, Maguindanao del Sur, exemplify these challenges. Teachers here navigate complex cultural dynamics daily, yet their lived experiences remain underexplored. Understanding these experiences is vital for developing culturally responsive teaching frameworks that are sensitive to local realities while aligned with broader international standards in multicultural education.

This study addresses a contextual research gap by focusing on teachers' perspectives within Ampatuan's culturally diverse classrooms, a unique local context shaped by socio-cultural and resource-related factors rarely examined in existing research. By synthesizing local empirical evidence with global literature on multicultural education and teacher development, the study aims to generate insights that inform culturally responsive policies and practices, ultimately contributing to educational equity and quality in marginalized and conflict-affected regions.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, theoretical frameworks are useful for exploring the complexities of cultural diversity in education, particularly in relation to teachers' experiences in multicultural classrooms. One foundational perspective is Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) (Ladson-Billings, 2021). CRP emphasizes three core components: academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. Academic success involves supporting students' intellectual growth and development of critical thinking skills. Cultural competence encourages students to maintain and affirm their cultural identities while gaining fluency in other cultures. Critical consciousness empowers students to recognize and challenge social inequalities and injustices. This framework is especially relevant for understanding how teachers in Ampatuan, BARMM, navigate cultural diversity and foster critical thinking despite challenges related to limited resources and complex socio-political contexts.

Another significant framework is Banks' Multicultural Education Theory, which offers a comprehensive approach to addressing cultural diversity in education. Banks and Banks (2019) identifies five dimensions: content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture. Content integration involves incorporating diverse cultural perspectives into the curriculum, while knowledge construction encourages critical examination of how knowledge is created and whose perspectives are included. Prejudice reduction focuses on decreasing biases and stereotypes, equity pedagogy aims to adapt teaching to meet diverse learners' needs, and empowering school culture promotes an inclusive environment that supports all students. Applying Banks' theory helps to analyze how educational practices, curriculum, and school culture influence teachers' attitudes and instructional strategies in multicultural settings.

By integrating Ladson-Billings' Culturally Relevant Pedagogy with Banks' Multicultural Education Theory, this study gains a structured and comprehensive lens for examining teachers' lived experiences in culturally diverse classrooms. While CRP provides insight into the pedagogical goals of fostering academic achievement, cultural affirmation, and social critique, Banks' theory situates these goals within broader curricular and institutional contexts that shape educational equity. Together, these frameworks enable a nuanced understanding of how teachers in Ampatuan respond to cultural diversity, implement inclusive teaching practices, and address systemic inequities in education.



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Objectives

This study aimed to describe teachers' lived experiences amidst cultural diversity in Ampatuan, Maguindanao del Sur.

Specifically, the study addressed the following questions:

1. How do teachers in Ampatuan, Maguindanao del Sur perceive the impact of cultural diversity on teachers, and how does this affect students' educational performance?
2. What are the key challenges teachers face in managing cultural diversity?
3. How do challenges within the school system contribute to teachers' ability to address cultural diversity and support students' academic needs?

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative-phenomenological research approach to explore workplace cultural diversity, focusing on elementary public school teachers' experiences of Christian, Muslim, and Lumads. Phenomenology is a qualitative research methodology that investigates people's lived experiences, exploring methods, origins, features, and process steps through an extensive literature search to develop an understanding of the lived experiences and achieve a better insight into human experiences. The design was also employed in local studies in the Philippines (Protacio, 2021).

Population and Sampling

Participants were purposively selected to ensure a diverse representation of cultural backgrounds, teaching experience, and religious affiliations among elementary public school teachers in the Ampatuan District. The sample included both veteran teachers with over 10 years of experience and newer educators with less than 5 years in the profession. This diversity allowed the study to capture a broad range of perspectives on navigating cultural and religious diversity in the classroom. Demographically, participants varied in age, gender, and ethnic identity, reflecting the multicultural composition of the region.

The sample size of 10 participants was deliberately chosen to balance depth and manageability, aligning with qualitative research standards for in-depth interview studies. This size enabled the researcher to explore rich, detailed narratives while maintaining feasibility for thorough data collection and analysis. To ensure data saturation, the researcher conducted iterative data collection and analysis, continuously comparing emerging themes across interviews. Saturation was reached when additional interviews no longer yielded new insights or themes relevant to the research questions. The purposive selection of diverse participants further enhanced the richness of data and minimized the risk of premature saturation. Given the study's focus on complex social phenomena within a specific local context, this purposive sample provides meaningful insights into how cultural diversity influences teaching practices and educational outcomes. These findings contribute valuable knowledge to inform policy and practice aimed at enhancing multicultural education in Ampatuan and similar culturally diverse settings (Semila, et al., 2025).

Instruments

The researchers used a semi-structured interview guide as the primary data-gathering instrument to explore cultural diversity in the workplace, focusing on teachers' experiences at an Elementary Public School. The semi-structured format of the interview guide provided the flexibility needed to delve deeper into participants' responses, allowing for the exploration of emerging themes and issues as they arise. Before data collection began, the interview guide underwent a process of evaluation by research experts to ensure its relevance, clarity, and effectiveness. Consequently, this is essential strategies for enhancing the trustworthiness and credibility of qualitative research by reducing researcher bias and validating interpretations with participants and colleagues (Pang, et al., 2024).

Data Collection

The research commenced after receiving permission from the Dean of SKSU's Graduate School, guided by a detailed researcher's manual that outlined the data collection process. The initial step involved securing approval from the Division of Maguindanao del Sur through a formal request endorsed by the Research Adviser. Once the Schools Division Superintendent granted permission, the researcher sought consent from the principals of elementary public schools in Ampatuan District for the 2024-2025 academic year. Along with the request, an information letter



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and questionnaires were distributed, and the study's objectives and procedures were clearly explained to ensure participants' full understanding and informed consent.

Data collection was carried out using a semi-structured interview guide designed to explore teachers' experiences with cultural diversity among Christian, Muslim, and Lumad communities. This guide was refined through expert review to ensure clarity and effectiveness in eliciting rich, detailed responses. Interviews were transcribed using software and manually reviewed to maintain accuracy and preserve the authenticity of participants' perspectives. Key themes and patterns related to cultural diversity, intergroup relations, and inclusive strategies were identified during transcription.

Following data collection, the researchers systematically reviewed and consolidated the questionnaires and transcriptions for consistency and accuracy. To enhance validity, member checking was conducted by sharing transcribed data and preliminary interpretations with participants, allowing them to confirm or clarify their responses. This process strengthened the credibility and reliability of the findings. Finally, thematic analysis was applied to interpret the data, supported by tables addressing specific research questions, providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities teachers face in managing multicultural classrooms.

Data Analysis

This study employed semi-structured interviews to provide flexibility in exploring participants' perspectives while maintaining a consistent thematic focus across interviews. This format allowed the researcher to probe deeper into relevant topics and clarify responses, thereby capturing rich, nuanced data. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and preserve the authenticity of participants' narratives.

Data analysis followed the six-phase process of Thematic Analysis (TA) as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), a rigorous and systematic method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data. The process began with familiarization, where the researcher immersed themselves in the data by reading and re-reading transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding. Next, initial codes were generated by systematically labeling meaningful segments of text relevant to the research questions. These codes were then collated into potential themes, grouping related codes to capture broader patterns.

In the reviewing phase, themes were refined by checking their coherence against coded extracts and the entire dataset, ensuring they accurately represented the data. The researcher then defined and named each theme, articulating its essence and relevance to the study's objectives. Finally, the analysis was compiled into a coherent narrative, linking themes to the research questions and existing literature. This thorough approach enabled the study to uncover deep insights into teachers' lived experiences and the complexities of cultural diversity in the classroom (Bugnos et al., 2022).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. To protect anonymity, pseudonyms were assigned, and strict confidentiality protocols were followed, including secure storage of consent forms and transcripts on a password-protected external hard drive accessible only to the researcher. Participants were fully briefed on the study's purpose and had the opportunity to review findings. As a gesture of appreciation, participants received a token of gratitude that did not influence their participation or responses, ensuring ethical integrity and respect for their contributions.



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RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Table 1. Perception of Teachers in Ampatuan, Maguindanao Del Sur on the Impact of Cultural Diversity on Teachers and How Does this Affect Students’ Educational Performance.

Probing Issue	Core Ideas	Categories	Essential Theme
Challenges in Inclusive Education	Language Barriers	Difficulty in communication due to differences	Pedagogical challenges amid diversity
	Lack of Professional Development	Insufficient Trainings for Teachers	
	Economic Status of Learners	Socio-economic variations	
	Lack of Classroom Resources	Inadequacy of Instructional Materials	

Essential Theme 1: Pedagogical Challenges Amid Diversity

The table above shows the thematic analysis of the responses of participants to provide clear and better understanding of the theme. The theme above directly addresses the research question concerning how teachers in Ampatuan perceive and manage the impact of cultural diversity on their teaching and students’ educational performance. It encompasses four interconnected categories: (1) communication difficulties due to linguistic and cultural differences, (2) insufficient professional development, (3) socio-economic disparities among learners, and (4) inadequacy of instructional materials and classroom resources.

Teachers consistently identified language barriers as a primary challenge affecting student comprehension and participation. As one participant, Hermione, stated:

"Yes, minsan, as I said, ang mga teachers dapat nagsasalita din ng kanilang dialect para mas lalo nila maintindihan the language of the learners to understand their needs."

[Yes, most likely; as I said, the teacher should know how to speak the dialect or language of their learners to understand their needs.]

This highlights the importance of linguistic competence in fostering inclusivity and belonging. This insight aligns with Ladson-Billings’ (2019) concept of cultural competence within Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, which emphasizes affirming students’ cultural identities as essential for effective teaching. Despite employing strategies such as code-switching and visual aids, many teachers lack formal training in multilingual education, limiting their ability to support diverse learners fully. This finding echoes Eden et al. (2024), who stress the need for educators to develop a profound understanding of students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds to navigate multicultural classrooms effectively.

The lack of targeted professional development further exacerbates these challenges. Teachers reported limited access to training that addresses the practical realities of managing linguistic diversity, socio-economic disparities, and culturally responsive pedagogies. Consequently, many rely on personal experience and trial-and-error methods, which may not consistently yield effective results. This reflects systemic shortcomings in capacity-building efforts, as noted by Bugnos et al. (2022), and highlights a critical gap in preparing educators for culturally diverse settings.

Socio-economic disparities among students emerged as a significant factor influencing educational engagement and achievement. Students from low-income families face barriers such as inadequate school supplies, limited parental support, and competing responsibilities outside school. Teachers often provide emotional and financial support to mitigate these challenges, but such individual efforts cannot replace systemic solutions. This finding aligns with Banks’ (2019) framework, which stresses equity pedagogy and the creation of empowering school cultures to address structural inequalities.



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Inadequate instructional materials and overcrowded classrooms further limit pedagogical effectiveness. Participants described relying on outdated textbooks and insufficient technological resources, often improvising with personal funds or creative solutions. The lack of adequate physical infrastructure disrupts the learning environment and constrains teaching practices. Sustainable improvements require increased resource allocation and policy reforms to ensure equitable access to quality educational materials and facilities.

Integrating these findings with theoretical frameworks reveals how linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic factors intersect to shape educational experiences in Ampatuan. The challenges teachers face in communication and professional development reflect gaps in fostering cultural affirmation and equity, as emphasized by Ladson-Billings (2021). Meanwhile, socio-economic disparities and resource inadequacies highlight systemic inequities that Banks’ (2019) Multicultural Education Theory seeks to address through equity pedagogy and empowering school culture.

Importantly, participants also recognized the potential of cultural diversity to inspire pedagogical innovation. Teachers’ adaptive strategies to accommodate diverse student needs demonstrate a transformative approach consistent with contemporary scholarship advocating for educators to harness students’ cultural strengths in multicultural settings (Eden et al., 2024).

Table 2. Key challenges teachers face in managing cultural diversity.

Probing Issue	Core Ideas	Categories	Essential Theme
Addressing Cultural Diversity Needs in the Classroom	Communication Difficulties	Cultural Awareness	Lack of cultural awareness, communication and inclusivity
	Addressing Cultural Diversity Needs	Communication Strategies	
		Inclusive Teaching Practices	

Essential Theme 2: Lack of Cultural Awareness, Communication, and Inclusivity

ET 2 is derived from three interrelated categories: (1) cultural awareness, (2) communication strategies, and (3) inclusive teaching practices. These categories reflect participants’ core concerns, particularly regarding communication difficulties and addressing cultural diversity needs in the classroom.

Participants emphasized that effectively addressing cultural diversity requires understanding culturally responsive pedagogy, valuing diverse backgrounds, adapting communication methods, and fostering an inclusive environment. As Neville expressed:

"Minsan, I have difficulty to understand the parents, hindi sila makaintindi ng simple ng English."

[I have difficulty communicating with my learners... there are times I have observed that parents too cannot comprehend simple English.]

This highlights the communication barriers teachers face not only with students but also with parents, underscoring the broader challenges of linguistic diversity in educational contexts. Teachers recognize the importance of understanding students’ cultural backgrounds to promote inclusivity and respect; however, many feel unprepared due to a lack of formal training. They often rely on personal experience and peer support to develop culturally responsive teaching methods. Although some schools encourage multicultural awareness, the absence of structured programs limits teachers’ ability to fully integrate cultural sensitivity into their instruction.

Effective communication is essential in diverse classrooms, yet teachers struggle with language barriers and differing communication styles. To bridge these gaps, they use strategies such as code-switching, visual aids, and simplified language. However, without targeted professional development in multilingual and culturally adaptive communication, these strategies remain inconsistent. Teachers need specialized training to enhance engagement and ensure language differences do not impede learning.

Teachers also strive to implement inclusive teaching strategies that accommodate diverse abilities, backgrounds, and learning styles. Nevertheless, limited training and resources hinder the full adoption of differentiated instruction and adaptive methods. Many educators depend on peer collaboration and trial-and-error approaches to foster inclusivity. Institutional support through training programs and resource provision is critical to developing and sustaining effective inclusive practices.



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These findings align with research indicating that as classrooms become increasingly diverse, educators must transition from conventional management tactics to adaptive approaches that address classroom variety and promote effective educator-learner interactions (Garcia, 2021). Moreover, teachers play a pivotal role in engaging learners from diverse cultures by employing culturally sensitive communication that fosters shared understanding without causing harm (Sari, 2020).

The integration of these insights with established theoretical frameworks, such as Banks’ (2019) dimensions of multicultural education, underscores the need for content integration, knowledge construction, and equity pedagogy to create inclusive classrooms. Furthermore, inclusive teaching emphasizes cultivating supportive classroom climates, incorporating diverse perspectives, and applying universal design principles to ensure all students feel valued and engaged (Jardinez & Natividad, 2024).

Overall, this theme reveals that while teachers recognize the importance of cultural awareness and inclusivity, systemic gaps in training and resources limit their capacity to implement effective communication and inclusive practices. Addressing these gaps through comprehensive professional development and institutional support is essential for fostering equitable and culturally responsive learning environments.

Table 3. Challenges within the School System and its Contribution to Teachers' Ability to Address Cultural Diversity and Support Students' Academic Needs.

Probing Issue	Core Ideas	Categories	Essential Theme
3.1 Adaptive and Inclusive Teaching Practices in Managing Cultural Diversity	Modifying teaching approaches;	Culturally Relevant Materials	Adaptive and Inclusive Teaching Practices
	Developing cultural competence;	Cultural Competence	
	Effective communication with students and families	Inclusive Teaching Practices	
		Emotional Resilience	
		Policy Implementation	
3.2. Equity in Learning through Cultural Responsiveness	Emotional and Collaborative Support	Stakeholder Engagement Monitoring and Evaluation	Inclusive Cultural Relationship
	Empathy	Advocacy and Awareness	
	Collaboration		
	Community Engagement		
	Access and Equity		

Essential Theme 3.1: Adaptive and Inclusive Teaching Practices

This theme is characterized by four categories: (1) culturally relevant materials, (2) cultural competence, (3) inclusive teaching practices, and (4) emotional resilience. These categories reflect three core ideas: (1) modifying instructional approaches, (2) developing cultural competence, and (3) effective communication with students and families.



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Participants emphasized the necessity of adapting teaching methods to meet the diverse cultural, linguistic, and learning needs of their students. As Harry stated:

"Narealize ko na wala talagang isang strategy para sa lahat, individual siya, nakapende siya sa ano ang dapat sa mga bata."

[*"I realized that there really isn't a single strategy for everyone; it's individual and depends on what is best for the children."*]

This insight underscores the importance of flexible, student-centered pedagogy that aligns with culturally responsive teaching principles, which advocate tailoring instruction to students' unique cultural contexts. Developing cultural competence is fundamental for teachers working in multicultural classrooms. It involves understanding and respecting students' cultural backgrounds, traditions, and values, and integrating this knowledge into teaching practices. Research shows that cultural competence training enhances teachers' ability to deliver inclusive education, bridging cultural gaps and reducing misunderstandings (Johnson & Ramirez, 2023).

Addressing language barriers remains a significant challenge. Effective communication strategies include using visual aids, simplifying language, encouraging peer support, and implementing language support programs to facilitate understanding among linguistically diverse students (O'Connor & Davis, 2019). Support systems such as mentorship programs and access to cultural competence resources are crucial for helping teachers manage the complexities of diverse classrooms. Additionally, wellness initiatives contribute to teachers' emotional resilience, enabling them to cope with the stresses associated with meeting varied student needs (Semila, et al., 2025).

In summary, adaptive and inclusive teaching practices encompass fostering cultural competence, engaging in ongoing professional development, collaborating with families and communities, addressing language barriers, establishing robust support systems, and modifying curricula. These strategies are vital not only for academic success but also for creating classroom environments where all students feel valued and included, thereby enhancing their overall educational experiences and outcomes.

Essential Theme 3.2: Cultural Understanding for Inclusive Relationship

This theme highlights the critical role of cultural awareness, effective communication, and community engagement in building inclusive relationships among students, teachers, and the wider school community.

Hermione expressed:

"Mahirap talaga ang pagiging teacher, pero to survive in uncertainties in the classroom lalo na sa area na culturally strong, dapat matutunan ng guro kung paano makibagay sa komunidad and the ability to help learners is very easy."

[It is very difficult to become a teacher when you are at the culturally oriented environment, so as a coping mechanism we have to go with the community standards and by abiding to the community standards, learning our learners' differences and teaching them is very easy.]

This statement reflects the necessity for teachers to adapt to community norms as part of culturally responsive pedagogy, facilitating trust and effective teaching in culturally rich contexts. Research supports that ongoing cultural diversity training and context-specific professional development are essential for equipping teachers with practical tools to navigate multicultural classrooms (Kalogerogianni, 2025).

Collaboration with colleagues, families, and community members is vital for gaining deeper insights into students' cultural contexts and fostering integrated educational approaches. Such partnerships enhance teaching effectiveness, reduce teacher isolation, and incorporate diverse perspectives into the curriculum, which motivates students and promotes participation (Lakkala, et al., 2021).

By embracing cultural competence, effective communication, and community collaboration, teachers can create inclusive and supportive learning environments that improve academic outcomes and strengthen classroom communities.

Conclusions

In culturally diverse classrooms, teachers encounter significant challenges in managing cultural diversity, including language barriers, insufficient professional development, and limited classroom resources. These obstacles hinder effective instruction and complicate the integration of culturally responsive teaching practices. Communication difficulties and a limited awareness of multicultural dimensions further affect learners, as teachers may struggle to fully address the varied cultural needs present in their classrooms.



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The study also underscores the critical role of systemic support in facilitating education that meets diverse student needs. Unequal distribution of educational resources, gaps in school administration's capacity to provide relevant training, and varying levels of parental involvement collectively exacerbate teachers' challenges in managing cultural diversity and promoting student academic success.

Adaptive and inclusive teaching practices emerge as essential strategies for effectively responding to cultural diversity. Through targeted professional development, teachers can develop cultural competence, enabling them to understand and respond sensitively to their students' unique backgrounds and experiences. Collaboration with families, communities, and colleagues further enhances teachers' capacity to design inclusive curricula that incorporate diverse perspectives and actively engage students. Additionally, addressing language barriers and establishing robust support systems for educators contribute to sustaining a positive, responsive classroom environment. These combined efforts not only improve academic outcomes but also foster students' sense of belonging and empowerment within the learning community.

Recommendations

To effectively address the challenges identified in managing cultural diversity in Ampatuan's classrooms, it is essential that schools implement specific, targeted programs designed to build teachers' cultural competence and instructional adaptability. One foundational step is the introduction of culturally responsive teaching workshops and seminars. These workshops provide educators with a deep understanding of students' diverse cultural backgrounds, help them recognize and mitigate implicit biases, and equip them with practical strategies for adapting instructional materials and classroom interactions. By engaging teachers in interactive activities such as role-playing and case studies, these sessions foster experiential learning and prepare educators to respond sensitively to the needs of all learners.

Beyond initial training, establishing ongoing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) offers sustained support for teachers. Within these collaborative groups, educators can share experiences, reflect on their teaching practices, and collectively develop culturally relevant strategies. PLCs encourage peer mentoring and continuous professional growth, which are critical for embedding culturally responsive pedagogy into everyday classroom practice.

Another effective approach involves training teachers to conduct individualized cultural profiling of their students. By gathering information about students' languages, interests, and cultural experiences through interviews or surveys, teachers can tailor their lesson plans to be more relevant and engaging. This personalized approach not only validates students' identities but also enhances motivation and learning outcomes.

Curriculum development also plays a crucial role. Professional development should include guidance on integrating culturally relevant content into lessons, ensuring that examples, narratives, and problem-solving scenarios reflect the diverse realities of students' lives. This helps create a more inclusive curriculum that resonates with learners and broadens their perspectives.

Addressing language barriers requires specialized training in multilingual teaching techniques. Educators must be equipped with skills such as code-switching, use of visual aids, and scaffolding language to support English Language Learners and students from varied linguistic backgrounds. Additionally, training should focus on effective communication strategies with families who may have limited proficiency in the school's primary language, fostering stronger home-school connections.

Mentorship and coaching programs are vital for providing individualized support to teachers, particularly those new to culturally responsive practices. Experienced mentors can offer classroom observations, constructive feedback, and emotional support, helping teachers build confidence and resilience as they navigate diverse classrooms.

Engagement with families and communities is another key component. Training educators to collaborate respectfully and effectively with parents and community members ensures that cultural norms are honored and that community resources are leveraged to support student learning. Such partnerships enrich the educational experience and promote a sense of belonging for students.

Finally, leadership training for school administrators is essential to sustain these efforts. Equipping leaders with knowledge of equity pedagogy and inclusive school culture enables them to advocate for necessary resources, support teacher development, and implement policies that address systemic inequities.



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