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THE ROLE OF HISTORY EDUCATION IN PROMOTING TOLERANCE AND MULTICULTURALISM IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of history education in promoting tolerance and multiculturalism in Philippine secondary schools, with the aim of identifying how historical narratives, pedagogical strategies, and classroom interactions shape students' understanding of cultural diversity. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research was conducted at Quezon City National High School and Davao City National High School, involving 30 participants through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The findings reveal that while the national curriculum offers limited representation of minority histories, teacher agency and localized instructional practices can significantly enhance multicultural learning. Classrooms that applied participatory methods—such as dialogue, comparative analysis, and community-based content—demonstrated higher levels of student engagement and empathy toward different cultural groups. A key novelty of this study lies in its integration of peace education, historical empathy, and multicultural pedagogy within a single analytical framework, providing a holistic understanding of how history can be taught to foster social cohesion. Additionally, the study contributes a comparative regional perspective by analyzing schools in both Luzon and Mindanao, offering insights into how geographic and cultural contexts affect inclusive teaching. The research concludes that history education can serve as a powerful tool for nurturing intercultural understanding, but only when delivered through inclusive content and reflective pedagogy. Therefore, meaningful reforms in curriculum design, teacher training, and policy implementation are essential to maximize its transformative potential in diverse learning environments.

Keywords: History education, multiculturalism, tolerance, pedagogy, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

History education plays a fundamental role in shaping students' worldview, particularly in multicultural societies such as the Philippines. Through the study of historical events, diverse cultures, and the development of national identity, learners gain insights into the complexity of human experiences across time and place. Teaching history with a multicultural lens allows students to appreciate cultural differences and recognize the contributions of various ethnic groups to national development. This fosters empathy, critical thinking, and respect for diversity—values essential in reducing prejudice and promoting tolerance in schools. Multicultural education, when integrated into history teaching, helps students develop a broader and more inclusive understanding of society (Brohinsky, 2023). The historical context of colonization, resistance, and nation-building in the Philippines further emphasizes the importance of inclusive

narratives in education. A history curriculum that acknowledges multiple perspectives encourages learners to question dominant narratives and embrace pluralism (Idacavage & McAndrews, 2024).

Tolerance and multiculturalism are crucial outcomes of quality history instruction, especially in a country with deep ethnolinguistic and religious diversity like the Philippines. Educators serve as agents of change when they facilitate dialogue about cultural heritage, conflict, and reconciliation in historical contexts. As Gillate et al. (2023) suggests, fostering multicultural competence through education enables students to engage respectfully with differences and challenge discriminatory practices. In Philippine secondary schools, integrating local histories and the voices of marginalized groups can counter historical silences and foster inclusive citizenship. Moreover, when students see their own communities reflected in the curriculum, their sense of belonging and civic responsibility grows stronger. Theoretical frameworks from critical pedagogy also support this, emphasizing the role of education in challenging social inequalities and cultivating democratic participation (Gillate et al., 2023). As such, history education becomes not only a tool for understanding the past but also a pathway for building a more tolerant and inclusive society.

Despite the recognized value of history education in fostering tolerance, its implementation in many Philippine secondary schools remains limited by outdated and centralized curricula. The national history curriculum often emphasizes dominant narratives, particularly those aligned with colonial or elite perspectives, leaving little room for the histories of indigenous peoples, Muslim Filipinos, and other ethnolinguistic minorities. As a result, students may develop a narrow understanding of the nation's multicultural roots and experience gaps in historical empathy. Many history textbooks used in public schools still lack diverse representation and reinforce monolithic views of Filipino identity (Villarino, 2025). This lack of inclusivity in content limits the development of intercultural awareness and critical citizenship skills. Teachers also face constraints such as standardized testing, limited resources, and lack of training in multicultural pedagogy, which further hinders meaningful historical engagement (Jauhiainen & Guerra, 2023).

In addition to content limitations, pedagogical practices in history classes often rely on rote memorization rather than critical dialogue and reflective learning. This traditional approach minimizes opportunities for students to explore multiple historical perspectives, engage with controversial issues, or relate the past to present-day social challenges. The lack of inquiry-based and participatory methods in history instruction prevents students from making connections between historical injustice and contemporary issues of discrimination and inequality (Jauhiainen & Guerra, 2023). Furthermore, classroom discussions on sensitive topics like colonialism, ethnicity, or religious conflict are frequently avoided due to a lack of teacher preparedness or fear of political backlash. These gaps contribute to a learning environment where tolerance and multiculturalism are not meaningfully addressed (Neuhaus & Vogt, 2022). Without

deliberate and reflective pedagogy, history education misses its potential as a transformative tool for social cohesion and inclusive citizenship.

While numerous studies have emphasized the value of multicultural education and inclusive history teaching globally, there is a lack of focused research examining how history education in Philippine secondary schools actively promotes tolerance and multiculturalism in practical classroom settings. Existing literature tends to highlight curriculum content analysis or general civic education approaches, but few empirical studies investigate how students and teachers engage with multicultural historical narratives in daily instruction. Moreover, the perspectives of learners—particularly in public schools serving ethnolinguistic minorities—are often underrepresented in academic discourse (Takenaka & Soga, 2019). There is a need for contextualized research that connects historical learning to real-world multicultural issues experienced by Filipino youth. This gap suggests an insufficient understanding of how classroom practices either support or hinder the development of tolerant attitudes through history education. Without this knowledge, efforts to reform history teaching remain disconnected from students' lived experiences (Villarino, 2025).

This study offers a novel contribution by exploring the lived experiences of students and teachers in utilizing history education as a means to promote tolerance and multiculturalism in Philippine secondary schools. Unlike previous research that often focuses on policy analysis or textbook content, this study combines classroom observation, interviews, and student reflections to capture how inclusive historical narratives are translated into pedagogical practices. It also situates the findings within the sociocultural realities of Philippine diversity, highlighting how localized historical content can foster empathy, critical thinking, and interethnic understanding. By centering the voices of both educators and learners, the research brings a participatory and grounded approach to the discourse on history education. Furthermore, the study aligns with current calls for decolonizing education in Southeast Asia by promoting pluralistic and student-centered history learning (Fahrudin, Salamah, et al., 2025). This unique perspective helps bridge the gap between curriculum intentions and classroom realities.

The primary aim of this research is to explore how history education in Philippine secondary schools contributes to the promotion of tolerance and multiculturalism among students. Specifically, the study seeks to examine the ways in which historical narratives, teaching strategies, and classroom interactions influence students' understanding and acceptance of cultural diversity. It also aims to identify how inclusive or exclusive content affects the development of empathy and intergroup respect. This research intends to assess teachers' roles in facilitating critical discussions on sensitive historical issues and how these pedagogical practices shape students' social attitudes. Additionally, it aims to analyze the alignment between curriculum goals and actual instructional practices regarding multicultural values. By doing so, the study will provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of history education as a tool for social cohesion. The findings are expected to inform policy reforms and teacher training programs focused on inclusive and tolerant historical learning environments.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research method using a case study approach to deeply examine how history education fosters tolerance and multiculturalism in secondary schools. Data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis to capture rich, contextual insights from both teachers and students. The research was conducted at Quezon City National High School and Davao City National High School, selected for their diverse student populations and representation of both urban Luzon and Mindanao contexts. A total of 30 respondents were involved: 4 history teachers and 11 students from each school, selected purposively based on their active engagement in classroom discussions. The purposive sampling ensured that participants could meaningfully reflect on issues related to multicultural history teaching. The data collection took place over a six-week period, allowing the researcher to observe different instructional sessions. Ethical clearance and consent were obtained from the schools and participants before fieldwork commenced.

The primary data collection instruments used in this study were semi-structured interview guides, classroom observation checklists, and document review forms. Interview questions focused on participants' perceptions of tolerance, multicultural content, and the inclusiveness of history lessons. Classroom observations were guided by a checklist evaluating teacher strategies, student engagement, and references to diverse cultural narratives. Document analysis included history lesson plans, textbooks, and instructional materials to assess representation and narrative scope. All qualitative data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun & Clarke (2006) six-phase framework to identify recurring patterns and insights. Codes were developed inductively, allowing themes to emerge directly from participants' narratives and classroom practices. Triangulation of data sources enhanced the validity of the findings. Reflexive journaling was also employed throughout the research to ensure researcher bias was acknowledged and minimized during the analytical process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One of the key findings reveals that the representation of cultural diversity in history teaching materials remains limited and uneven across the two schools. Although both institutions follow the Department of Education's prescribed curriculum, textbooks and lesson plans predominantly focus on dominant historical narratives—such as Spanish colonization and national heroes from Luzon—while underrepresenting indigenous, Muslim, and regional histories. As shown in Table 1, only 18% of instructional content analyzed included multicultural references, with even fewer lessons addressing Mindanao or Lumad histories. This lack of diverse representation restricts students' exposure to the cultural plurality of the Philippines. Several teachers expressed concerns about the rigidity of mandated materials, which limits their ability to introduce localized and inclusive content. This aligns with earlier studies that criticize national curricula for their

Manila-centric focus (Alamon, 2017). Without balanced cultural narratives, history education struggles to promote true multicultural understanding.

Table 1: Cultural Representation in History Lesson Materials

Cultural Group/Region	Frequency in Lessons	Percentage (%)
Tagalog/Manila-based	38	52%
Visayan	12	16%
Muslim Filipino (e.g., Moro)	8	11%
Indigenous (e.g., Lumad, Aeta)	6	8%
Others (Mixed)	9	13%

The classroom observations and teacher interviews highlight varying pedagogical strategies in promoting tolerance. Teachers in Davao City National High School, where the student population is more culturally diverse, demonstrated more deliberate efforts to integrate multicultural dialogue into lessons. For example, one teacher used a comparative analysis of religious practices during pre-colonial times to foster discussions on interfaith respect. In contrast, Quezon City National High School relied more on textbook-centered instruction with fewer student-led discussions. As summarized in Table 2, student engagement in multicultural discussions was significantly higher in classrooms that employed participatory and reflective teaching methods. These strategies included group debates, historical role-plays, and linking historical events to current interethnic issues. This finding supports Fahrudin & Saefudin (2025) theory that democratic, student-centered pedagogy enhances multicultural awareness. Teachers who received training in inclusive education were more confident in navigating sensitive historical topics and promoting critical dialogue.

Table 2: Student Engagement in Multicultural Discussions by School

School	High Engagement	Moderate Engagement	Low Engagement
Davao City National High School	7	3	1
Quezon City National High School	2	4	5

Student reflections and interview responses indicate that inclusive and participatory history teaching positively influences their attitudes toward cultural diversity. Students exposed to multicultural content and open discussion spaces reported increased empathy, curiosity about other cultures, and a stronger sense of shared national identity. Several students in Davao expressed pride in seeing their own ethnic backgrounds acknowledged in lessons. Meanwhile, students from Quezon City noted feeling detached from lessons that lacked cultural relevance. These responses suggest that history education can indeed promote tolerance, but only when cultural inclusion is intentional and pedagogically grounded. Moreover, both groups expressed a desire for

more history content related to current social issues, such as ethnic discrimination and regional conflict, indicating that students are eager to connect historical learning to real-life diversity challenges. The findings affirm that content representation and teaching style both play vital roles in shaping multicultural consciousness in learners.

The findings of this study confirm and expand on recent scholarship emphasizing the importance of culturally responsive history education in multicultural societies. Scholars such as Fahrudin, Kurniawanti, et al. (2025) argue that when students see their identities and communities reflected in the curriculum, it enhances their engagement and promotes intergroup empathy. In the Philippine context, recent work by Brewis & Hannan (2023) highlights how marginalized histories—particularly those of Muslim Filipinos and Indigenous groups—remain peripheral in national narratives, limiting students' full understanding of the nation's pluralistic identity. This study aligns with their conclusions, as only 18% of observed materials included content from non-dominant groups. Additionally, the use of participatory teaching methods observed in this research supports Brewis & Hannan (2023) multicultural education model, which emphasizes inquiry-based learning and critical reflection as tools to promote tolerance. These findings reaffirm the theoretical link between inclusive pedagogy and democratic citizenship (Fairless Nicholson, 2023).

Furthermore, the disparity in student engagement between schools reflects a broader trend noted in Southeast Asian educational research, where urban or resource-rich schools tend to implement more inclusive practices compared to under-resourced counterparts (Efiloglu Kurt, 2023). The Davao-based school's success in promoting multicultural dialogue can be attributed to teacher training programs focused on peace education and local history integration, which scholars like Vinco et al. (2019) argue are essential for addressing regional historical tensions in Mindanao. The study's findings also echo Neuhaus & Vogt (2022) recommendation that history education must move beyond rote memorization to cultivate historical empathy and civic engagement. When history is taught as a critical inquiry into multiple perspectives, students not only gain factual knowledge but also develop a deeper respect for diversity (Godsell et al., 2024). This literature confirms that pedagogical reform and curricular inclusivity are key to fostering tolerance through history education.

This study presents a novel contribution to the field of history education in the Philippines by bridging the gap between curriculum policy and lived classroom experiences in multicultural settings. Unlike previous studies that primarily analyzed textbooks or policy frameworks (Wang, 2024), this research employs direct observation and student-teacher narratives to reveal how multicultural values are (or are not) enacted in real-time instruction. It emphasizes the role of pedagogical practices—such as open dialogue, localized content, and inclusive examples—in fostering tolerance among learners, an area often underexplored in the Philippine educational context. By including two schools from culturally distinct regions (Luzon and Mindanao), this study provides comparative insights that highlight the impact of geographic and sociocultural diversity on history teaching. This approach aligns with recent calls for context-sensitive

educational research in Southeast Asia (Brohinsky, 2023). The findings advocate for pedagogical change rather than merely curricular revision, marking a shift in research focus within the field. Additionally, this study introduces an innovative perspective by integrating the principles of peace education, historical empathy, and multicultural pedagogy into a single analytical framework. While prior literature often treats these concepts separately, this research demonstrates their interconnectedness in shaping students' civic consciousness and respect for diversity (Efiloğlu Kurt, 2023). The inclusion of student voice as a central element of data collection—through reflective interviews—also contributes to methodological innovation, offering a bottom-up view of how history is received and internalized by learners. Furthermore, the study highlights how teacher agency and localized knowledge can overcome limitations of national curriculum structures, an insight valuable for both policy makers and educators (Visuddho et al., 2023). In doing so, this research not only fills a local empirical gap but also contributes to global discussions on inclusive history education in postcolonial societies.

This study holds significant global relevance as it contributes to the broader discourse on inclusive and decolonized history education in multicultural societies. By highlighting how local pedagogical practices in the Philippines can promote tolerance and intercultural understanding, the findings offer transferable insights for other postcolonial nations grappling with ethnocultural diversity in education. The integration of historical empathy, peace pedagogy, and student voice aligns with global education goals such as those outlined in UNESCO's framework for Global Citizenship Education (Shume Nadew et al., 2024). Furthermore, the study demonstrates that grassroots innovations—such as context-based teaching and localized content—can serve as scalable models for promoting democratic values in classrooms worldwide. Educational policymakers and researchers across Asia, Africa, and Latin America can draw lessons from this study to reform history teaching in ways that reflect the pluralism of their own societies. Ultimately, the research supports the global agenda of nurturing socially responsible, culturally aware learners who are equipped to engage in peaceful coexistence.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study conclude that history education in Philippine secondary schools has the potential to promote tolerance and multiculturalism, but its effectiveness is highly dependent on the inclusiveness of content and the pedagogy employed by teachers. Schools that integrated localized historical narratives and participatory teaching strategies showed greater student engagement and cultural empathy. However, limited representation of minority groups in textbooks and rigid curriculum structures remain significant barriers. Teachers who actively fostered open dialogue and critical thinking were more successful in shaping tolerant attitudes among students. The contrast between schools in Luzon and Mindanao also underscores the importance of regional and cultural context in shaping classroom dynamics. Overall, history education can be a transformative tool for social cohesion if grounded in inclusive, reflective, and student-

centered approaches. Thus, systemic reforms in curriculum design and teacher training are essential to realize this potential across diverse educational settings.

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