

Stakeholders' Perceptions of a Language-Based Multicultural Education Model for Cameroon Primary Schools

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Abstract

In Cameroon, characterized by more than half a century of legacy colonial language education, adopting an alternative form of education is not only a desired goal but more importantly, a major challenge in classroom innovation. This paper investigates stakeholders' perceptions of a language-based multicultural education (LBME) model for primary schools in Fako Division, Cameroon. The study explores what stakeholders consider the essential for a culturally responsive education. The study employed an exploratory sequential design with mixed methods having research instruments like questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions with teachers, inspectors, parents, and head teachers. The findings reveal that stakeholders prioritize indigenous language and culture, local history, traditional knowledge systems, and intercultural dialogue as central elements of a Language-based Multicultural Education (LBME) curriculum. However, they highlight challenges such as the dominance of colonial languages, lack of culturally relevant teaching materials, and insufficient teacher preparation. The study argues for the development of a context-specific curriculum that integrates indigenous knowledge and languages with national and global competencies. It concludes training of more teachers and participatory policy-making to foster equity, cultural preservation, and social cohesion.

Keywords: Multicultural Education, curriculum content, indigenous knowledge, Cameroon, primary schools.

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1. Introduction

The content of a language-based multicultural education integrates cultural and linguistic diversity into the curriculum to foster critical thinking, social cohesion, and deep appreciation for different perspectives, going beyond simply teaching about cultures to creating an environment where diverse students, languages and cultures are valued, respected, and actively integrated

into the learning process. In the Cameroon educational system, the main goal of education is to get students to accept the dominant (western) ideologies. Students are made to learn content and receive directives and applications without questioning (Banks, 2004; Hahn, 1998), but today stakeholders think that Cameroonian schools need to accept multicultural education which will involve getting students to take decisions on important social issues and supporting initiative taking in students,

societal change and democratic values (Banks, 2004).

Most stakeholders were in agreement with the multicultural content of a functional multicultural educational model. Without controlling the effect of other ideologies, the views of those who stated that multicultural education students should be taught the importance of equity wherefore, cultural diversity should be a vital component to be taught in multicultural education significantly influenced stakeholders' thoughts. When controlled for other ideologies, the only ideology that stood significant was that which stated that in multicultural education, students should be taught in a common language that is understood by all. The imperative for multicultural education in increasingly diverse societies is widely acknowledged, driven by the goals of promoting equity, inclusion, and academic excellence for all students (Banks and Banks, 2019; Gay, 2018). Rather than simply adding diverse elements to an existing curriculum, multicultural education content represents a transformative approach designed to reshape educational environments to reflect the experiences, cultures and perspectives of all learners, simultaneously challenging historical biases and empowering students to critically analyze societal structures. This paper is out to discuss stakeholders' perceptions of the content of a language-based multicultural education model for Cameroon primary schools.

Background

Multicultural education emphasizes the recognition and integration of diverse cultural identities in schools (Banks, 2016; Nieto, 2017). Despite Cameroon's rich cultural diversity, with over 250 indigenous languages alongside English and French, curriculum content has often privileged Eurocentric knowledge while sidelining local languages and cultural values (Anchimbe, 2006; Kouega, 2016). This mismatch between learners' lived realities and school curricula contribute to alienation, under achievement, and social fragmentation. Building upon Cameroon's inherent linguistic and ethnic diversity and its unique dual colonial heritage, there is need to look at the background specific to content that constitutes multicultural education within the Cameroonian schooling system. While the overarching need for multicultural education in a nation termed "Africa in miniature" and the implementation of genuinely multicultural content has been a significant challenge (Mfumbe, 2012). The content of education in Cameroon has been shaped by the legacies of both French and British colonial systems, prioritizing national unity and

assimilation into the official framework. The content of the Cameroon educational system is drawn heavily from the Western academic traditions and, where "national" content is included, it often represents a generic, unifying, rather than deeply diverse, portrayal of Cameroonian cultures. With a situation like this one, the rich tapestry of over 250 indigenous ethnic groups, their languages, histories, has been largely marginalized or relegated to extracurricular activities in some schools (Ebok, 2014)

The reality of multicultural education as articulated by scholars like Banks (2008) and Gay (2018), requires a profound transformation of curriculum content across all subject areas. This could involve the fundamental restructuring of the curriculum to integrate diverse perspectives, challenge Eurocentric biases, enable knowledge construction from multiple viewpoints, and empower students for social action. For this to be practical in Cameroon, it involves moving beyond the two official languages to incorporate and make use of the country's vast linguistic heritage in the educational system. The current educational landscape in Cameroon presents a significant gap between the theoretical need for multicultural education content and its practical realization in the classroom. Diversity is celebrated but the classroom situation is neglected as it fails to equip students with deep understanding of, and respect for, the full understanding of Cameroonian cultures in the educational system.

Research Problem

In recent years, Cameroon, through its legal frameworks, is seemingly committed to promoting an educational system founded on its cultural diversity with national languages as the base. However, keen observation reveals a lack of clear modeling or what the curriculum for such an education should be.

Research Goal and Objectives

The goal of this study is to attempt an operational multicultural education model for Cameroon based on the perceptions of stakeholders. To realize this goal, the research seeks to meet the following research objectives which have been formulated:

1. To ascertain stakeholders' perceptions about the content of a language-based multicultural education model for Cameroon primary schools.
2. Bring out stakeholders' perceptions of the role

of indigenous languages in the construction of the model.

3. Identify the challenges involved in the implementation of an indigenous languages model for multicultural education for Cameroon.

Research Questions

1. What are stakeholders' perceptions about the content of a language-based multicultural education model for Cameroon primary schools.

2. How do stakeholders view the integration of indigenous languages and cultural knowledge in curriculum content?

3. What challenges hinder the inclusion of culturally relevant content in schools?

2. Methodology

The research design has been discussed here, the participants of the study, data collection methods and analysis.

the exploratory sequential research design was adopted. It is derived from a mixed research method and makes use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. The justification of this design is explained by the fact that, data were collected in two consecutive phases; first qualitative and then quantitative to support the qualitative data. The instruments used to collect data for this study were an interview guide, focused group discussion guide and questionnaire. We had a total of 138 participants who responded to these instruments. Teachers were 95 in number, parents 30, head teachers 4, pedagogic inspectors were 6 in number and three respondents did not indicate their category. The schools visited ranged from diverse primary schools running from government, mission and private schools; Cradle Nursery and Primary School (Wokoko Buea) G.S Bonduma (group 2) PNPS (Buea Town) and New Horizon (Cite Sonara, Limbe)

For the collection of data, the questionnaires used were a Likert-scale and open-ended items on curriculum content priorities with teachers of basic education. Semi-structured interviews were done with parents, head teachers and inspectors. There was equally a focus group discussion with head teachers and teachers, to stimulate collective reflection. For a proper organization, the interview guide and the focused group discussions guide were organized into different sections which responded to the different research questions. The first section of the

interview guide was made up of demographic information, and the second responded to the various research questions. The focused group discussions guide was presented according to themes derived from the various research questions. There was a 100% return rate for questionnaires.

Data analysis as for the qualitative responses which were collected by recording the interviews with the participants. After the interviews the audio records were transcribed into text format for coding. The coding process was done using ATLAS.ti version 9. The transcribed responses were imported into the software and coded using themes that resulted from the responses of the participants of the study. After the coding process, the responses were exported into Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for the classification of themes, creation of the tables and sorting of responses based on the frequency of occurring themes before importing into the final report of the study. Then with the quantitative instrument (questionnaire), the data collected was coded and keyed into the computer system for computation. The data coding process was simply assigning codes to the responses found on the instrument to simple numerical codes that could be used to enter the data without compromising its integrity that is, minimizing the number of errors that result in data entry. Responses about strongly agree were coded as 4; agree as 3; disagree as 2 and strongly disagree as 1. The instrument equally had negatively worded questions and these set of questions was coded in a reverse manner, that is, strongly agree as 1 and strongly disagree as 4.

3. Findings of The Study

The data are presented in line with the objectives of the study and has been done using tables. Tables were used to present the frequencies of the responses to the closed ended questionnaire as well as the themes that were obtained from the interviews and focused group discussions. Also, the interviews were analysed in themes, and the themes are arranged in order of magnitude, that is, the most recurrent themes were at the top of the table and the least recurring themes at the bottom. For the sake of clarity and following the exploratory sequential design proposed in this paper, the work has been classified under qualitative and followed by a quantitative analysis.

Analysis on interviews of Stakeholders' perceptions about the content of a language-based multicultural education model for Cameroon primary schools?

Respondents’ opinion if there is any cultural representation in our educational system?

Table 1

Theme	Grounding	Sampled quotations		
		Head teachers	Inspectors	Parents
Partially takes culture into consideration	i	To an extent, the mother tongue and the rest into affective. I am in charge of mother tongue. When it comes to mother tongue day in February, students are always alive in school. You see them coming in different languages because they have learned greetings. You greet in Bayangi, Kenyan, Mokpe, all those things. The students do the greetings in different aspects; French, English, and the rest.		“It could be because it is from there that we have teachers.”
There is a cultural representation	i		“It is very good because you see as they say charity begins at home and you want to do the culture. A person without culture is a lost man. You start with culture, learn your culture, and you go home and teach it.”	
Tribalism	i	“I cannot see bias but is as I think it is part of tribalism. It is difficult to see a bakweri man; if they want two teachers in one class and then you see other tribes out of the two you will take even one Bakweri. Maybe the person is not even worth being in that class but because of tribalism, you just take someone who is not fit for that post.”		

The above table explains the opinions of stakeholders on the cultural representation in the current educational system. The stakeholders explained that the culture is represented in its language as there is the mother tongue day where students are expected to practise aspects of the culture. One of the stakeholders presented the analogy that the presence of teachers from different cultures in the schools implied that culture was partially represented in the educational system. This perspective was not shared

by all the stakeholders as one of the stakeholders mentioned that the culture was not completely represented and this was some form of bias as teachers are only sent to teach in areas where they cultural competence.

Stakeholders’ responses on which culture we can promote

Table 2

Theme	Grounding	Sampled quotations		
		Head teachers	Inspectors	Parents

Universal cultural principles	ii	<p>“We don’t need to. If we promote one, we are creating discrimination. When have things like the aspects.?You learn when you teach these proverbs, let’s say variety in spheres of like; mokpe, Kenyan or folktales. Even folktales have moral lessons. Proverbs in Kenyan and translate in English, phonetics, someone who done phonetics will read the proverbs and understand. So they can take those aspects and teach; those moral lessons will help imbibe moral lessons in children.”</p>	
Accommodate other cultures	i		<p>“I think that each culture is unique and important. I think it is important that it cuts across all the various cultures When we have various cultures, like bicultural, it is good because we have to make the atmosphere warm”</p>

Table 2 presents the responses of the stakeholders on choice of culture to be promoted in a multicultural educational system. The stakeholders mentioned that there should be universal cultural principles; that is, a variety of cultures should be promoted and no particular culture should be promoted over the other. To expand further on this theme, a also mentioned that proverbs in

Kenyan could as be incorporated to encourage or accommodate other cultures.

Responses on stakeholders’ perceptions from focus group discussions about the content of a language-based multicultural education model for Cameroon primary schools

Table 3

Codes	Themes	Sampled quotations
Content of multicultural education	Teaching of dialects	<p>“In my opinion, I think culture cuts across language, that is, the dialect, the way of dressing, the type of food, in general, it is the way of doing things. So I think that at the base, we should introduce the dialect to the children, the way of dressing of the people around them, that is, the tribe or division. Introduce nationally, the child should know that a person from the north, that is, how you can identify the person from the north through dressing or the kind of food or the manner in which they do carryout their traditional occasions for example like marriages and all that. At the base, we should make the children already know that if they talk about this food, they’ll know that it is eaten by this other group and how to cook it and how those it link to maybe they are celebrating death or how do they dress when they are doing birth celebration and things like that. I think at the base if they bring such things, they will know that Cameroon has so many ethnic groups and dresses and food. As madam already said, we are already doing these things. If there is fashion parade in class; it should be done according to regions.”</p>

<p>Storytelling, dance and folklore</p>	<p>“I think as content for primary education, we should try to stratify the different ethnic groups. First thing they differentiate between the coastal people, lets say the “Sawas”, the northern people, the Beti’s, and the Bulus, the fangs, then they go to they grassfields and differentiate the bamilekes before we differentiate the various social aspects of the people. When we do that, it will be easier now for a child or a learner when they see a particular cultural aspect of a people, that child will be able to identify the group of the people.”</p> <p>“As my colleague likely said, that we can add the territorial zones. They can also put songs, folklore, storytelling, dance and all what has been said. So that these children not only mastering theirs, can master other cultures and it will help to boost our multiculturalism in Cameroon.”</p>
<p>Teaching of salutation</p>	<p>“To me, for the content, you know, in basic education we have the nursery and the primary sector. So in the nursery, I think we can introduce the content, that is, greetings first, the children should know how to greet because we maybe know that Cameroon is split into four: we have the “Sawa” that is the south west and the Littoral region, we have the Fang beti, that is, the Bulu and people of the Center region, we have the Sudano-Sahel that is people from the north and we have the grassfield that is the Bamileke’s and people from the North west. If we look at these, we know that they have almost the same culture because if you see a douala man and a south west man, we have the same culture. I can say the same because most of these things are the same. People from the north west and the west region; they also have the same culture and if we look back at history, the Bamilekes came from there. So we have to stratify these cultures in a way that if these children can know that Cameroon is one but it is divided into subsections and from these subsections they should know how these people from this zone greet and respect tradition and terms of being respectful to respect their culture in terms of marriages. Even the way they call names, in the south west they call chiefs, in the south west they call fons, the other sides they call lamidos an so on. So we have to teach them that if they hear someone being called lamido, he is from the North. From that now, we come down to our system of living that is you know food like this one is coming from this area, food like “fufu and Eru” is coming from the south west we have so many things “Nkwi” is from the West and Achu is from the North West. So teach them the way they eat, the way they dress; if we look at the traditional wears of the north west and the west regions, they almost look alike and the Littoral and the South West are almost the same. This tradition is just like a small global something that if we take the content in the way that we eat, dress, speak and name things, we respect people’s cultures if children can adapt to this then we have intermarriages; children can live from north west and adapt in fang beti because they have learnt it in school”</p>
<p>structure of multicultural education in the form of scope and sequence</p>	<p>Content should focus on knowledge</p> <p>“At the level of the nursery, the content can concentrate on knowledge following bloom’s taxonomy. Then at the level of primary, level one, the objective there can be based on knowledge and comprehension. Then level two which is class three and four we add comprehension and application then level three, we add synthesis and evaluation.”</p>

<p>Stream learners according to their ethnic groups</p>	<p>“As I rightly said, with the scope, vertically, we can start by identifying these various ethnic groups at the nursery level because once the learners identify the various ethnic groups, we go now to the different aspects of culture. It is enough for them, that is, identification of the various ethnic groups in Cameroon. Then at the primary level, we go now to the various aspects of the culture whether it is art, dishes. I wish that the use of language should come only at level three where the learners can easily assimilate. So the various aspects of the culture should be taught in level one and level two then language should be reserved at level three”</p>
<p>Start teaching at multiculturalism at the Nursery level</p>	<p>“Our learners can be from the nursery, the primary, the secondary but since this multiculturalism is just a subject or something that they want to introduce in our curriculum, it is better that they start first with the base. They start first with the nursery and primary, then they see how the thing unfolds then they carry it to the secondary and university because it will be a type to just start something then they place on all the system of education. so, to me I believe that if we want to implant it in our curriculum, we should start with the nursery and primary then from there, we see how it has developed, it has gone deep into the roots of the children then we carry it to the secondary and to the university because even at the university level, it will take time for us to have lecturers that will come and teach those in the university immediately but if we start it in the basic sector, there will be some teachers that can still be as resource persons even in the university and they can teach better.”</p>
<p>Teachers are equipped with the skills to teach multicultural education</p>	<p>Not equipped</p> <p>“In my own opinion, I think that for now, the teachers in the field are not yet capable to practice it. I will suggest that, they introduce it in the teacher training colleges first so that they train the teachers and they come out. If we say they train particular teachers, it will not really be effective. For example in the nursery, the children are already versed with you, they know you because when they come they have that fear and once they get used to you; if you are going out for another teacher to come in to teach, maybe when you are going out they will be following behind you. So I think that we should introduce it in the training colleges let the teachers be trained. So that when you find yourself at any level, you should be able to deliver it.”</p> <p>“To me, I consider it impossible for it to be very effective at the beginning. If by the time the government is about to add something to the curriculum, the first thing she should think of is how to get the human resources. I think the government can still do the same in French and English where they are training bilingual teachers to teach French and English in our schools. So if they really see the importance of multiculturalism in our school, I think they will also do same as in English and French.”</p>

From the table above, the content of multicultural education should be the teaching of dialects as testified by this respondent; “In my opinion, I think culture cuts across language, that is, the dialect, the way of dressing, the type of food, in general, it is the way of doing things. So I think that at the base, we should introduce the dialect to the children, the way of dressing of the people around them, that is, the tribe or division. Introduce nationally,

the child should know that a person from the north, that is, how you can identify the person from the north through dressing or the kind of food or the manner in which they do carryout their traditional occasions for example like marriages and all that. At the base, we should make the children already know that if they talk about this food, they’ll know that it is eaten by this other group and how to cook it and how those it link to maybe

they are celebrating death or how do they dress when they are doing birth celebration and things like that. I think at the base if they bring such things, they will know that Cameroon has so many ethnic groups and dresses and food. As madam already said, we are already doing these things. If there is fashion parade in class; it should be done according to regions.”

Other responses were storytelling, dance, folklore and teaching of salutation. Some of their direct quotations were; “As my colleague likely said, that we can add the territorial zones. They can also put songs, folklore, storytelling, dance and all what has been said. So that these children not only mastering theirs, can master other cultures and it will help to boost our multiculturalism in Cameroon.”; “To me, for the content, you know, in basic education we have the nursery and the primary sector. So in the nursery, I think we can introduce the content, that is, greetings first, the children should know how to greet because we maybe know that Cameroon is split into four: we have the “Sawa” that is the south west and the Littoral region, we have the Fang beti, that is, the Bulu and people of the Center region, we have the Sudano-Sahel that is people from the north and we have the grassfield that is the Bamileke’s and people from the North west.”

Regarding the structure of the content to be taught, the participants opined that content should focus on knowledge, learners should be streamed according to their ethnic groups and the teaching of multiculturalism should start at the Nursery level as testified by some of them;“At the level of the nursery, the content can concentrate on knowledge following bloom’s taxonomy. Then at the level of primary, level one, the objective there can be based on knowledge and comprehension. Then level two which is class three and four we add comprehension and application then level three, we add synthesis and evaluation.”;“As I rightly said, with the scope, vertically, we can start by identifying these various ethnic groups at the nursery level because once the learners identify the various ethnic groups, we go now to the different aspects of culture.....”;“Our learners can be from the nursery, the primary, the secondary but since this multiculturalism is just a subject or something that they want to introduce in our curriculum, it is better that they start first with the base.....”.

Analysis of questionnaires on Stakeholders' perception of the content of a language based multicultural education model

Table 4

SN	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	No response	Total
11	In a language-based multicultural education, learners should be taught the historical background of the various cultures	79 (57%)	53 (38%)	1 (1%)	3 (2%)	2 (1%)	138 (100%)
12	Teaching about the various cultures and their characteristics should not be neglected in a language-based multicultural education	70 (51%)	47 (34%)	12 (9%)	6 (4%)	3 (2%)	138 (100%)
13	In a language-based multicultural education, learners should be taught in a common language that is understood by all others	71 (51%)	59 (43%)	6 (4%)	0 (0%)	2 (1%)	138 (100%)
14	In a language-based multicultural education, lessons given to learners should draw directly from their contextual background	43 (31%)	60 (43%)	23 (17%)	9 (7%)	3 (2%)	138 (100%)
15	Cultural prejudice should be an essential component in the teaching of a language-based multicultural education	66 (48%)	60 (43%)	7 (5%)	3 (2%)	2 (1%)	138 (100%)
16	The literature used in the teaching of language-based multicultural education should be founded in the Cameroonian culture	87 (63%)	45 (33%)	3 (2%)	0 (0%)	3 (2%)	138 (100%)
17	The significance of cultural events should be left out of a language-based multicultural education	10 (7%)	22 (16%)	57 (41%)	41 (30%)	8 (6%)	138 (100%)
18		64	59	8	4	3	138

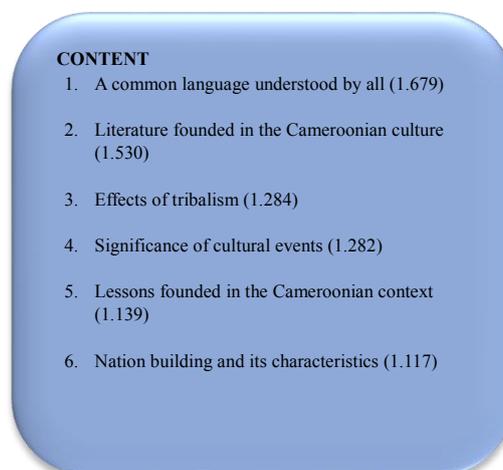
		(46%)	(43%)	(6%)	(3%)	(2%)	(100%)
	Cultural songs should be made part of the curriculum of a language-based multicultural education						
19	Language-based Multicultural education does not entail teaching democracy	11 (8%)	15 (11%)	45 (33%)	65 (47%)	2 (1%)	138 (100%)
20	Nation building and its characteristics should be taught to learners in a language-based multicultural education setting	56 (41%)	68 (49%)	9 (7%)	2 (1%)	3 (2%)	138 (100%)
	Multiple response set	642 (52%)	510 (45%)	229 (9%)	37 (4%)	29 (2%)	1380 (100%)

Table 4 presents the frequency and percentages of the responses of stakeholders' Stakeholders' perception of the content of a language based multicultural education model. Beginning with item 11, 95% of respondents agreed that in a language-based multicultural education, learners should be taught the historical background of the various cultures. As for item 12, a cumulative frequency of the 85% respondents agreed that teaching about the various cultures and their characteristics should not be neglected in a language-based multicultural education. Item 13 stated that in a language-based multicultural education, learners should be taught in a common language that is understood by all others; 95% of the respondents were in agreed to this statement. Looking at item 14, 74% of the respondents agreed that in a language-based multicultural education, lessons given to learners should build directly on their contextual background. With item 15, 91% of the respondents agreed that cultural prejudice should be an essential component in the teaching of a language-based

multicultural education. 96% of respondents agreed to item 16 which states that the course material used in the teaching of language-based multicultural education should be founded on the Cameroonian culture. As for item 17, only 23% agreed that the significance of cultural events should be left out of a language-based multicultural education; thus, this suggests that 71% of responses were in disagreement. 89% of respondents agreed to item 18 which states that cultural songs should be made part of the curriculum of a language-based multicultural education. Only 19% agreed to item 19 which stipulates that language-based multicultural education does not entail teaching democracy. Lastly, 90% of the respondents agreed to item 20 which stated that nation building and its characteristics should be taught to learners in a language-based multicultural education setting.

A Proposed model on the content of a language based multicultural education

Figure 1



The proposed model goes at all levels but as the children change levels, there is going to be an in depth study.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING CULTURALLY RELEVANT CONTENT

- Lack of textbooks and teaching materials in indigenous languages.
- Absence of teacher training in multicultural pedagogy.
- Policy ambiguity on integrating indigenous content.
- Perceptions of indigenous knowledge as “inferior” compared to Western knowledge.
- While community leaders emphasized cultural preservation, education officials were cautious, stressing the importance of global competitiveness. This reflects a tension between localization and globalization in curriculum design.
- Teachers highlighted that current curricula overemphasize colonial languages and Western history, while neglecting Cameroon’s diverse cultures. Parents expressed concern that children graduate with little knowledge of their mother tongues or cultural roots.

4. Conclusion

From this study which set out to propose a model for a language based multicultural education, Stakeholders in Fako Division perceive curriculum content as a critical site for advancing multicultural education. They emphasize the inclusion of indigenous languages, cultural values, and local knowledge as central to equitable and culturally responsive schooling. The indigenous language should be a common language that all will strive to understand. Literature founded in the Cameroonian culture should be taught and effects of tribalism should not be left out. Significance of cultural events, Lessons founded in the Cameroonian context, Nation building and its characteristics. Stakeholders further agreed that for the content of a LBME, Local history and oral traditions, including folklore and proverbs should be looked upon, cultural practices and values, such as respect, solidarity, and communal living. Intercultural dialogue to promote unity across ethnic groups, practical knowledge, such as local crafts, agriculture, and environmental stewardship. Though these proposals were made, however, entrenched challenges must be addressed through curriculum reform, teacher training, and participatory policy-making. Curriculum reform should incorporate indigenous languages, local history, and cultural knowledge into primary school curricula. Teacher training schools could develop pre-service and in-service

programs on multicultural pedagogy. Resource development in the sector of the production of textbooks and teaching aids in indigenous languages. Policy clarity in establishing clear guidelines for integrating indigenous content into national curricula. Community engagement should go a long way in involving parents, chiefs, and cultural associations in curriculum design and monitoring.

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