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A Critical Pedagogy Analysis of Literature Teachers' Perspectives on The Integration of Multicultural Literature in Higher Education

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Multiculturalism, Higher Education Institutions, Philippine Education System, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Language Learning

Abstract

This qualitative study investigates the integration of multicultural literature within higher education classrooms, examining experiences, challenges, necessary support, and perceived impacts on students. Framed within critical pedagogy theory, the research aimed to uncover insights into the transformative potential of diverse narratives. Employing a descriptive phenomenology research design, semi-structured interviews were conducted with university literature teachers. Analysis of participant responses revealed multifaceted teaching strategies, emphasising the significance of cultural representation, innovative approaches, and fostering cross-cultural understanding. Teachers adapt their methods to accommodate diverse student voices while leveraging technology and cultural sensitivity. This study concludes that effective integration fosters inclusivity, empathy, and critical thinking among students. Further, the findings underscore the role of critical pedagogy and the need for comprehensive institutional support to enhance multicultural literature's impact within higher education.

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Mga keyword

Multikulturalismo, Mga Institusyon sa Taas nga Edukasyon, Sistema sa Edukasyon sa Pilipinas, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Pagkat-on sa Pinulongan

Abstract

Kini nga kwalitatibo nga pagtuon nag-imbestigar sa paghiusa sa multikultural nga literatura sulod sa mas taas nga mga lawak-klasehanan sa edukasyon. Pagsusi kini sa mga kasinatian, mga hagit, gikinahanglan nga suporta, ug mga epekto sa mga estudyante. Gi-frame kini sa sulod sa kritikal nga teorya sa pedagogy ug nagtumong sa pagdiskubre sa mga panabut sa potensyal nga pagbag-o sa lain-laing mga asoy.

Gigiyahan sa qualitative research nga mga prinsipyo, ilabi na ang descriptive phenomenology, ang pagtuon naggamit sa semi-structured nga mga interbyu sa mga instruktor sa literatura nga gipili pinaagi sa purposive sampling. Ang pagkolekta sa datos naglakip sa daghang mga online nga plataporma aron mapadali ang prangka nga mga diskusyon ug pagsiguro sa lain-laing representasyon sa mga panglantaw. Ang mga interbyu gipalambo ug gipamatud-an pinaagi sa pre-testing ug konsultasyon sa eksperto aron masiguro ang kalabutan sa mga tumong sa panukiduki. Ang mga interbyu girekord ug gi-transcribe sa verbatim alang sa thematic analysis, usa ka metodikal nga pamaagi sa pag-ila sa mga pattern ug tema sa datos. Ang induktibo nga pangatarungan naggiya sa proseso sa pagtuki, nga nagtugot sa pag-forma sa teorya gikan sa naobserbahan nga mga sumbanan. Ang mga pagsusi sa kasaligan sa intercoder ug mga pamaagi sa pagsusi sa miyembro gigamit aron mapauswag ang pagkakabalanse ug kredibilidad sa datos.

Ang pag-analisa sa mga tubag sa mga partisipante nagpadayag sa daghang mga pamaagi sa pagtudlo, nagpasiugda sa kamahinungdanon sa representasyon sa kultura, mga bag-ong pamaagi, ug cross-cultural nga pagsabut. Gipahiangay sa mga magtutudlo ang ilang mga pamaagi aron ma-accommodate ang lain-laing mga tingog sa estudyante samtang gigamit ang teknolohiya ug pagkasensitibo sa kultura.

Kini nga pagtuon nagpasiugda nga ang mga institusyon, magtutudlo, ug mga estudyante kolektibong nag-amot sa pagpalambo sa usa ka kultura nga gipadato sa pagkat-on. Nakatampo usab kini sa pagka-inclusivity ug pagkalainlain sa edukasyon, pag-ugmad sa cultural intelligence, ug mas lapad nga pagsabot sa global nga mga panglantaw. Gipasiugda sa pagtuon ang panginahanglan alang sa mga magtutudlo sa literatura nga adunay access sa lain-laing mga kapanguhaan, mga oportunidad sa pagpauswag sa propesyonal, ug pagtinabangay alang sa epektibo nga paghiusa. Dugang pa, ang mga institusyon sa taas nga edukasyon hinungdanon sa pagsuporta sa kini nga panagsama pinaagi sa pagpauswag sa kurikulum, alokasyon sa kapanguhaan, ug igo nga oras sa pagpangandam. Bisan pa sa mga hagit sama sa limitado nga suporta sa institusyon, ang personal nga dedikasyon ug pasalig sa mga magtutudlo ug mga estudyante adunay hinungdanong papel sa malampuson nga paghiusa sa multikultural nga literatura sa mga setting sa edukasyon.

Kini nga mga kaplag naghatag og nuanced nga mga panabut sa mga kakomplikado sa paghiusa sa multikultural nga literatura sa mas taas nga edukasyon, nga nag-amot sa teorya sa edukasyon, pag-uswag sa palisiya, ug mga pamaagi sa pedagogical.

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1. Introduction

Literature plays a vital role in spurring social engagement by stimulating deep thoughts and emotions. It shines a light on crucial and often controversial societal matters such as prejudice, inequality, and corruption in politics, which reverberate across various fields, leaving a lasting impression.

The study of literature not only fosters creative thinking but also promotes collaborative skills and the implementation of innovative ideas, enabling students to make meaningful contributions to their respective fields. Recognizing the significance of these factors, 21st-century competencies emphasize the importance of literature in enhancing students' sensitivity, self-awareness, and cross-cultural understanding. This idea was supported by Adams (2021) who stated that literature is pivotal in higher education as it fosters critical thinking, empathy, and cultural awareness among students. To facilitate students' meaningful interaction with literary works and enable them to comprehend the underlying themes and concepts, educators must develop effective teaching strategies.

Furthermore, Magulod (2021) noted that literature holds a vital position within the curriculum of numerous educational institutions worldwide, as it enhances students' learning and inventive abilities. Recognizing the diverse needs of their students, educators should consistently assess and enhance their teaching approaches, acknowledging that there is no universal method that suits every student when it comes to teaching literature.

This recognition of the growing diversity and interconnectedness of the world has led to an increasing awareness of the importance of integrating multicultural literature into higher education courses (Smith et al., 2020; Parker et al., 2019). Nevertheless, implementing this integration effectively poses numerous challenges and concerns for literature educators. To develop educational strategies and support systems that promote the successful incorporation of multicultural literature, it is crucial to understand their experiences, challenges, and perspectives.

Considering this issue in the context of the Philippines, one potential challenge in the study of literary education is the efficacy of teaching strategies. Even though there is a multitude of literature on teaching literature, there is still a need for additional research on effective teaching strategies as the educational system adapts to meet modern demands. It is crucial to investigate how different methods of teaching literature affect student learning outcomes and to discover ways to include students with diverse backgrounds and learning preferences. It is the responsibility of literary instructors to ensure that all students feel valued and welcome in the classroom. Constructing an inclusive education that considers students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as well as how to interact with diverse texts and reflect multiple points of view, requires additional research. Due to the increasing diversity of contemporary society, multicultural literature is gaining increasing importance in higher education programs.

Intending to contribute to the existing corpus of knowledge on this topic, the researcher decided to conduct this qualitative study. The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences, challenges, and perspectives of literature instructors regarding

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the incorporation of multicultural literature in higher education courses to promote cultural awareness, diversity, and inclusive education. This study aims to contribute to the existing corpus of knowledge by enhancing our understanding of how literature teachers interact with and approach the challenges of teaching multicultural literature. It attempts to provide educational institutions and policymakers with the knowledge and ideas they can use to develop more effective strategies and support systems as teachers of literature seek to incorporate multicultural literature.

2. Literature Review

This section contains extant literature and studies on the incorporation of multicultural literature in higher education classrooms to better comprehend the experiences, obstacles, and perspectives of literature teachers in the Philippines.

21. Literature Education in the Philippines

The Philippine education system most closely resembles the American paradigm. During Ferdinand Marcos' presidency in 1974, math, science, and literature were taught in both English and Tagalog, though English remained the primary language of instruction. In recent decades, the Philippine government has aimed to create a more inclusive educational system. In 2004, the Department of Education (DepEd) issued an order for a standardized curriculum in Muslim schools, primarily in Mindanao. This decision was prompted by concerns that specialized education in private Muslim schools was alienating students from their own culture. However, DepEd also recognized that public schools often neglected the Arabic language and Islamic values, leaving Muslim students disconnected from their religious heritage.

Maintaining interest in literature has long been a challenge in the Philippines. According to Antonio, as cited by Gomez (2022), Filipino students often overlook literature due to historical colonial influences, which have diminished cultural appreciation among younger generations. Despite literature being a cultural legacy, student engagement remains low. Other studies attribute this disinterest to the perception that literature, with its complex vocabulary, may not be accessible to all learners (Hassan, 2018).

2.2. An Introduction to Multicultural Literature

According to Stallworth, Gibbons, and Faubern (2006), multicultural literature serves as a reflective mirror for students' experiences, introducing them to diverse cultures and fostering respect and appreciation for differences (p. 480). Educators play a crucial role in embracing multicultural literature to enhance students' understanding, tolerance, and appreciation of various cultures and backgrounds in our increasingly diverse society. Exposure to multicultural literature allows students to relate to characters and cultures different from their own, promoting a sense of belonging and supporting academic success. When students do not encounter their own identities in literature, they may

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struggle with engagement and feel marginalized or undervalued, impacting their reading comprehension and overall engagement in learning activities. By integrating multicultural literature into classrooms, educators enrich students' educational experiences and cultivate inclusive environments that mirror the diverse world around them.

Sanders (2009) defines multicultural literature as encompassing all literary genres, focusing on characters from historically marginalized or misrepresented groups, including racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural minorities, as well as those from different sexual orientations. (p. 194)

2.3. Multicultural Education in Higher Education Classrooms

Multicultural literature encompasses a wide range of literary genres, including fiction, poetry, drama, and nonfiction, exploring the experiences, perspectives, and cultural identities of individuals from diverse ethnic, racial, religious, and social backgrounds (Chin, 2020). This literature vividly portrays the rich tapestry of human experiences across various cultures and societies, providing a platform to explore and understand diverse perspectives.

Literature holds a pivotal role in higher education by fostering critical thinking, empathy, and cultural awareness among students (Adams, 2021). Through exposure to a multitude of narratives and life experiences, multicultural literature enriches students' comprehension of the world and their place within it. Engagement with diverse cultures, histories, and social issues through literature cultivates essential skills such as empathy, critical thinking, and effective intercultural communication (Chin, 2020; Sleeter & Short, 2017). Incorporating literary works from different cultures in educational institutions not only celebrates human diversity but also promotes a deeper global understanding.

In Philippine higher education, established policies and guidelines influence literature curricula to support multicultural education. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has issued regulations emphasizing the incorporation of diverse literary works and multicultural perspectives into curricula (Commission on Higher Education, 2013). The CHED Memorandum Order No. 20 series of 2013 outlines the goals of general education, stressing the importance of multicultural education in fostering cross-cultural understanding and equipping students with the necessary skills for a diverse society.

The Department of Education's K–12 Basic Education Program also impacts higher education curricula, particularly through guidelines for teaching literature that reflect diverse cultural histories and perspectives. Many colleges and universities have developed policies to integrate multiculturalism into literary studies, such as the University of the Philippines Diliman's standards for teaching Philippine literature, which emphasises diverse voices and cultural perspectives (University of the Philippines Diliman, n.d.).

While initiatives abound, gaps in resources, support, and professional development for literature instructors persist. The research underscores the need for readily available

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diverse resources, including books, curriculum guides, and teaching tools, alongside comprehensive training programs addressing challenges like handling sensitive topics and fostering inclusive classrooms (Wang, 2020; Green, 2019). Collaboration and networking among educators are crucial for sharing best practices, lesson plans, and assessment techniques. (Lee & Kim, 2020)

To bridge these gaps effectively, continuous investment in comprehensive professional development programs is essential. These initiatives should provide literature educators with the resources, guidance, and support necessary to overcome challenges, promote inclusive teaching practices, and enhance cultural understanding. Collaboration between educators, curriculum specialists, and publishers is vital for developing high-quality educational materials and inclusive collections of multicultural literature that meet curricular needs.

2.4. Perceptions and Roles of Teachers in Teaching Multicultural Literature

Recent global events underscore the increasing importance for students to avoid ethnocentrism. Exposure to diverse multicultural literature can effectively break down barriers between cultures. Today's students face significant challenges that profoundly influence their identities and futures. Some students may encounter prejudice and misunderstanding due to their ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, or family structure. (Lawson, 2013)

Heath, as cited by Lawson (2013), highlights the significant role that a child's culture plays in their literacy development. Educators mustn't let personal biases affect their teaching, but instead, embrace cultural and linguistic diversity. Educators must expect high performance from all students while acknowledging and supporting their unique needs (Lawson, 2013). By viewing differences in culture and language as assets rather than obstacles, educators can better serve their students.

In addition, literature instructors shape pedagogical practices by employing diverse teaching strategies that foster critical thinking and engage students actively in learning. They create environments where students can explore literary texts, express their ideas, and participate in meaningful discussions (Dancel, 2015). Literature instructors also act as mentors, nurturing students' appreciation for literature and guiding their intellectual and personal growth. They encourage creative expression, promote reading enjoyment, and enhance analytical and writing skills (Santos, 2018).

Moreover, literature educators play a pivotal role in fostering cultural awareness and social consciousness. Incorporating multicultural literature into the curriculum exposes students to diverse perspectives, dispels stereotypes, and cultivates empathy (Ocampo, 2021). By creating inclusive classrooms that celebrate diversity, literature teachers provide a safe space for students to learn about and respect different cultures.

In higher education settings, literature instructors significantly influence curriculum development and pedagogical strategies. They select a range of literary works and design activities that encourage critical thinking and cultural appreciation. Through

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their teaching and mentorship, literature educators inspire students to engage deeply with literature, develop analytical abilities, and nurture a passion for reading. Their commitment to diversity enriches the educational experience, enabling students to gain insights into various cultures and perspectives.

Despite the benefits, integrating multicultural literature into the curriculum poses challenges for literature instructors, such as limited access to resources and navigating sensitive topics. However, through proactive efforts like seeking out diverse literary works and participating in professional development, educators can enhance their teaching effectiveness. (Santos, 2018; Ocampo, 2021)

Accordingly, literature educators who incorporate multicultural literature into their teaching practices report positive outcomes such as increased student engagement, improved critical thinking skills, and greater cultural awareness (González, 2020; Johnson, 2019). These experiences underscore the value of multicultural literature in higher education as a means to deepen understanding of diverse cultures and foster empathy among students.

2.4. Importance of Multicultural Literature and Its Impact on Students

Students can acquire a deeper understanding of their own culture as well as the cultures of others using multicultural literature. Through this deeper knowledge, relationships between students from disparate cultural backgrounds can be strengthened, bridging the gap (Hseu & Hetzel, 2000). As students of the 21st century are global citizens, cultural sensitivity is crucial. Norton (2009) discovered through extensive research that when students can relate global events to the themes, conflicts, and characters found in multicultural literature, it aids in their comprehension of contemporary world issues. Therefore, students improve their cognitive abilities as they learn to engage with and evaluate the texts they read.

In a study that Suzanne Evans (2010) conducted on critical literacy using a variety of multicultural picture books, she sought to determine whether student perspectives on diversity and acceptance of others changed after being exposed to multicultural texts. Evans concluded that the exposure of students to multicultural literature increased their awareness of the various social practices, values, and beliefs of other cultures. These themes are a primary focus of the Australian Curriculum, which incorporates a general capability strand dedicated to intercultural understanding into each of the main learning areas. The effects of multicultural literature on students include: 1. Promotes self-confidence and prevents students from feeling isolated. It can foster respect, empathy, and tolerance among all students (Steiner et al., 2008); 2. Fosters interaction between children of diverse ethnic backgrounds (Steiner et al., 2008); 3. can help students develop a global perspective by exposing them to contemporary cultural issues. When students experience the sentiments and emotions of others vicariously through literature, they are encouraged to examine the world critically and gain a deeper understanding of the global community

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(Monobe & Son, 2014); and 4. can also aid students in the formulation of their identities (Hseu & Henzel, 2000).

According to literature professors, integrating multicultural literature cultivates students' critical thinking skills. Johnson (2019) and González (2020) demonstrate that exposing students to a variety of literary texts motivates them to analyze, evaluate, and interpret material from multiple perspectives. Because of their interaction with multicultural literature, students are encouraged to think critically, to challenge presuppositions, and to gain a greater understanding of complex societal issues (Johnson, 2019; González, 2020).

Language proficiency is another area where the integration of multicultural literature has an effect. Literature instructors are aware that exposing students to a diversity of texts improves their students' language proficiency, vocabulary development, and communicative skills. Santos (2018) and Ocampo (2021) demonstrate how multicultural literature exposes students to a variety of linguistic nuances, idiomatic phrases, and cultural nuances, thereby augmenting language acquisition and expanding their language repertoire.

Educators must develop effective teaching strategies to facilitate students' meaningful engagement with literary works and comprehension of their underlying themes and concepts. Recognizing the diverse requirements of their students, educators should continually evaluate and improve their teaching approaches, recognizing that there is no universal method for teaching literature to all students.

The development of cultural awareness is one of the primary benefits of multicultural literature. Students gain knowledge of diverse customs, values, and lifestyles through exposure to a variety of cultural narratives. Incorporating multicultural literature into the curriculum of higher education is a motivating force behind the development of inclusive learning environments that truly embrace the diversity of the student body. This immersive method addresses detrimental assumptions and biases while enhancing students' comprehension of human experience. Through multicultural literature, readers can actively engage with and appreciate various cultures, developing vital skills such as cultural awareness, respect, and tolerance (Sleeter & Short, 2017).

According to Magulod (2021), literature plays an important role in the curricula of numerous educational institutions around the globe because it fosters students' learning and creative abilities. Literature study not only fosters creative thought but also fosters collaborative skills and the implementation of innovative ideas, enabling students to make significant contributions to their respective fields. Recognizing the significance of these factors, 21st-century competencies highlight the significance of literature in fostering students' sensitivity, self-awareness, and cross-cultural understanding.

Furthermore, according to Chin (2020) and Sleeter & Short (2017), multicultural literature also helps students develop a global perspective. They are made aware of the complexities of multicultural communities, which encourages critical thought regarding societal injustices and nurtures an appreciation for a variety of perspectives. Through their

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engagement with multicultural literature, students gain a deeper understanding of social justice, equity, and human rights, enabling them to be informed and proactive participants in a connected and diverse world.

Research on multicultural literature in higher education frequently examines the relationship between the diversity of faculty members and campus receptivity to diversity (Park and Denson; Hubbard et al.; De la Colina and Davis; Griggs and Tidewell; Matthew et al.). According to Park and Denson, "faculty plays a crucial role in university life." They design and teach the curriculum, conduct research that expands the existing body of knowledge, and establish guidelines that determine the majority of campus standards. They constitute the pool from which department chairs, deans, and college presidents are selected" (415).

By appreciating literature that represents a variety of perspectives and narratives, educational institutions can challenge prevalent assumptions and promote a curriculum that accurately reflects the realities of a multicultural society. Students who read multicultural literature are more likely to engage in critical analysis and thought, which equips them to challenge preconceived notions and biases in the texts they encounter. This genre of literature provides a forum for investigating power structures, societal norms, and cultural practices from a variety of perspectives to foster students' ability to think critically about issues of social justice and to engage in meaningful dialogues.

Incorporating multicultural literature into the curriculum equips students with invaluable skills for traversing a world that is becoming more interconnected. In an age of globalization and cultural exchange, people must cultivate intercultural competence and cross-cultural communication skills. Through discourse and the promotion of respect for diverse points of view, multicultural literature serves as a bridge between cultures. Through reading multicultural literature, students acquire the communication skills necessary to interact with others with courtesy, empathy, and cultural awareness.

3. Methodology

Using a descriptive phenomenological research design, this study investigated literature teachers' experiences, challenges, and perceptions regarding the integration of multicultural literature in higher education classrooms. Qualitative research was chosen to delve deeply into the complexities and nuances of these perspectives (Creswell, 2013). Descriptive phenomenology, in particular, facilitated a profound understanding of how literature instructors perceive and incorporate multicultural texts in their teaching practices. This approach allows for a nuanced exploration of subjective experiences, shedding light on motivations and actions that may challenge existing assumptions and inform new theories, policies, or practices (LibGuides: Qualitative Study Design: Phenomenology, n.d.).

Semi-structured interviews were employed as the primary data collection method. These interviews blend structured questions with opportunities for open-ended responses, providing flexibility while ensuring key topics are explored (George, 2023). Conducted

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across multiple online platforms, the interviews created a comfortable and confidential environment conducive to candid discussions with literature instructors (Patton, 2015).

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, targeting literature teachers with extensive experience in higher education and a demonstrated commitment to integrating multicultural literature into their curriculum (Guest et al., 2020). This approach aimed to capture a diverse range of perspectives and experiences among educators. To achieve data saturation, the sample size was determined based on the point at which no new information or themes emerged from the interviews (Guest et al., 2020).

A research instrument in the form of an interview guide was meticulously developed to explore literature teachers' experiences, challenges, and perceptions concerning the integration of multicultural literature. This guide comprised open-ended questions and prompts specifically crafted to elicit rich responses from participants. Prior to its deployment, the guide underwent rigorous pre-testing with a small group of literature teachers to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives (Creswell, 2013).

To enhance the validity and reliability of the interview questions, feedback was sought from five literature teachers who were not part of the original participant group. Their input was instrumental in refining the questions to effectively address the study's focus areas. Following iterative discussions and revisions, the finalized set of open-ended questions was employed as the primary research instrument.

During the interviews, participants granted permission for recordings, facilitating accurate transcription and subsequent data analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Verbatim transcriptions were conducted to ensure a thorough understanding of participant responses. The collected interview data were then subjected to thematic analysis, a method that allows for systematic identification of patterns, themes, and categories inherent in qualitative data (Labra et al., 2020; Braun & Clarke, 2019).

The thematic analysis process involved six distinct steps: familiarization with the data, coding, theme generation, review of themes, definition of themes, and report writing (Voxco, 2021). Given the exploratory nature of the study, an inductive approach was adopted, moving from specific observations to broader themes and theoretical insights (Guest et al., 2020).

To ensure the rigor and credibility of the data analysis, intercoder reliability checks were performed. An independent researcher coded a subset of interviews, and any discrepancies were resolved through consensus and discussion. Additionally, member-checking techniques were utilized, allowing participants to validate the analyzed data, thereby enhancing the accuracy and trustworthiness of the findings (Patton, 2015).

The methodological framework employed in this study—qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews, purposive sampling, and thematic analysis—was thoughtfully selected to capture nuanced perspectives and generate meaningful insights into literature teachers' experiences with multicultural literature integration in higher education settings. Collectively, these methods provided a robust foundation for exploring the complexities

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of the subject matter and deriving valuable conclusions for the study.

3.1 Research Instrument(s)

To gain a comprehensive insight into literature teachers' perspectives on integrating multicultural literature in higher education classrooms, data were collected using semi-structured interviews as the primary research method.

The semi-structured interview approach was chosen for its flexibility, depth, and participant-centered focus, which are crucial for exploring the complex and multifaceted topic of multicultural literature integration in higher education. This method balanced structure with adaptability: while a set of core questions guided the interviews, there was ample opportunity to delve into additional topics and follow up on interesting points raised by participants. This approach fostered natural and nuanced conversations, allowing teachers to share their experiences and insights extensively.

Moreover, the open-ended nature of the questions encouraged participants to articulate detailed responses, providing a deeper understanding of the challenges and nuances involved in integrating multicultural literature into higher education curricula. This approach respected the expertise and diverse perspectives of literature instructors, enabling them to shape the dialogue and offer a more accurate representation of their viewpoints.

Furthermore, the semi-structured interview guide consisted of meticulously crafted open-ended questions and prompts designed to explore teachers' experiences, challenges, and perspectives on multicultural literature integration. The guide was developed based on comprehensive literature review findings and underwent validation by a literature instructor and researcher to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with research objectives. Their feedback was instrumental in refining the guide to capture comprehensive insights from participants.

Throughout the interviews, participants' consent was obtained for audio recording, ensuring the accuracy of data transcription and analysis. This method not only captured verbal responses but also preserved nuances such as tone, pauses, and non-verbal cues, enhancing the depth and richness of the data analysed.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection process involved conducting individual semi-structured interviews with literature teachers experienced in integrating multicultural literature in higher education classrooms. Each interview was scheduled at a convenient time and location for the participant to ensure a comfortable environment conducive to open discussion. The researcher commenced each interview by outlining the study's purpose, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation, and obtaining informed consent from each participant.

During the interviews, a semi-structured interview guide containing open-ended questions and prompts was utilised. This approach facilitated the exploration of emergent

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themes and in-depth discussion of specific areas of interest. The researcher actively listened to participants, encouraging them to share their experiences, challenges, and perspectives on incorporating multicultural literature. Probing inquiries and follow-up prompts were employed to clarify responses and gather additional details.

With participants' permission, all interviews were audio recorded to ensure accuracy in data transcription, capturing nuances in expressions, tone, and emotions. These recordings will serve as a reference during data analysis to faithfully represent participants' voices. After each interview, the researcher transcribed the recordings verbatim and anonymised the data by assigning pseudonyms to participants.

Qualitative data analysis, particularly thematic analysis, was employed to analyse the transcripts. The researcher immersed in the data, identifying patterns, themes, and significant insights from participants' narratives. To enhance the reliability and credibility of findings, preliminary analysis summaries were shared with participants for feedback, validation, or clarification.

Participants were recruited from higher education institutions offering literature courses. The researcher contacted eligible faculty members to request their participation, providing detailed consent information. Recommendations for additional participants were also sought from interviewees to broaden the study's scope.

Interview preparations included scheduling convenient appointments, offering remote options as feasible, and piloting the interview guide with a literature teacher to refine questions and ensure clarity. Each interview session began with a clear explanation of the study's objectives, emphasizing confidentiality and voluntary participation, fostering a supportive atmosphere for candid responses.

Data analysis involved meticulous transcription and organisation of data according to participant pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. The researcher employed a coding framework to categorize and label data based on emerging themes, analysing iteratively to refine and validate identified themes.

To ensure rigour, member checking was conducted, involving participants in validating findings to ensure accuracy and interpretation fidelity. The researcher sought feedback from the dissertation advisor and committee members to enhance research credibility. Ethical guidelines and institutional research policies were strictly adhered to throughout, including secure data storage and anonymization to protect participant confidentiality.

4. Results and Discussion

This part presents the data collected through a series of interviews conducted by the researcher. The data has been thoroughly analysed and interpreted to address the research questions posed in this study.

- *What are the literature teachers' experiences and perceptions in integrating multicultural literature into their curriculum in higher education classrooms?*

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In the realm of higher education, literature teachers champion diversity and inclusivity, recognizing the limitations of relying solely on mainstream and traditional literary narratives. By integrating multicultural literature, these educators illuminate a broader spectrum of voices, narratives, and cultural landscapes. This effort goes beyond expanding syllabi; it enriches students' educational journeys with a tapestry of colors and flavors. As one teacher aptly stated, "I want my students to realize that literature is very rich and diverse... There is so much more color and flavor. There is so much more to explore."

This sentiment resonates deeply with Langer and Close's seminal study (2001), which underscores that exposing students to diverse literature opens doors to understanding various cultures and perspectives. This exposure fosters open-mindedness and cultivates tolerance, transcending the literary realm.

A recurring theme among literature teachers is the emphasis on cross-cultural sensitivity and its role in promoting inclusive discussions. Participants stress the importance of helping students recognize both commonalities and distinctions across cultures. This practice not only deepens their appreciation for diversity but also equips them with tools to engage in discussions with empathy and respect.

A poignant example of this approach comes from a teacher who shared, "I always ask them to point out or identify the similarities and differences between cultures in the myths". This approach aligns with Nieto and Bode's insights (2008), advocating for exposing students to diverse cultural perspectives to enhance their understanding of societal issues and broaden their worldview.

At the heart of integrating multicultural literature lies the ambition to foster cultural understanding and empathy among students. This transformative goal echoes throughout the participants' responses, describing their classrooms as spaces where students gain profound insights into human experiences across diverse cultures.

One participant eloquently expressed, "Integrating multicultural literature into my teaching has been a transformative and enriching experience... my students have gained a deeper appreciation for the complexities of the human experience across cultures". This sentiment echoes Banks's assertion (2006) that multicultural education prepares students to become global citizens who understand the significance of cultural diversity and our interconnected world.

In the symphony of literature education, these teachers' voices resonate as advocates of a pedagogical revolution. Their insights illuminate the profound impact of integrating multicultural literature in higher education. Through their efforts, they broaden students' literary horizons and create educational experiences that nurture empathy, cultivate global citizenship, and elevate the human spirit in the face of diversity. As they weave threads of richness, cross-cultural understanding, and empathy, they create a harmonious tapestry that embraces inclusivity and illuminates a path to a more enlightened future.

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- *What are the challenges literature teachers encounter in the integration of multicultural literature?*

The integration of multicultural literature into higher education presents a dynamic landscape rich with challenges and promising opportunities. As literature educators delve into this pedagogical realm, their reflections reveal a multifaceted terrain shaped by self-study, nuanced pedagogical approaches, and resource limitations. Amid diverse codes and themes, the discourse emphasizes the pivotal roles of personal exploration and robust support structures.

Resource Scarcity and Linguistic Challenges stand out as recurring themes in teachers' feedback. One participant candidly points out"The main problem that results in other challenges is the lack of resources". Insufficient access to well-crafted materials impedes students' exploration of diverse narratives. Moreover, linguistic barriers pose significant hurdles, particularly when students encounter unfamiliar terms rooted in different cultural contexts.

Cultural Sensitivity and Representation present complex considerations for educators integrating multicultural literature. They must navigate the nuances of cultural sensitivity to avoid reinforcing stereotypes or misrepresentations in texts. Reflecting on this, an educator notes, "Cultural sensitivity for authors like Apostol... students sometimes think twice about the settings of the texts since these authors tend to shift settings from local to international". This underscores the need for thoughtful facilitation of discussions that delve beyond surface narratives into deeper cultural insights.

Institutional Constraints and Evolving Student Engagement patterns emerge as critical issues. Participants highlight varying levels of institutional support, with concerns about adapting to digital learning environments where shorter attention spans and alternative learning modes prevail. As one teacher observes, "Young students today cannot (will not) read very long texts and will rely on synopses or video versions of the summary of the texts" . This shift necessitates innovative approaches to foster appreciation for diverse literary forms.

Sleeter's study (2012) underscores the challenges educators face when incorporating multicultural literature into curricula, underscoring the scarcity of quality resources and the necessity for pedagogical adaptations to meet diverse student needs.

The narratives of educators encapsulate the intricate landscape they navigate when integrating multicultural literature. As they confront resource constraints, linguistic barriers, cultural sensitivities, and evolving student engagement, their commitment to fostering inclusive learning spaces remains steadfast. These challenges not only prompt growth and adaptability but also offer opportunities to celebrate the diverse tapestry of human experiences.

- *How do literature teachers adapt their teaching strategies to effectively integrate multicultural literature?*

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Literature instructors in higher education employ a variety of pedagogical strategies to seamlessly integrate multicultural literature. Their skill lies in cultivating cultural empathy, critical thinking, and a nuanced understanding of the world, alongside conveying narratives. Through their diverse experiences, challenges, and innovative methods, a tapestry of teaching strategies emerges, each contributing to a more inclusive educational environment.

The journey begins with carefully selecting literary works that resonate with diverse experiences. This artistic and scholarly endeavor demands thoughtful consideration of factors such as cultural and thematic relevance, as well as literary quality. When curating literature for a syllabus, it is crucial to weigh aspects like themes, genres, character and gender representation, cultural authenticity, writing craftsmanship, and educational objectives, as articulated by one educator. This delicate balance ensures students encounter a spectrum of voices that reflect their identities and broaden their perspectives.

The classroom evolves into a realm of experimentation and creativity, where instructors devise innovative methods to engage students with diverse literature. A teacher's toolkit may include Socratic discussions, interactive Canva activities, role-playing character interviews, and even memes as discussion prompts. As one educator explains, "I ask students to look for a meme related to the assigned text, providing an alternative entry point for the discussion."

In their 1999 study, Sleeter and Grant underscore the significance of inquiry-based and culturally relevant teaching strategies. Their research underscores how innovative pedagogy fosters inclusive learning environments and empowers students from diverse backgrounds. Teachers facilitate open dialogue and the exchange of diverse perspectives by nurturing a safe and respectful environment for discussions. Through active listening, students develop empathy and an appreciation for differing viewpoints, fostering a sense of community amidst diversity. Au and Jordan's (1981) investigation into the impact of Socratic questioning further highlights the role of thought-provoking inquiries in promoting deep engagement with diverse texts.

Teachers adapt their strategies to ensure all students' voices are heard, recognizing the diversity within their classrooms. Leveraging technology, incorporating cultural symbols into discussions, and addressing misconceptions with sensitivity are essential tools. A teacher exemplifies this adaptive approach, stating, "If the topic relates to our own culture, I ask students who may be familiar with it, especially if they are truly immersed in a particular culture". Garcia (2012) discusses the importance of culturally responsive instruction in engaging diverse learners, emphasizing the need to tailor teaching methods to students' cultural backgrounds and experiences.

As literature educators navigate the landscape of multicultural education, their strategies serve as bridges connecting students with diverse narratives. Whether through innovative activities, cross-cultural dialogues, or adaptable approaches, these bridges enrich educational experiences and promote empathy, understanding, and respect for the

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myriad human stories. Through their pedagogical expertise, teachers weave a tapestry where cultural perspectives intersect, paving the way for a more inclusive and harmonious educational journey.

- *How do literature teachers perceive the impact of integrating multicultural literature on students?*

In the realm of higher education, the integration of multicultural literature plays a pivotal role in fostering transformative growth among students. As literature teachers navigate the rich tapestry of diverse narratives, they witness firsthand the profound impact these literary explorations have on their students. The theme of "Empowering Students through Multicultural Literature" reveals the myriad ways in which diverse perspectives enrich students' cultural awareness, critical thinking, empathy, and understanding. Through the lens of multicultural literature, students are exposed to worlds beyond their immediate surroundings. One teacher aptly notes, "It promotes awareness and sensitivity. It opens the world to the students". These literary journeys serve as a conduit for students to connect with a multitude of cultures and experiences, fostering greater appreciation for diversity and encouraging them to approach life with open hearts and minds. Gay (2010) underscores the significance of culturally relevant teaching in creating inclusive classroom environments, highlighting its role in promoting cultural awareness and sensitivity.

The infusion of multicultural literature nurtures students' broader perspectives, emphasizing the development of "multicultural intelligence and broad-mindedness" . This shift allows students to transcend cultural boundaries, recognizing the value of diversity and appreciating its richness in their own lives. Engaging with narratives from various cultural contexts helps students broaden their understanding of the world and develop respect for differing viewpoints. Banks (1997) discusses the importance of integrating multicultural education into the curriculum, empowering students to navigate a globalized world with cultural competence and an open mindset.

Moreover, engagement with multicultural literature becomes a crucible for critical thought and empathetic growth. As one educator observes, "It stimulates critical thinking skills by challenging stereotypes and assumptions about various cultures". Through grappling with diverse narratives, students not only hone their ability to analyze texts but also cultivate empathy by stepping into the shoes of characters from different backgrounds. Howard's (2001) study on culturally relevant pedagogy illustrates how multicultural literature challenges students' preconceptions and fosters cognitive growth.

The integration of multicultural literature acts as a catalyst for transforming the learning environment into a nurturing space of inclusivity. Educators find that it "creates a more inclusive learning environment," where students' diverse backgrounds are celebrated and their voices valued. This approach cultivates an atmosphere where each student's unique perspective contributes to the collective learning journey. Villegas and Lucas (2002) explore the implications of culturally responsive teaching for educational

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equity, highlighting how inclusive learning environments benefit all students by fostering a sense of belonging and improving academic outcomes.

Given these research findings, the implications for pedagogy are profound and actionable. Incorporating multicultural literature in higher education necessitates a deliberate reconfiguration of teaching strategies. Educators can leverage these insights to foster an educational landscape that nurtures cultural awareness, critical thinking, empathy, and inclusion. By integrating diverse narratives into curricula and emphasizing culturally responsive teaching, institutions prepare students to thrive in an interconnected world. Interactive lessons that challenge stereotypes enhance students' cognitive capacities, enabling them to approach complex issues with nuance and insight. Moreover, cultivating an inclusive environment ensures that students from diverse backgrounds feel valued and empowered, thereby amplifying their academic achievements. Ultimately, the transformative power of multicultural literature illuminates the pedagogical implications for educators, guiding them toward a dynamic and culturally enriched approach to education.

- *What resources and support do literature teachers perceive as necessary to enhance their ability to integrate multicultural literature effectively?*

Amidst the dynamic landscape of higher education, the integration of multicultural literature shines as a catalyst for transformation, molding students' minds while nurturing empathy, understanding, and cultural intelligence. Exploring the perspectives of literature educators, a clear theme emerges: "Empowering Literature Teachers through Resources and Support for Multicultural Literature Integration". This theme echoes through educators' aspirations, needs, and strategies as they navigate the realm of multicultural narratives.

Central to this theme is the active engagement of literature teachers in enriching experiences such as webinars and seminars, where experts delve into the complexities of myths across cultures. Reflecting on a recent webinar, one educator recalled, "I attended a webinar last year... how myths are labeled and defined differently in each country". These sessions serve as enlightening moments, broadening teachers' horizons and equipping them with tools to guide students through diverse narratives. This sentiment is supported by Gorski's (2018) research, highlighting the transformative impact of ongoing professional development in promoting equitable teaching practices.

A cornerstone of effective integration lies in accessibility — access to a wide array of literary works that reflect diverse cultures. Teachers emphasize the importance of "availability of books in the local library" and "translations or the availability of translated materials". These resources form the foundation of curricula that resonate with students from diverse backgrounds. Ladson-Billings (1995) reinforces this approach, stressing the pivotal role of culturally relevant texts in fostering inclusive educational experiences.

Collaboration emerges as another key element, where literature teachers forge

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connections with like-minded colleagues. The refrain of "collaboration with colleagues interested in multicultural literature" and "funding for teacher training" resonates throughout. Collaborative efforts create communities of practice, facilitating knowledge exchange and the development of innovative teaching strategies. Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) research underscores the power of collaborative learning environments in promoting culturally responsive teaching.

Beyond classroom pedagogy, integration extends to institutional support, where educational institutions advocate for inclusive curricula and professional development in multicultural literature. One educator asserts, "Higher education institutions should be more supportive of the updating of the curriculums to enhance multicultural literature.". This call to action aligns with Nieto's (2010) research, emphasizing institutions' crucial role in fostering diverse teaching practices.

The theme "Empowering Literature Teachers through Resources and Support for Multicultural Literature Integration" underscores the synergy between resources and dedicated educators as essential components of transformative education. From engaging webinars to fostering collaboration and institutional advocacy, each element contributes to pedagogical innovation. In this symphony, literature teachers emerge as catalysts, guiding students into a world of empathy, cross-cultural understanding, and critical thinking — a world enriched by diverse narratives.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the conclusions emphasise the transformative potential of multicultural literature in higher education. Institutions, educators, and students all play pivotal roles in cultivating a culturally enriched learning environment. Therefore, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- *Multicultural Literature Enhances Student Learning:* The perceived impact of multicultural literature on students underscores its potential to enhance awareness, sensitivity, critical thinking, and empathy. It contributes to a more inclusive and diverse learning environment, fostering cultural intelligence and a deeper understanding of global perspectives.
- *Teacher Resources are Essential:* Literature teachers require a comprehensive set of resources and support mechanisms to effectively integrate multicultural literature. Access to diverse literature, professional development, collaboration opportunities, and funding are critical for successful implementation.
- *Institutional Role is Crucial:* Higher education institutions play a pivotal role in facilitating multicultural literature integration. Their support through curriculum enhancement, resource provision, funding, and preparation time is essential for promoting a culturally responsive education.
- *Personal Dedication Matters:* Despite limited institutional support, the personal dedication and commitment of both teachers and students have a positive impact

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on the integration of multicultural literature. Teachers' determination to create inclusive spaces and students' receptivity contribute to the success of this endeavor.

- **Pedagogical Implications**

The integration of multicultural literature in higher education offers a dynamic opportunity to promote inclusivity, cultural awareness, and critical thinking among students. As educators navigate the complex landscape of narratives, it becomes crucial to translate research insights into practical pedagogical strategies. These strategies provide a framework for educational institutions, teachers, and stakeholders to foster an enriched learning environment that not only embraces diversity but also challenges biases and equips students with the skills needed for global citizenship.

This section explores the multifaceted pedagogical implications derived from research findings, aiming to outline effective ways to integrate multicultural literature into higher education curricula.

- *Curriculum Design:* Higher education institutions should prioritize the integration of multicultural literature into curricula, updating and promoting diverse texts that reflect various cultures and perspectives. This integration should be woven into core courses to ensure widespread exposure.
- *Professional Development:* Institutions must offer regular professional development opportunities focused on multicultural literature integration. Workshops, seminars, and webinars with experts should be provided to equip teachers with effective strategies for engaging students with diverse texts.
- *Resource Allocation:* Educational institutions should allocate resources for diverse literature collections, online platforms, translations, and teaching guides. Libraries and online repositories should curate materials that represent a wide range of cultural backgrounds.
- *Collaboration and Networking:* Creating communities of educators interested in multicultural literature facilitates the sharing of ideas, resources, and best practices. Encouraging collaboration among teachers fosters a supportive environment that enhances teaching quality.
- *Support for Teachers:* Providing funding for teacher training, exposure opportunities, and reduced administrative burdens empowers teachers to invest more time and effort in developing culturally responsive lessons.
- *Culturally Inclusive Environment:* Institutions should foster an inclusive learning environment that embraces diversity and encourages open dialogue about cultural experiences and perspectives. This includes creating safe spaces for discussing potentially sensitive topics.
- *Student Engagement Strategies:* Educators should employ interactive and technology-based approaches to engage students effectively. Multimedia content,

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discussions, and experiential learning activities can deepen students' understanding of diverse cultures.

- *Personal Engagement:* Teachers and students should maintain personal dedication to multicultural literature integration, even in the absence of extensive institutional support. Encouraging a passion for cross-cultural learning and fostering a growth mindset can drive positive outcomes.

- **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study on literature teachers' experiences and perceptions regarding the integration of multicultural literature in higher education classrooms, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Educational institutions should prioritize integrating multicultural literature into higher education curricula. It is essential to provide clear guidelines and official recommendations to literature teachers to assist them in selecting authentic and culturally relevant literary works. Furthermore, institutions should allocate resources to develop a diverse and inclusive collection of multicultural literature.
- Provide ongoing professional development for literature teachers emphasizing multicultural literature integration and critical pedagogy. Workshops, seminars, and conferences can improve educators' cultural understanding, teaching strategies, and commitment to inclusivity.
- Foster a supportive classroom that values diversity and encourages open dialogue on cultural themes. Promote respect and create a safe environment where students feel comfortable sharing their experiences and perspectives. This approach helps cultivate a deeper appreciation for multicultural literature.
- Facilitate collaboration among literature teachers to share best practices in multicultural literature integration, fostering a supportive community.
- Promote flexible curriculum design so teachers can choose culturally relevant texts that resonate with their students, adapting teaching methods as needed.
- Encourage student-centered approaches that promote critical thinking, empathy, and social awareness, using principles like conscientization and dialogue.
- Implement assessment tools to measure the impact of multicultural literature on students' cultural awareness, empathy, and critical thinking skills, ensuring continuous improvement.
- Advocate for multicultural literacy within educational institutions and the wider community, emphasizing its role in promoting cultural understanding and social change.
- Allocate resources to support literature teachers in integrating multicultural literature, including funding for culturally authentic books and materials.
- Use culturally responsive evaluation methods that respect students' diverse backgrounds when assessing their engagement with multicultural literature

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Declaration of conflicting interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of the article.

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