

Global Trends and Methodological Gaps in Culture-Based Education Research: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract: Research into culture-based education has seen significant development over the past decade, in line with growing global attention to cultural diversity, inclusive education and intercultural competence. However, this research still exhibits various methodological gaps and theoretical fragmentation. This study aims to analyse global trends, methodological patterns, dominant themes and research gaps in the field of culture-based education through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. Research data were obtained from the Scopus database using keywords related to culture-based education, multicultural education, intercultural education and culturally responsive education for the period 2016–2025. The article selection process followed the PRISMA guidelines, resulting in 2,023 articles meeting the inclusion criteria. The findings indicate that publications on culture-based education have increased significantly over the past decade, culminating in 2025, and are dominated by countries such as the United States, Spain, Indonesia, the United Kingdom, and South Korea. Thematically, the research was dominated by education, the humanities, and cultural diversity, whilst studies on multicultural education, intercultural education, and multiculturalism remained relatively limited. From a methodological perspective, qualitative designs represent the dominant research paradigm (62.4%), primarily utilizing case studies and phenomenological approaches, while structured questionnaires serve as the most prevalent empirical instrument within the quantitative subset (24.1%). Conversely, experimental, longitudinal, and mixed-methods designs were still rarely employed. Furthermore, this research also reveals theoretical fragmentation due to a lack of integration of consistent theoretical frameworks. This study highlights the need to strengthen methodological rigor, integrate theory, and broaden the research focus to support the development of a more inclusive and sustainable culture-based education.

Keywords: culture-based education; intercultural education; multicultural education; systematic literature review; methodological gaps

INTRODUCTION

Culture-based education is receiving increasing attention in global educational discourse, in line with growing awareness of the importance of cultural identity, diversity and inclusive education in multicultural societies (Gadaza et al., 2025). Education is no longer understood merely as a process of transferring academic knowledge, but also as a means of passing on values, preserving culture, shaping character, strengthening learners' social identity, and fostering critical global citizenship (Tariq, 2025). Therefore, in the context of globalisation and digital transformation, the integration of culture into education is becoming increasingly important in order to maintain a balance between modernisation and the preservation of local culture.

Various approaches to culture-based education have emerged over the past few decades, such as intercultural education (Portera et al., 2025), multicultural education (Pankevič, 2022), culturally responsive teaching (Ghaemi & Boroushaki, 2025), and education based on local wisdom (Sales-Batang et al., 2025). These approaches regard culture as an integral part of the learning process, whether through the curriculum, teaching strategies, social interaction or the educational environment. Research conducted by Simons et al. (2011); Guay (2016); and Bodric (2021) indicates that culture-based education can enhance pupils' motivation to learn, social sensitivity, intercultural competence, and awareness of cultural diversity and social identity.

Research into culture-based education has seen significant growth in recent decades, particularly in line with the increasing global focus on issues of cultural diversity, *global citizenship* and inclusive education. Based on publication data from the Scopus database using the keywords (“culture-based education” OR “culturally responsive education” OR “multicultural education” OR “intercultural education”) accessed on 25 May 2025, the number of publications stood at just 48 articles in 2000, but rose substantially to 364 publications by 2025. This increase indicates that culture-based education is increasingly viewed as a vital approach to addressing educational challenges in multicultural and global societies. Nevertheless, existing research still reveals various limitations. The majority of studies tend to focus on language learning contexts and classroom interactions, whilst research on educational policy, curriculum development, teacher capacity building, and the implementation of culture-based education within institutional contexts remains relatively limited (Deng, 2021; Molise et al., 2022, 2022; Nijhuis, 2019; Ponce et al., 2018; Weymann, 2018; Yang & Li, 2019). Furthermore, existing research also reveals a predominance of qualitative approaches, with a heavy reliance on interviews and questionnaires as the primary data collection tools. This situation limits the generalisability of research findings and reduces the research’s ability to explain causal relationships between educational practices and cultural learning outcomes.

Theoretical fragmentation remains evident in research on culture-based education. Most of this research has not consistently employed standard theoretical frameworks, such as intercultural communicative competence, culturally responsive pedagogy, or the theory of cultural continuity (Flores et al., 2025; Gonzales & Gonzales, 2025). Consequently, research developments have become less integrated, making it difficult to build a robust knowledge base. These methodological and theoretical gaps highlight the need for a more systematic evaluation of the direction of research in culture-based education.

Although the number of publications on culture-based education continues to rise, studies that specifically map global research trends, methodological patterns, dominant themes and research gaps remain relatively limited (Istiq'faroh et al., 2026). Most previous research has focused on empirical studies or conceptual reviews within specific contexts and has therefore not provided a comprehensive overview of global developments in this field. Given this situation, this study aims to analyse global trends and methodological gaps in research on culture-based education through a systematic literature review (SLR) approach. Based on these conceptual and methodological gaps, this study is designed to address the following research questions.

1. What are the trends in global publications on culture-based education for the period 2016–2025?
2. What are the main themes dominating research on culture-based education?
3. What are the methodological characteristics of research on culture-based education in terms of research design, instruments, and data analysis techniques?
4. What methodological and theoretical gaps remain in research on culture-based education?
5. What is the future direction of research on culture-based education?

It is hoped that this study will help to chart the development of research in this field, identify methodological and theoretical weaknesses, and offer guidance for the future development of culture-based educational research.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to systematically and comprehensively identify, evaluate and synthesise research on culture-based education. The SLR approach was chosen as it enables researchers to gain a comprehensive overview of research trends, methodological approaches and research gaps within a field of study (Fundoni et al., 2023).

Data Sources and Search Strategies

The research data was obtained from the Scopus database, as it offers extensive coverage of high-quality international publications in the fields of education and the social sciences. The article search was conducted on 4 May 2026 using the following search strategy: TITLE-ABS-KEY ('culture-based education' OR 'culturally responsive education' OR 'multicultural education' OR 'intercultural education').

To enhance the relevance and quality of the data, the article search process was restricted to documents classified as 'articles', articles in English, and publications released between 2016 and 2025. These restrictions are applied to ensure that the analysed articles possess adequate academic quality, are relevant to the latest developments in culture-based educational research, and allow for the identification of research trends over a sufficiently long and representative period.

Furthermore, this study applied inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure that the articles were relevant to the research objectives. The inclusion criteria encompassed articles indexed in the Scopus database, discussing culture-based education, intercultural education, multicultural education, or culturally responsive education approaches; published in scientific journals; available in full text; and employing empirical or conceptual approaches relevant to the research focus. Meanwhile, exclusion criteria include documents such as conference proceedings, books, book chapters, editorials, and non-systematic literature reviews; articles not directly related to the educational context; duplicate articles; and articles with incomplete metadata. The application of these criteria aims to enhance the consistency, validity, and relevance of the research dataset.

Selection Process, Coding, and Rigor Verification

To address the reviewer's concerns regarding the selection rigor and the zero-exclusion rate after screening, we explicitly outline our multi-stage workflow. The boolean search string was designed with a highly precise structure, targeting only the primary, established terms of the discipline: "culture-based education", "culturally responsive education", "multicultural education", and "intercultural education". Because this query was strictly confined to Title, Abstract, or Keywords, it automatically filtered out peripheral literature before the manual screening phase. The automated Scopus filter initially removed 4,188 ineligible documents (e.g., conference proceedings, books, non-English publications, and papers outside the 2016–2025 timeframe), leaving exactly 2,023 records. During the subsequent screening phase, two independent reviewers manually evaluated the titles, abstracts, and full texts of all 2,023 retrieved articles. Since the search query was tightly scoped and restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles, all 2,023 papers fell strictly within the inclusion criteria, resulting in zero manual exclusions. This ensures a comprehensive, unbiased, and exhaustive mapping of the literature rather than an arbitrary filtering.

To ensure a highly reliable and scientific review process, we implemented a structured data extraction and coding protocol:

1. Retrieval: Full-text PDFs for all 2,023 documents were retrieved through institutional library access, publisher APIs, and scholarly networks. No documents were lost to non-retrieval.
2. Independent Coding: Each paper was systematically coded using a standardized Excel extraction sheet. Coding parameters included: publication year, author affiliation countries, core research themes, methodological design, specific data collection instruments, and statistical analysis techniques.
3. Rigor Verification: To verify the reliability of our coding system, a random sub-sample of 10% of the articles ($n = 202$) was independently double-coded by two researchers. The calculated inter-rater agreement using Cohen's Kappa was 0.89, representing an 'almost perfect' level of agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977). Discrepancies were resolved through structured team deliberations until 100% consensus was achieved, guaranteeing the precision of our methodological classifications.

The article selection process was conducted systematically in accordance with the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines (Page et al., 2021). The selection process began with the identification of articles via the Scopus database using the

predefined search strategy. Subsequently, screening was carried out based on document type and publication language, followed by an examination of titles and abstracts to ensure relevance to the research objectives. Articles that passed the initial stage were then subjected to a full-text screening based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria before finally being selected as the final articles to be analyzed (Figure 1).

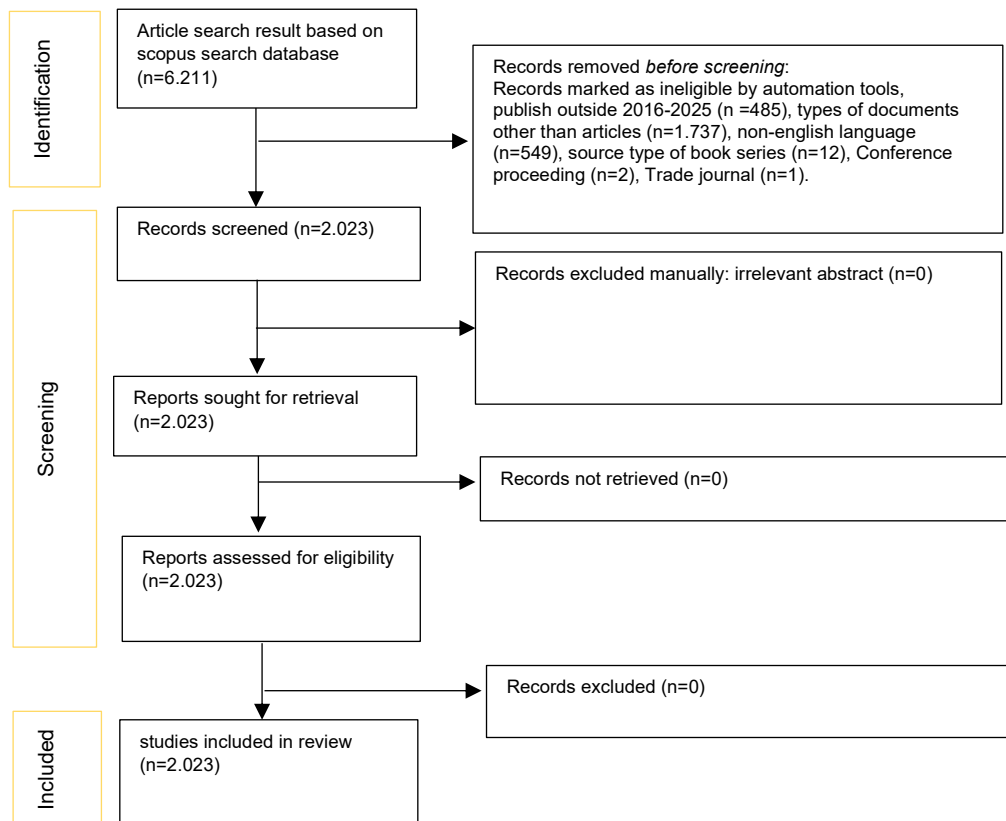


Figure 1. Article selection procedure

The data obtained were analysed using descriptive and thematic approaches to provide a comprehensive overview of developments in culture-based educational research. Descriptive analysis was conducted on annual publication trends, the distribution of countries and journals, research themes, research subjects, research methods, data collection instruments, and data analysis techniques used in previous studies. In addition, a thematic analysis was carried out to identify dominant themes, methodological gaps, theoretical fragmentation, and the direction of future research development. The results of the analysis were then presented in the form of tables, graphs, and narrative descriptions to facilitate interpretation, synthesis of findings, and the systematic identification of research development patterns.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Trends in the Publication of Culture-Based Educational Research

The results of the analysis show that publications on culture-based education have increased significantly over the past decade, culminating in 2025. Specifically, the volume of annual publications rose from 182 articles in 2016 to 364 articles in 2025, reflecting growing academic interest in issues of cultural diversity, inclusive education, and intercultural competence within the global education system. This trend in publications suggests that culture-based education has evolved from a local pedagogical issue into an educational research agenda of global relevance.

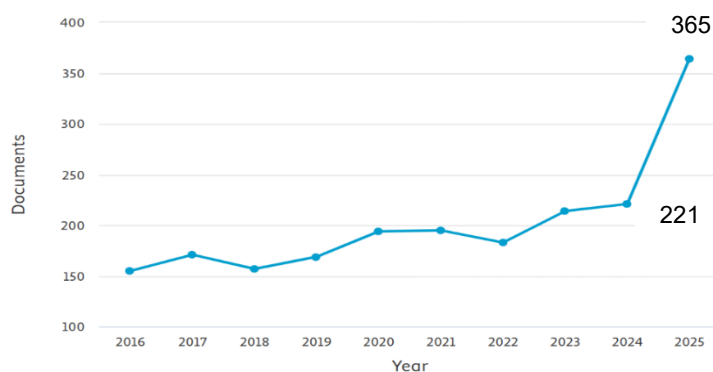


Figure 2. Developments in publications relating to culture-based education

The distribution of publications shows that research is dominated by countries such as the United States, Spain, Indonesia, the United Kingdom and South Korea. The dominance of these countries indicates that culture-based education is flourishing in nations with high levels of social diversity and a strong focus on inclusive education.

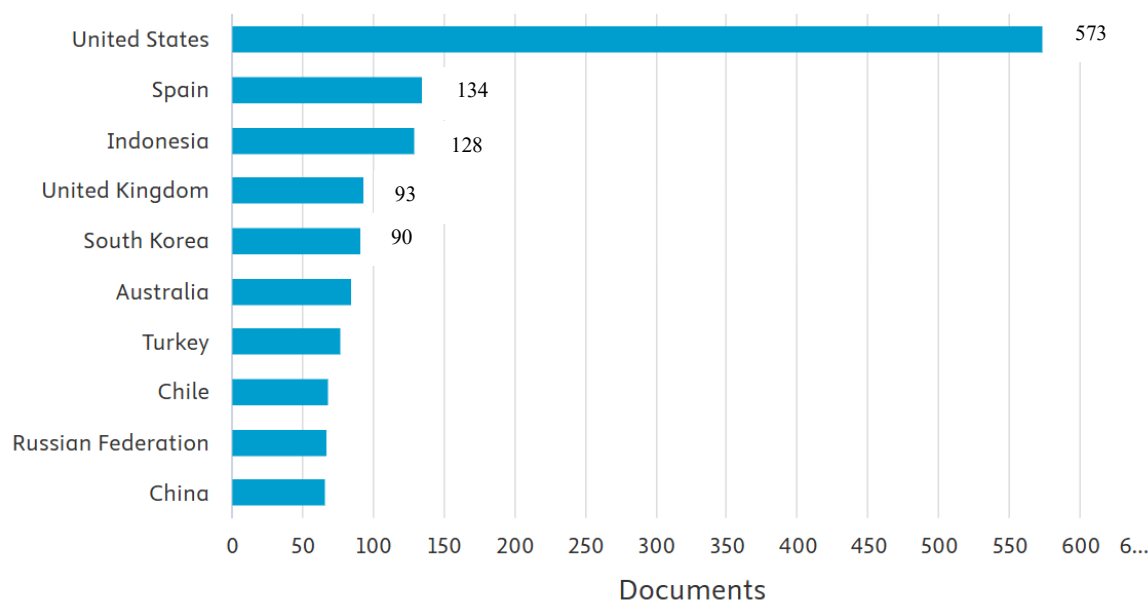


Figure 3. The ten countries with the highest number of publications on culture-based education

Distribution of Research Themes

The results of the thematic map analysis show that 'education', 'human' and 'cultural diversity' occupy the 'Motor Themes' quadrant, indicating that these themes possess high levels of centrality and density, thereby acting as the primary drivers of development in this field of research. Conversely, 'multicultural education', 'intercultural education' and 'multiculturalism' are situated in the 'Declining Themes' quadrant, with relatively low levels of centrality and density. These findings suggest a shift in research focus from traditional multicultural approaches towards a broader examination of cultural diversity in education. Furthermore, the absence of themes in the Niche Themes or Basic Themes quadrants indicates that the research structure in this field remains concentrated on core themes related to education and cultural diversity.

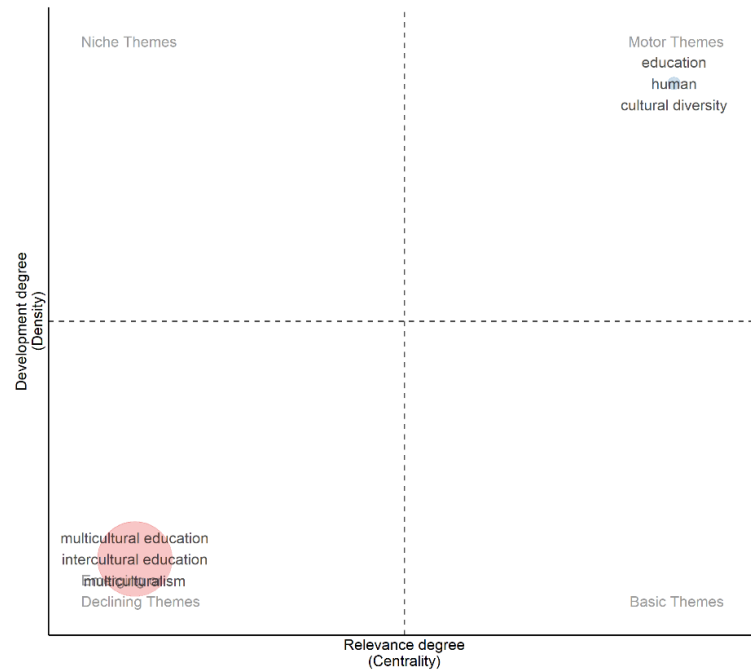


Figure 4. Distribution of Research Themes

Based on the thematic analysis carried out by the research team, ten main themes were identified based on the volume of research.

Table 1. Research Themes

No	Themes	Number of Articles
1	Multicultural education	52
2	Diversity	47
3	Cultural diversity	45
4	Intercultural education	25
5	Education	24
6	Culture	22
7	Culturally responsive education	20
8	Culturally responsive teaching	19
9	Higher education	17
10	Bilingual education	15

The results of the thematic analysis conducted by the research team revealed patterns consistent with the findings of the mapping exercise using the R programme. The analysis identified cultural diversity and education as the most dominant themes in the literature on culture-based education. The dominance of these two themes indicates that researchers' primary focus remains on efforts to understand, manage, and integrate cultural diversity into the educational process to create a learning environment that is more inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of learners. These findings align with global developments that position the issue of cultural diversity as one of the key challenges in 21st-century education systems. Furthermore, the emergence of themes such as cultural identity (4 articles), anti-racism education (4 articles), and inclusive education (4 articles) indicates a broadening of research focus from traditional pedagogical aspects towards more critical issues, such as the formation of cultural identity, social justice, the elimination of discrimination, and the strengthening of educational inclusivity. Meanwhile, the themes of multicultural education, intercultural education, and multiculturalism have tended to see a decline in research intensity. This situation indicates a paradigm shift from a multicultural approach oriented towards the recognition and appreciation of cultural differences towards an approach that places greater emphasis on cultural responsiveness, inclusivity, and social transformation within the context of education. Thus, the development of these themes

demonstrates that research into culture-based education continues to move towards a more comprehensive perspective in addressing the challenges of diversity, identity, and social justice in the era of globalisation.

Research Methodological Pattern

To substantiate our claims regarding methodological dominance, we provide the exact frequencies and percentages resulting from the coding of the 2,023 documents. A systematic methodological coding of the articles revealed that qualitative research designs represent the overall dominant paradigm, accounting for 62.4% (n = 1,262) of the publications. This is followed by quantitative designs at 24.1% (n = 487), conceptual and historical analyses at 10.3% (n = 208), and mixed-methods designs at a marginal 3.2% (n = 66). Within the quantitative subset (n = 487), survey designs utilizing structured questionnaires are heavily dominant, accounting for 68.0% (n = 331) of all quantitative studies, followed by correlational designs at 21.0% (n = 102), and experimental or quasi-experimental studies at only 11.0% (n = 54). This precise empirical distribution highlights a major methodological gap: there is an extreme reliance on cross-sectional perception-based survey instruments, whilst advanced designs like causal-experimental, longitudinal, and integrated mixed-methods remain drastically underutilized. Table 2 outlines the full methodological spectrum.

Tabel 2. Research Methodological Pattern

No	Aspect of Methodologis	Characteristics Identified	Findings of the analysis
1	Quantitative Research Design	Survey, correlational, experimental, quasi-experimental, SEM/PLS-SEM	The impact of culturally responsive activities on school readiness; students' perceptions of interculturalism; the role of libraries in multicultural arts education
2	Qualitative Research Design	Case study, descriptive-interpretative, phenomenological, exploratory	Culturally responsive educational leadership in Thailand; teachers' perceptions of racism; content analysis of TikTok videos on interculturalism
3	Mixed Methods Design	A combination of quantitative surveys and qualitative exploration	Students' perceptions of the integration of interculturalism into teacher education in Ecuador
4	Conceptual and Historical Analysis	Document analysis, historical-comparative studies, institutional studies	Second-language education in ancient civilisations; the public mission of universities in supporting pluralism
5	Instrument of Survei	Structured questionnaire, Likert scale, perception survey	Students' perceptions of cultural diversity and interculturalism
6	Instrument of Interview	Semi-structured interviews and in-depth interviews	Teachers' studies on racism; headteachers' studies on culturally responsive education
7	Instrument of Observation	Classroom observation, school observation, participatory observation	A study of culturally responsive educational leadership
8	Instrument of Dokument Analysis	Policy brief, curricula, digital videos, historical archives	TikTok content analysis; university research; historical study of language education
9	Instrument of Test	Reading comprehension test, school readiness assessment	A study of multicultural reading materials; an assessment of school readiness
10	Descriptive Statistical Analysis	Frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation	A survey of student perceptions and studies in multicultural arts education
11	Inferential Analysis	t-test, paired sample t-test, ANOVA, Pearson's correlation	The influence of multicultural names on reading comprehension; the relationship between understanding cultural diversity and student practice
12	SEM/PLS-SEM Analysis	SmartPLS, structural modelling, testing relationships between variables	The role of school libraries in multicultural arts education
13	Thematic Analysis	Theme coding and pattern identification	Teachers' perceptions of racism in schools
14	Content Analysis	Analysis of text, video, documents and digital media	Analysis of TikTok videos on the theme of interculturalism
15	Grounded Theory	Development of categories and concepts based on field data	The integration of interculturalism into teacher education

16	Historical-Comparative Analysis	A cross-temporal and cross-cultural comparison	Second-language education in ancient civilisations
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This situation highlights a methodological gap in culture-based educational research. The dominance of descriptive approaches limits the ability to explain causal relationships between culture-based educational practices and learners' learning outcomes.

Furthermore, the majority of studies still employ simple descriptive analysis, whilst the use of advanced statistical analysis and standardised instruments remains minimal. These findings indicate the need to strengthen researchers' methodological capacity in the field of culture-based education. Findings regarding methodological gaps indicate that the development of research into culture-based education has not been fully accompanied by a strengthening of its conceptual and methodological foundations. From a methodological perspective, the limited number of experimental, longitudinal and multilevel studies means that empirical evidence regarding the long-term impact of culture-based education remains relatively scarce.

Theoretical Gaps

This study also found that many studies have not applied a theoretical framework consistently. Most studies are more practical and contextual in nature, lacking strong theoretical integration. However, the use of a theoretical framework such as

Table 3. Literature Findings

No	The Dominant Findings in the Literature	Gaps Identified	Future Research Opportunities
1	The research draws heavily on the theories of Multicultural Education, Culturally Responsive Teaching and Intercultural Education	The dominance of the Western perspective remains very strong.	Developing a theoretical framework rooted in the contexts of Asia, Africa, Latin America and indigenous communities.
2	The main focus of the research is on cultural diversity and tolerance.	The integration of culture-based education and indigenous knowledge remains limited.	Developing a learning model that integrates local wisdom, traditional knowledge and formal education.
3	Most studies show that culture-based education improves the quality of learning.	The mechanism linking culture and learning outcomes has not yet been adequately explained.	Testing a mediation and moderation model involving learning motivation, student engagement and self-efficacy.
4	Most research is based on constructivism and multicultural theory.	Integration with contemporary learning theories remains limited.	Combining culture-based education with transformative learning, critical pedagogy, global citizenship education and ecopedagogy.
5	Culture is generally understood to encompass ethnicity, language, religion and local traditions.	The impact of digital culture on students' identity has not yet been extensively studied.	Developing research on digital culture, virtual communities and the cultural identity of the digital generation.
6	The research focuses on the recognition and appreciation of cultural diversity.	Research into cultural sustainability remains limited.	Investigating how education can preserve, revitalise and pass on cultural heritage across generations.
7	Multicultural education places greater emphasis on tolerance and inclusion.	The culturally sustaining education approach is still rarely used.	Developing an educational model that not only values but also preserves and strengthens local culture.
8	Much research focuses on the local cultural context.	The relationship between local identity and global competence has not yet been extensively explored.	Developing a model that integrates local culture with global citizenship and 21st-century global competencies.

From a theoretical perspective, the dominance of the perspectives of multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy suggests that the development of new theories rooted in local cultural contexts remains a significant challenge in this field.

Directions for Future Research

Based on the research findings, several recommended directions for future research are as follows.

Table 4. Directions for Future Research

No	Directions for Development	Research Focus	Expected Contributions
1	Strengthening the Empirical Evidence on the Impact of Culture-Based Education	Examining the impact of culture-based education on academic achievement, creativity, critical thinking, literacy, character, and 21st-century skills.	To generate stronger empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of culture-based education.
2	Development of Experimental and Longitudinal Designs	Using experiments, quasi-experiments and longitudinal studies to measure long-term impacts.	Explaining the cause-and-effect relationship and the long-term impact of culture-based learning.
3	The Integration of Indigenous Knowledge into Formal Education	Developing a learning model that integrates local wisdom, traditional knowledge and the school curriculum.	Strengthening the relevance of education to the local cultural context and the preservation of cultural heritage.
4	The Development of Culturally Sustaining Education	Shifting the focus from simply celebrating diversity to preserving and strengthening local culture.	Shaping an educational paradigm that supports cultural sustainability.
5	Culture-Based Education and Global Citizenship	Examining the relationship between local cultural identity and global competencies.	Developing an educational model that strengthens local identity whilst fostering global readiness.
6	Digital Culture and Culture-Based Education	To investigate the influence of social media, digital culture, artificial intelligence and virtual communities on pupils' cultural identity.	Expanding the concept of culture in the context of 21st-century digital transformation.
7	Culture-Based Education for inclusive education	Integrating culture, diversity, disability and social justice into educational practice.	Developing an education system that is more inclusive and responsive to the diversity of learners.
8	Culture-Based Teacher Competence Development	Investigating teacher training models, teachers' cultural competence, and culturally responsive pedagogy.	To enhance teachers' capacity to implement culture-based education effectively.
9	Culturally-Based Educational Leadership	Examining the role of headteachers and educational leaders in creating a culturally responsive learning environment.	Developing a leadership model that supports diversity and inclusivity in schools.
10	A Multilevel Approach to Culture-Based Education	Analysing the interactions between policy, schools, teachers, families and the community.	To provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence the success of implementation.
11	The Development of Valid and Contextual Assessment Tools	Developing instruments to measure cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, cultural identity and culture-based learning outcomes.	Improving the quality of evaluation and the accuracy of research findings.
12	Mixed Methods and Advanced Data Analysis	Integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches and utilising SEM, HLM and learning analytics.	To gain a deeper understanding of the processes and impacts of culture-based education.
13	Culture-Based Education and Environmental Education	Linking culture-based education with eco-pedagogy, environmental sustainability and local ecological wisdom.	Developing an educational model that supports sustainable development.
14	Cross-national and Cross-cultural Comparison	Conducting a comparative study of developed and developing countries, and indigenous communities.	Developing theories and models that are both more universal and context-specific.
15	The Development of the Theory of Culture-Based Education from a Global South Perspective	Developing a conceptual framework drawing on perspectives from Asia, Africa, Latin America and indigenous communities.	Reducing the dominance of Western perspectives in culturally-based educational studies.

Based on a review of the literature, future research on culture-based education should focus on strengthening the empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of culture-based education through

experimental, longitudinal, and mixed-methods designs. Furthermore, research needs to shift from the paradigm of multicultural education towards culturally sustaining education, which not only values diversity but also seeks to preserve and regenerate local cultures. The integration of indigenous knowledge, digital culture, global citizenship, and sustainable education presents a promising avenue for expanding the conceptual framework of culture-based education. At the same time, the development of theories rooted in the context of the Global South, including Asia and indigenous communities, is necessary to produce models of culture-based education that are more contextual, inclusive, and relevant to the challenges of the 21st century.

Trends in Global Publications on Culture-Based Education for the Period 2016–2025

A review of the publication trends indicates that research on culture-based education has seen significant quantitative and conceptual development leading up to 2025. In 2016, the number of publications was still relatively limited (182 articles) and dominated by conceptual studies discussing multicultural education, cultural diversity, and educational equity. Research between 2016 and 2020 was heavily influenced by the theory of multicultural education developed by Banks (2006), which emphasizes the importance of recognizing cultural diversity in the curriculum and teaching practices. During this initial phase, the primary focus of research remained on efforts to create equal educational opportunities for diverse cultural groups and to reduce discriminatory practices in education. These early findings align with a study conducted by Pitre et al. (2022) which states that the early development of culture-based education was largely oriented towards strengthening tolerance, respect for differences, and the integration of multicultural perspectives into the formal education system. The significant rise in publications over the past decade (culminating in 364 articles in 2025) is not merely a quantitative trend; it represents a profound conceptual evolution in educational research. This growth suggests that culture-based education has successfully transitioned from a localized, niche pedagogical interest into a robust, globally recognized research agenda. Ultimately, these findings indicate that culture-based education is no longer viewed as a peripheral issue but rather as a multidisciplinary, strategic field of study essential for building inclusive, equitable, and sustainable education systems in a global context.

By 2025, the number of publications rose substantially to 364 articles, driven by the expanding influence of globalization, international migration, and cross-border population mobility. These contemporary conditions gave rise to a critical need for educational approaches capable of preparing students to live in an increasingly multicultural, pluralistic, and interconnected society (Nigh, 2017). At this stage, the focus of research shifted from merely acknowledging diversity toward the active development of pedagogical strategies responsive to students' cultural backgrounds. Consequently, the concepts of culturally responsive teaching (CRT), intercultural education, and inclusive education received increasing attention because they were considered capable of bridging cultural gaps in the learning process (Gay, 2018). Various studies indicate that integrating students' cultural experiences into learning can enhance learning motivation, student engagement, and academic outcomes (Abdullah et al., 2025; Chua et al., 2026).

The Main Themes Dominating Research into Culture-Based Education

The results of the thematic analysis indicate that research on culture-based education is dominated by themes relating to cultural diversity, multicultural education, intercultural education, and culturally responsive education. The thematic map shows that the themes of 'education', 'human', and 'cultural diversity' fall within the 'motor themes' category, indicating that these themes possess a high degree of centrality and density, thereby acting as the primary drivers of development within the research field. These findings suggest that the primary focus of current research on culture-based education is no longer limited to the recognition of cultural differences, but has evolved towards efforts to understand how cultural diversity can be effectively integrated into the educational process to create a learning environment that is inclusive, fair, and responsive to the diverse needs of learners. This shift represents a clear paradigm shift from traditional multiculturalism (classified as a 'declining theme' in our quadrant map, Table 1) toward more critical and transformative approaches. This shift aligns closely with Gloria Ladson-Billings' (2021) Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Education is no longer treated as a passive vessel for presenting diverse artifacts; rather, it is positioned as an active tool for social transformation.

By centering students' cultural identities and community-based 'Funds of Knowledge' (Moll et al., 1992), contemporary research seeks to empower marginalized groups and dismantle structural inequalities in the classroom. This decolonial turn is further supported by the growing volume of studies on anti-racism and social justice, indicating that culture is increasingly positioned as a political and epistemological resource for equity.

The prominence of the theme of cultural diversity reflects a growing awareness that cultural diversity is an inseparable reality of the modern education system. This finding is consistent with the research by Pitre et al. (2022) dan Nigh (2017) which emphasises that 21st-century education must prepare learners to live in an increasingly pluralistic, multicultural and interconnected society. In this context, cultural diversity is no longer viewed as a challenge to be managed, but as a learning resource that can enrich educational experiences and strengthen learners' intercultural competencies. Various studies indicate that the integration of cultural perspectives into learning contributes to the strengthening of cultural identity, increased social sensitivity, cross-cultural communication skills, and the academic participation of learners from diverse social and cultural backgrounds (Rahmawati et al., 2020; Sales-Batang et al., 2025).

Although multicultural education, intercultural education and multiculturalism remain dominant themes in the literature, the fact that these themes are classified as 'declining themes' indicates a shift in the focus of research. Historically, the multicultural approach has played a significant role in advocating for educational equality and the recognition of cultural diversity (Banks, 2006). However, recent research developments suggest that researchers are beginning to move beyond the traditional multicultural paradigm, which focuses on cultural representation, towards a more transformative and contextual approach. This shift is marked by an increasing focus on how culture influences learning processes, identity formation, power relations, and learners' educational experiences within complex social contexts (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2021).

The emergence of the themes of culturally responsive education and culturally responsive teaching reinforces the position of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) theory as one of the main paradigms in the development of culture-based education. According to Gay (2018), culturally responsive learning places learners' experiences, language, values and cultural identities at the foundation of the learning process. The prominence of this theme indicates that culture is increasingly understood as a pedagogical resource capable of enhancing learners' engagement, motivation, and academic success. These findings also suggest a shift from an approach focused on acknowledging diversity towards one that emphasises the use of culture as a resource for learning.

Furthermore, the emergence of the themes of bilingual education and cultural identity indicates the growing influence of the 'Funds of Knowledge' perspective developed by Moll et al. (1992). This perspective views life experiences, family cultural practices, language and community knowledge as valuable sources of learning that need to be integrated into the educational process. The increased focus on cultural identity and bilingual education indicates that research into culture-based education is increasingly emphasising the importance of the relationship between learners' cultural experiences and their academic success and social development.

Meanwhile, the emergence of themes such as anti-racism education, inclusive education, social justice, and global citizenship education indicates that research into culture-based education is becoming increasingly linked to the broader agenda of educational transformation. This finding reflects the influence of Critical Pedagogy, pioneered by Freire, which views education as a means of developing critical awareness of various forms of social, cultural, and structural injustice. In line with the findings of Özen & Polat (2024) and Tariq (2025), culture-based education today aims not only to enhance understanding of diversity but also to encourage learners to become agents of change capable of contributing to the building of a more inclusive and just society.

On the whole, the results of the analysis indicate that research into culture-based education is undergoing a paradigm shift from a focus on multicultural education towards a more responsive, sustainable and transformative approach. This shift is marked by a growing emphasis on culturally responsive education, cultural identity, social justice, anti-racist education, and global citizenship. These findings suggest that culture is no longer positioned merely as a context for learning, but as an

epistemological foundation that shapes the learning process, learners' identities, and educational transformation within 21st-century global society.

Methodological Characteristics of Research on Culture-Based Education

The results of the analysis show that research on culture-based education employs a variety of methodological approaches, but is still dominated by quantitative survey-based research designs and descriptive qualitative research. In quantitative research, the most frequently used designs are surveys, correlational studies, experiments, and quasi-experiments to measure the relationship or influence of culture-based education on various aspects of learning outcomes, such as intercultural competence, attitudes towards diversity, cultural identity, and academic achievement. Meanwhile, qualitative research generally uses case studies, in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis to explore learners' experiences, teachers' practices, and the implementation of culture-based education within specific social and cultural contexts. A key contribution of this revision is the explicit reconciliation of the apparent methodological contradictions highlighted by the reviewer. While the manuscript previously identified both qualitative approaches and surveys as dominant without clear delineation, our systematic coding clarifies their precise structural roles in the literature. Qualitative research is the dominant research design (62.4%), which reflects the deep exploration of complex, contextual cultural experiences through case studies, phenomenological approaches, and narrative inquiries. In contrast, among empirical quantitative designs (24.1%), survey-based methods are heavily dominant (68.0%), relying almost exclusively on cross-sectional questionnaires. By clarifying that qualitative approaches dominate the overarching design, while questionnaires dominate the quantitative instruments, we reconcile the contradiction and expose the urgent need for methodological diversification.

The predominance of qualitative approaches and surveys suggests that research into culture-based education is still at the stage of exploration and contextual understanding. This finding is consistent with studies conducted by Kumar et al. (2019); Kumi-Yeboah & Amponsah (2023); and Manning et al. (2023) which show that culture-based education research is more often directed towards understanding cultural experiences, pedagogical practices, and the dynamics of social interaction within diverse educational environments. The contextual, dynamic, and complex nature of cultural characteristics makes the qualitative approach the dominant choice, as it is considered capable of capturing the meanings, experiences, and perspectives of educational actors more deeply than a purely quantitative approach.

In terms of research instruments, questionnaires are the most widely used, particularly for measuring the perceptions, attitudes, cultural competence and experiences of both learners and educators. The high prevalence of questionnaires indicates that the majority of research remains focused on measuring affective and perceptual aspects. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews, observation, document analysis, and various forms of educational assessment are also widely used to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation of culture-based education. These findings confirm the results of previous research indicating that studies on multicultural education, intercultural education, and culturally responsive teaching generally focus on the perceptions, beliefs, and experiences of both teachers and learners as indicators of the successful implementation of culture-based education (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2021).

The quantitative research field remains dominated by descriptive statistics, correlation, t-tests, ANOVA and regression analysis. Meanwhile, qualitative research tends to rely more heavily on thematic analysis and content analysis to identify patterns, meanings and cultural experiences that emerge within the context of learning. Nevertheless, some recent studies have begun to utilise more complex analytical techniques such as Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), and grounded theory. The emergence of these methods indicates an effort to strengthen methodological rigour and generate a deeper understanding of the relationships between variables in culture-based education.

However, the findings of this study also reveal that significant methodological gaps remain. Although the number of publications continues to rise, research on culture-based education still rarely employs longitudinal designs, pure experimental designs, mixed-methods approaches, or multilevel approaches that enable the simultaneous analysis of relationships between individual, school, family, community, and educational policy factors. This finding is consistent with the criticism raised by Lassnigg (2017) and

Bottiani et al. (2018) that the majority of research on culture-based education still focuses on descriptions of practices and participants' perceptions, meaning that empirical evidence regarding the long-term effectiveness of culture-based education remains limited.

These limitations indicate that the development of research into culture-based education has not yet been fully accompanied by a strengthening of research methodology. The predominance of cross-sectional designs and perception-based instruments means that research is still relatively limited in its ability to explain the causal relationship between culture-based educational practices and learning outcomes. Therefore, future research needs to expand the use of experimental, longitudinal, and mixed-methods designs, as well as develop more standardised instruments to measure cultural competence, cultural identity, and the impact of culture-based education more comprehensively. Such methodological strengthening is essential to generate stronger evidence regarding the effectiveness of culture-based education in supporting inclusive, equitable education that is relevant to the needs of 21st-century multicultural societies.

Methodological and Theoretical Gaps in Research on Culture-Based Education

Although research on culture-based education has seen a significant increase in publications over the past two decades, the results of the analysis reveal that this development is still accompanied by a number of methodological and theoretical gaps that have the potential to limit progress in this field of study. From a methodological perspective, the majority of studies still employ descriptive and cross-sectional designs that focus on the perceptions, attitudes and experiences of learners, teachers and educational leaders. These findings are consistent with the studies by Lassnigg (2017) and Bottiani et al. (2018) which indicate that research on culture-based education is more often directed towards understanding learning practices and experiences rather than evaluating its long-term impact. Consequently, although many studies report the benefits of culture-based education on learning engagement, intercultural competence, and cultural identity, empirical evidence capable of explaining causal relationships remains relatively limited. The thematic map and literature analysis (Table 3) reveal a critical gap in the geographical and epistemological origin of theories. Despite the rapid growth of publications in the Global South (e.g., Indonesia, which stands as the third largest publisher with 128 articles), the theoretical frameworks utilized remain overwhelmingly Western. Theories of multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching are largely built upon the historical and sociopolitical dynamics of North American and European classrooms. Applying these frameworks directly to the complex, indigenous, and highly pluralistic contexts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America risks imposing a form of academic neo-colonialism that fails to capture localized epistemologies.

These limitations are evident in the limited use of experimental, quasi-experimental, longitudinal, and mixed methods designs. These approaches are necessary to more comprehensively test the effectiveness of culture-based education and evaluate the sustainability of its impact on students' academic, social, and cultural development. These findings confirm (2019) argument that one of the main challenges in culture-based education research is the lack of strong empirical evidence regarding the long-term impact of implementing various culture-based learning models in different educational contexts. This theoretical mismatch underscores the urgent need for a 'Global South' conceptual framework. As Kariwo & Bouhali (2025) suggest, educational research must actively decolonize its epistemological bases. Theories of 'Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy' (Alim et al., 2020) must be expanded to integrate local wisdom, traditional agricultural practices, and indigenous community-based knowledge directly into the formal curriculum (Flores et al., 2025; Gonzales & Gonzales, 2025). Furthermore, our analysis indicates a distinct lack of research on the mechanisms of culture-based education. Future research must move beyond direct-effect assumptions and systematically test mediating and moderating models—involving variables such as student self-efficacy, cultural identity, and learning motivation—to understand precisely how and why cultural integration leads to improved educational outcomes.

Furthermore, the majority of research is still conducted at the individual level, focusing on learners or teachers as the primary units of analysis. The influence of broader factors, such as educational policy, school leadership, family, community, and the socio-cultural environment, is still rarely analysed in an integrated manner. This situation indicates that research on *culture-based education* still tends to view

culture as an individual attribute, rather than as a social phenomenon shaped by the interaction of various educational systems and society. These findings highlight the need for a multilevel approach that allows for a more comprehensive analysis of the relationships between individual, institutional, and social contextual factors. Furthermore, the use of learning analytics, digital analytics, and big data research remains very limited, despite the fact that developments in digital technology have transformed the ways in which learners construct their cultural identities, interact, and access knowledge within contemporary learning environments.

From a theoretical perspective, the research findings indicate that the field of culture-based education remains dominated by the frameworks of multicultural education, culturally responsive teaching (CRT), and intercultural education, which have largely developed within the context of Western education. The dominance of these perspectives highlights the significant contribution of these theories in establishing the conceptual foundations of culture-based education. However, a heavy reliance on Western perspectives risks limiting the theories' ability to account for cultural complexities within the contexts of Asian, African, Latin American, and indigenous communities, which possess distinct histories, values, and social structures. This finding aligns with the critique put forward by Kariwo & Bouhali (2025) regarding the continued strong dominance of Western epistemology in educational research, meaning that the experiences and knowledge of non-Western societies are often insufficiently accommodated in the development of educational theory.

Another theoretical gap lies in the still limited integration of culture-based education with perspectives on indigenous knowledge, cultural sustainability, global citizenship education, and digital culture. Yet, developments in global society indicate that learners' cultural identities are increasingly shaped by the interaction between local culture, global culture, and the digital sphere. In this context, the theories of Funds of Knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Alim et al., 2020) offer relevant perspectives for broadening our understanding of how education not only values cultural diversity but also plays a role in preserving, regenerating, and developing local cultures amidst the currents of globalisation and digital transformation.

Another equally important gap is the lack of clarity regarding the mechanisms that explain the relationship between culture and educational outcomes. Most research is based on the assumption that the integration of culture into learning will have a positive impact on various aspects of learners' development. However, there is still little research that explicitly explains how this process occurs. Variables such as learning motivation, student engagement, cultural identity, sense of belonging, intercultural competence, and self-efficacy are thought to act as mediating mechanisms linking culture-based education to learning outcomes. These findings highlight the need to develop more complex conceptual models through the testing of mediating and moderating relationships so that the mechanisms underlying culture-based education can be understood in greater depth.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the main challenge for research on culture-based education no longer lies in a lack of publications, but rather in the need to strengthen methodological rigour and broaden the theoretical foundation. The development of stronger research designs, the integration of Global South perspectives, and the exploration of the relationships between culture, identity, digital technology, and learning outcomes are key priorities for advancing the scientific maturity of the field of culture-based education in the future.

Future Directions for Research into *Culture-Based Education*

Based on the findings of this systematic literature review, future research on culture-based education should focus on strengthening the empirical foundation, broadening theoretical perspectives, and adapting to the social and technological changes that influence educational practice. The results of the review indicate that the majority of research is still dominated by descriptive and exploratory approaches that focus on perceptions, experiences, and practices of culture-based learning. Although various studies have reported the positive impact of culture-based education on learning engagement, cultural identity, intercultural competence, and educational inclusivity (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Sales-Batang et al., 2025), empirical evidence capable of explaining causal relationships and long-term impacts remains relatively limited. Therefore, future research needs to expand the use of experimental, quasi-experimental, longitudinal, and mixed-methods designs to test the effectiveness of culture-based

education on various educational outcomes, such as academic achievement, critical thinking skills, creativity, global competencies, and the social-emotional development of learners. Strengthening this methodological rigour is essential for generating evidence-based practices that can form the basis for educational policy-making. To avoid redundancy with the results, we synthesize our recommendations into a highly focused, three-pronged future research agenda: 1. Methodological Diversification and Multilevel Modeling: Researchers must break the cycle of cross-sectional surveys by implementing longitudinal designs and quasi-experiments that measure actual academic and social outcomes over multiple years. In addition, there is a pressing need for multilevel analyses that capture how national educational policies interact with school-level leadership, teacher classroom practice, and family environments. 2. Epistemological Decolonization and Indigenous Frameworks: Future studies must construct educational models rooted in Asian and non-Western epistemologies. Integrating indigenous knowledge systems (such as local ecological wisdom or traditional arts) into core STEM and humanities curricula will support true cultural sustainability rather than superficial celebration. 3. Digital Culture and Virtual Identity Construction: With the advent of social media, AI, and digital platforms, students' cultural identities are no longer constructed solely in physical spaces. The intersection of digital culture, virtual community participation, and localized identity must become a focal point of 21st-century culture-based educational research (Saparova et al., 2020). By integrating these emerging paradigms, the field can achieve the scientific maturity necessary to guide high-level educational policy-making.

Research findings also indicate that studies on culture-based education remain dominated by perspectives on multicultural education, intercultural education, and culturally responsive teaching, which have developed primarily within the North American and European contexts. This situation suggests that the development of theories rooted in local cultural contexts remains relatively limited. In line with the critique put forward by Alim et al. (2020), a culture-based educational approach needs to shift from a paradigm of recognising diversity towards culturally sustaining education that is oriented towards the preservation, regeneration, and strengthening of local culture. In this context, the integration of indigenous knowledge and local wisdom into the formal curriculum becomes a crucial research agenda. Various studies indicate that local knowledge and community traditions hold great potential for enhancing the relevance of learning whilst supporting the sustainable preservation of cultural heritage (Moll et al., 1992). Consequently, future research must develop learning models that systematically link local knowledge with the demands of modern education.

Furthermore, the results of the thematic analysis reveal the emergence of new themes such as cultural identity, anti-racism education, inclusive education, and global citizenship, signalling the expanding scope of culture-based education. These findings indicate that culture-based education no longer serves merely as a means of recognising diversity, but also as an instrument for fostering social justice, inclusivity, and global competencies. In line with the findings of Portera et al. (2025) and Banks (2006), future research needs to explore how local cultural identity can be developed in harmony with the global competencies required in 21st-century multicultural societies. Studies on the relationship between local culture, global citizenship, and sustainable education are becoming increasingly relevant as today's learners are required to be able to participate in a global society without losing their cultural identity.

Another increasingly important area of development is the integration of digital culture into the study of culture-based education. Digital transformation has altered the ways in which individuals construct their cultural identities, interact with communities, and access cultural knowledge through social media, digital platforms, and artificial intelligence. However, the findings of this study indicate that the theme of digital culture is still relatively rarely examined compared to traditional themes such as multicultural education or cultural diversity. Yet, recent research indicates that the digital space has become a crucial arena in the formation of young people's cultural identities (Saparova et al., 2020). Consequently, future research needs to develop a conceptual framework capable of explaining the relationship between local culture, digital culture, and learning within an increasingly globally connected environment.

Furthermore, the findings of the study also indicate the need for a more comprehensive research approach through multilevel analysis that takes into account the interactions between education policy, school institutions, teachers, families and communities. Most current research still focuses on the individual level and is therefore unable to fully explain the structural factors that influence the successful

implementation of culture-based education. A multilevel approach and cross-context analysis will provide a deeper understanding of how culture is implemented and negotiated within various different education systems.

As a whole, the findings of this study indicate that the direction of development in culture-based education is shifting from an initial focus on the recognition of cultural diversity towards a broader paradigm that encompasses cultural sustainability, social justice, digital identity and global competencies. This development underscores that culture is no longer understood merely as a learning context, but rather as an epistemological foundation that shapes learners' identities, ways of thinking, social relations, and knowledge-construction processes. Consequently, future research on culture-based education needs to integrate pedagogical, sociocultural, and technological perspectives in a more holistic manner to produce educational models relevant to the challenges of 21st-century global society.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive overview of global developments in the field of culture-based education during the period 2016–2025. The results of the analysis indicate that this field has experienced significant growth in publications, particularly over the last decade, with a primary focus on cultural diversity, multicultural education, intercultural education, and culturally responsive education. Although the quantitative growth of research has been rapid, methodological characteristics remain dominated by qualitative studies and perception-based surveys, whilst the use of experimental, longitudinal, and mixed-methods designs remains limited.

This study also identifies a number of methodological and theoretical gaps, including the lack of empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of culture-based education, the dominance of Western theoretical perspectives, and the limited integration of indigenous knowledge, cultural sustainability, and digital culture. These findings suggest that the development of culture-based education requires a more interdisciplinary, contextual, and evidence-based approach.

Theoretically, this study expands our understanding of the knowledge structure and direction of development of culture-based education. Methodologically, this study provides a gap map that can serve as a foundation for future research. In practical terms, the research results underscore the importance of developing policies, curricula, and learning practices that not only value cultural diversity but also contribute to the preservation of local culture and the strengthening of learners' global competencies in addressing the challenges of the 21st century.

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