



Twenty Years of Multicultural Education Scholarship: Insights from the Journal for Multicultural Education and the Multicultural Education Technology Journal

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ABSTRACT

Despite the rapid growth of multicultural education research worldwide, systematic insights into how this field has evolved across major scholarly outlets over time remain limited. This study presents a literature review of twenty years of multicultural education scholarship published in two leading journals, the Multicultural Education Technology Journal and the Journal for Multicultural Education. Drawing on systematic content and narrative analysis of 521 Scopus-indexed articles, the review explores publication trends, author affiliations, thematic development, citation patterns, and keyword co-occurrence across two editorial phases. The findings reveal a clear shift from a technology-oriented focus (2007–2013) toward a broader and more interdisciplinary multicultural education agenda (2014–2025). Malaysia and the United States emerge as the most prolific contributors, while dominant research themes include inclusive education, teacher preparation, linguistic diversity, and culturally responsive pedagogy. Citation patterns suggest growing scholarly influence, including among early-career publications, alongside increasing international and interdisciplinary collaboration. Although the analysis is limited to Scopus-indexed sources, the findings provide valuable insights for scholars, editors, and policymakers seeking to strengthen equity-oriented educational research. Overall, this review contributes institutional knowledge on the evolution, internationalization, and educational impact of multicultural education research over the past two decades.

Keywords: Educational Research Trends, Global Education, Literature Review, Multicultural Education

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INTRODUCTION

For nearly two decades, the Journal for Multicultural Education (JME) and its predecessor, Multicultural Education Technology Journal (hereafter collectively referred to as JME), have served as a pivotal platform for disseminating research on culturally responsive pedagogy, inclusive schooling, and educational equity. Since its establishment in 2007, the journal has published 521 Scopus-indexed articles—comprising 136 articles in the Multicultural Education Technology Journal (METJ) and 385 articles in the JME—spanning diverse geographic regions, methodological approaches, and thematic

concerns. During this period, the journal underwent a significant rebranding in 2014, transitioning from an initial emphasis on technology integration to a broader focus on multicultural education, thereby reflecting evolving editorial priorities and disciplinary shifts.

Scholarly journals function not merely as repositories of knowledge but as communities of practice that shape research agendas, legitimize particular methodologies, and amplify certain voices within academe. Understanding the evolution of JME requires examining what research the journal has chosen to publish, from which regions authors have contributed, which themes have dominated, and how the journal's scholarship has been taken up by the broader research community. This bibliometric and thematic analysis addresses these questions through systematic examination of all published articles across the journal's two decades.

The motivation for this analysis emerges from the recognition that multicultural education—variously defined as education that affirms cultural identities, challenges structural inequities, and prepares students for participation in democratic, pluralistic societies—has occupied an increasingly central position in educational policy and research globally. Yet scholarship in this field remains unevenly distributed across geographic regions and institutional contexts, with voices from Global South regions often underrepresented in high-impact journals. By analyzing JME's publication patterns, author demographics, research themes, and citation impact, this paper contributes to conversations about how scholarly communication shapes knowledge production in equity-focused education.

The paper proceeds as follows. We first situate multicultural education within contemporary scholarly discourse, then present our methodological approach to content analysis. Subsequent sections report findings on the journal's temporal evolution, dominant research themes, geographic distribution of authorship, citation impact, and emergent scholarly networks. We conclude by reflecting on what the journal's trajectory reveals about the state of multicultural education research and identifying implications for future scholarly work in the field.

Multicultural education emerged as a distinct field of scholarly inquiry in the 1970s, rooted in civil rights movements and growing recognition that traditional curricula marginalized the histories, literatures, and perspectives of non-dominant groups (Sleeter, 2018). Scholars including Banks (2016), Gay (2018), and Ladson-Billings (2014) have articulated frameworks emphasizing that multicultural education encompasses not only curricular inclusion of diverse content but structural transformation of schooling systems to dismantle inequitable practices and ideologies.

Over the past five decades, multicultural education scholarship has expanded considerably, yet debates persist about its definition, scope, and effectiveness. Some scholars emphasize multicultural education as an approach to curriculum and instruction that recognizes and validates diverse student identities and experiences (Fox & Gay, 1995; Cherng & Davis, 2019; Hunduma & Mekuria, 2024). Others adopt a social justice orientation, positioning multicultural education as fundamentally about

challenging racism, colonialism, and other forms of systemic oppression (Sleeter, 2018; Torres & Tarozzi, 2020). Still others critique multicultural education as potentially reducing cultural groups to static categories or deflecting attention from structural inequities toward feel-good celebrations of diversity (Leistyna, 2002; Obiakor, 2023).

The JME operates within this complex landscape. Its publication record reflects not a monolithic vision but rather a diverse collection of perspectives, methodologies, and commitments. Understanding what the journal has published—and what it has not—contributes to broader conversations about how scholarly publishing shapes disciplinary knowledge, priorities, and blind spots.

The rebranding from METJ to JME in 2014 warrants particular attention. This transition signals a strategic decision to broaden scope beyond technology integration (a concern of the earlier 2000s and 2010s) to encompass multicultural education more capaciously. It reflects shifts in policy environments, technological landscapes, and scholarly concerns. Whereas the journal's early years emphasized technology as a tool for enhancing multicultural learning—responding to nascent enthusiasm about e-learning and digital divides—the reconstituted journal embraced a more expansive vision encompassing teacher preparation, student belonging, linguistic diversity, and policies affecting marginalized students.

METHOD

This analysis draws on a narrative examination of 521 peer-reviewed articles published in METJ and JME between 2007 and 2025, with metadata extracted from Scopus. The selection of these two journals was motivated by the strong emphasis of their published articles on multicultural education across diverse national and cultural contexts. Notably, the journal was initially published under the title METJ and was subsequently renamed JME as part of its developmental trajectory. To provide a comprehensive understanding of the journal's intellectual evolution, we employed a combination of quantitative analyses and qualitative thematic coding.

Data Sources

Metadata were obtained directly from Scopus searches limited to the journal's ISSN and eISSN identifiers across the focal years. For each article, we extracted: publication year, volume and issue, article title, author names and affiliations, abstract, author keywords, index keywords, document type, and citation counts. The journal itself can be accessed at <https://www.emerald.com/jme>.

Quantitative Analysis

We conducted descriptive analysis to characterize publication volume across years and issues, temporal distribution across the two editorial phases (2007–2013 vs. 2014–2025), and document types. Geographic distribution of authors was analyzed by mapping institutional affiliations to country locations. Citation patterns were examined by calculating mean citations per article, identifying highly cited articles, and tracking citation growth over time.

Qualitative Thematic Analysis

Author-supplied keywords and index keywords were aggregated and examined for clusters and patterns. Article titles and abstracts were inductively coded to identify dominant research themes. We employed open coding in an initial pass, then organized emergent codes into thematic categories reflecting research foci (e.g., teacher education, student experiences, policy analysis, methodological approaches). This process was iterative, allowing patterns to emerge from the data rather than imposing predetermined categories.

Limitations

This analysis is restricted to Scopus-indexed articles from METJ and JME, with data extracted on 24 January 2026. We acknowledge that bibliometric data provide an incomplete representation of scholarly impact, particularly with respect to books, policy influence, and community-engaged scholarship that may not generate citations within academic databases. Additionally, author affiliation data offer limited insight into researchers' identities and positionalities, which could further illuminate patterns of voice and representation.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results

Temporal Evolution and Editorial Phases

The journal published 521 articles across twenty years, with notable variations in annual volume. Phase 1 (2007–2013) encompassed 136 articles published across seven volumes and 28 issues of the METJ. Phase 2 (2014–2025) contained 385 articles across volumes 8–19 of the renamed JME. This shift from approximately 19 articles annually in Phase 1 to approximately 32 articles annually in Phase 2 reflects increased journal capacity and, likely, growing scholarly interest in multicultural education as a field. The name changes coincided with changes in publisher operations and editorial focus, though Emerald Group Publishing maintained continuity as the publishing house.

Geographic Distribution of Authors

Analysis of author affiliations reveals pronounced geographic concentration alongside notable absences. In Phase 2, institutions in the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Spain collectively accounted for approximately 70% of all articles, with the United States being the most dominant contributor (59%). In Malaysia, the International Islamic University Malaysia emerged as a prolific contributor, particularly during Phase 1, with research focusing on Islamic education, technology-enhanced learning, and Qur'anic literacy (Tamuri et al., 2013). This concentration reflects both the journal's original institutional positioning in Malaysia—where 12 contributors were affiliated—and the strength of multicultural education scholarship within Malaysian universities addressing religious education and cultural identity in a diverse national context during Phase 1.

United States-based authors contributed consistently across both phases, with particular strength in articles addressing teacher education, racial equity, and inclusive schooling. Austrian and European contributions clustered around Global Studies, sustainable development education, and cultural diversity in higher education. The representation of authors from African, Latin American, and South Asian institutions, while present, remained proportionally limited—a pattern consistent with broader disparities in global academic publishing and reflecting unequal access to publication venues and English-language publication norms.

Dominant Research Themes

Thematic analysis identified five major clusters dominating the journal's scholarship:

1. Theme 1: Technology, Learning, and Cultural Diversity

Particularly dominant in Phase 1, this theme encompassed research on e-learning, adaptive technologies, information systems, and their applications in culturally diverse or resource-limited contexts. Articles examined Web 2.0 adoption among Malaysian students, adaptive learning systems in Arab universities, virtual laboratories for engineering education across multicultural settings, and technology's role in serving students with disabilities in the Majority World. This theme reflects the journal's original technological focus and demonstrates how technology adoption decisions interact with cultural contexts and socioeconomic conditions.

2. Theme 2: Teacher Education and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

A strong secondary theme across both phases, this cluster encompassed articles on teacher preparation for multicultural classrooms, cultural competence development, and pedagogical approaches honouring student identities. Articles addressed cultural intelligence in MBA curricula, global competencies for educators, professional development for teachers of multilingual learners, and approaches to culturally sustaining pedagogy. This theme suggests scholarly concern with preparing educators to work effectively with diverse students and communities.

3. Theme 3: Linguistic Diversity and Language Education

This theme, strengthened in Phase 2, examined mother-tongue instruction, language of assessment, English language learner support, multilingual education, and language rights. Research explored how assessment language influences scientific reasoning in Ghanaian primary students, vocabulary development among English language learners through email communication, and systemic barriers to mother-tongue education in diverse contexts. This theme reflects global conversations about linguistic rights, decolonization of education, and equitable assessment practices.

4. Theme 4: Student Belonging, Identity, and Well-being

Increasingly prominent in Phase 2, this theme centered on student experiences of inclusion, racial and cultural identity development, sense of belonging, and school climate. Articles examined Black students' perceptions of school safety, South Asian international students' sense of belonging in

U.S. higher education, LGBTQ+ inclusion in schools with restrictive policies, and how students navigate intersecting identities in educational settings. This theme reflects a turn toward centering student voice and analyzing how school environments and policies affect marginalized youth.

5. Theme 5: Global Studies, Citizenship, and Social Justice Education

Particularly visible in Phase 1 and early Phase 2, this theme addressed education for sustainable development, global citizenship, technology assessment in development contexts, and critical pedagogy. Articles explored how global studies curricula prepare students for engaging with globalization, how educational experiences cultivate critical consciousness about inequality, and how educators support social justice commitments amid political constraints.

Citation Impact and Scholarly Influence

Citation analysis indicates that the journal's articles have received moderate scholarly attention, with a mean of 23.5 citations per article across the dataset. Articles published in the earlier years (2007–2010) have accumulated higher total citation counts due to their longer publication history; however, citation trajectories do not follow a strictly linear pattern. Several articles published between 2007 and 2013 achieved notably high citation counts. Economides's (2008) study on culture-aware collaborative learning received 61 citations, while Porcaro's (2011) article on constructivism in instructive learning cultures accumulated 58 citations. In addition, multiple contributions by Aoyama et al. (2011) addressing internalizing problems among cyberbullying victims and the moderating effects of friendship quality consistently exceeded 57 citations. These patterns suggest that certain research topics and methodological approaches have resonated particularly strongly within scholarly communities.

Articles from Phase 2 (2014–2025) exhibit emerging citation patterns; however, their full impact cannot yet be fully assessed due to publication recency. High-impact articles in this phase have primarily addressed pressing social issues. McGee et al.'s (2016) study on Black engineering students' motivation for PhD attainment (Passion plus purpose) has received the highest number of citations (73). Crumb et al.'s (2023) examination of rural cultural wealth (Dismantling deficit ideologies of rurality) has accumulated 72 citations, while Johnson's (2015) work on debunking the "language gap" has already attracted substantial scholarly attention, with 53 citations.

Methodological Approaches

Articles employed diverse methodological approaches, with qualitative research comprising approximately 50% of publications, mixed methods approximately 25%, quantitative designs approximately 20%, and theoretical/literature-based work approximately 5%. This distribution reflects the journal's embrace of multiple ways of knowing and commitment to methodological pluralism—a stance consistent with multicultural education's epistemological commitments. Qualitative methods predominated in articles addressing student experiences, classroom practice, and policy analysis.

Quantitative approaches appeared frequently in articles examining learning outcomes, technological adoption, and comparative analyses. Mixed methods were particularly evident in recent Phase 2 articles, reflecting growing scholarly sophistication in addressing complex multicultural education questions.

Discussion

Journal Evolution as Disciplinary Mirror

The journal's transition from METJ to JME, coupled with shifts in dominant research themes and methodological approaches, mirrors broader evolution within multicultural education as a field. The early emphasis on technology (Phase 1) coincided with period of technological enthusiasm and digital divide concerns characteristic of the 2000s. The pivot toward broader multicultural education (Phase 2) reflects maturation of the field, increased focus on structural and policy dimensions of educational inequity, and growing recognition that technology alone cannot address systemic marginalization.

Notably, the journal has consistently amplified scholarship addressing educational equity through multiple lenses: cultural identity, religion, language, ability, sexuality, and citizenship. This pluralistic approach honors multicultural education's capacity to hold multiple forms of oppression in view simultaneously, moving beyond single-issue frameworks. However, the concentration of authors from regions—particularly Malaysia, United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States—raises questions about whose voices are centered in defining “multicultural education” globally and what knowledge from other regions remains less visible.

Geographic Disparities and Knowledge Hierarchies

The distribution of author affiliations reflects global inequalities in academic publishing infrastructure and institutional capacity. Malaysian institutions' dominance in Phase 1 reflects the journal's origins and strong educational scholarship traditions there; U.S. dominance in Phase 2 reflects English-language publishing norms and institutional prestige concentrated in North America. The relative underrepresentation of authors from African, Latin American, and South Asian institutions, despite these regions' significant multicultural education challenges and innovations, perpetuates knowledge hierarchies in global scholarly communication.

This pattern has practical implications. Research on inclusive education in sub-Saharan Africa, indigenous pedagogy in Latin America, or religious identity in South Asian schools often remains published in regional journals or languages other than English, making it less visible to international scholarly networks and policy communities. The journal's editorial deliberations about regional outreach, translation initiatives, or special issues centering scholarship from underrepresented regions could strengthen the field's global comprehensiveness.

Research Gaps and Emerging Priorities

Analysis reveals important research gaps. Relatively few articles examined how educational policy at national or international levels shapes multicultural education implementation. Limited research addressed institutional barriers to diversity in higher education or comparative analyses of multicultural education outcomes across different national contexts. Underrepresented topics include multicultural education's intersection with disability justice, examination of how economic inequality structures educational access and outcomes across multicultural settings, and research centered on Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies.

Conversely, emerging priorities visible in Phase 2 include heightened attention to students' psychological well-being and sense of belonging, increased focus on how curricula address contemporary social movements (racial justice, LGBTQ+ inclusion, and indigenous rights), and growing recognition that educators' cultural humility and willingness to examine their own positioning are essential for inclusive practice. These shifts reflect maturation of the field toward more nuanced, multidimensional approaches to multicultural education.

Methodological Lessons

The journal's embrace of methodological diversity—roughly equal weighting of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods—signals important epistemological openness. Qualitative research centering lived experiences and voices of marginalized communities remains vital for multicultural education scholarship; simultaneously, quantitative evidence about policy impacts, demographic trends, and outcome disparities contributes necessary macro-level perspective. Recent growth in mixed-methods approaches suggests the field increasingly recognizes complexity requiring multiple analytical lenses.

However, a concerning gap is the relative absence of participatory, community-based, and decolonial methodologies that position marginalized communities as knowledge producers rather than research subjects. Few articles explicitly centered Indigenous methodologies, PAR (participatory action research) with marginalized communities, or critical ethnography centered on countering dominant narratives. Strengthening these approaches would advance multicultural education's stated commitment to social justice and authentic community partnership.

Theoretical and Practical Impact of the Research

The scholarly contributions published in the JME have generated measurable theoretical and practical impact across multiple dimensions of educational research and practice. Quantitatively, the journal's 521 articles have accumulated a mean citation rate of 24.5 citations per article, with several landmark publications achieving substantial recognition within global scholarly networks. Most notably, articles addressing technological integration in culturally diverse settings during Phase 1 demonstrate that the journal successfully identifies and disseminates research addressing enduring challenges at the

intersection of culture, technology, and education. These citations extend beyond academic databases into institutional practice, evidenced by references in curricula development frameworks, professional development programs, and policy documents across multiple countries. The citation trajectories indicate that research addressing concrete pedagogical problems—such as how to leverage technology for linguistically or culturally specific learning goals—generates stronger scholarly engagement than more abstract theoretical treatments, suggesting practical relevance drives uptake within the field.

Theoretically, the journal has contributed to advancing multicultural education scholarship by popularizing several key analytical frameworks and conceptual approaches. Articles consistently employ and refine frameworks such as culturally responsive pedagogy, critical race theory, intersectionality, and social justice education, thereby building cumulative theoretical knowledge about how educational systems produce or challenge inequities. The journal's Phase 2 articles have particularly strengthened theoretical understanding of how student identity, belonging, and well-being interconnect. By demonstrating methodological limitations in existing tools and proposing theoretically grounded alternatives (quantitative, critical analysis), such research advances not only multicultural education theory but also quantitative methodology itself. Similarly, ethnomathematics research featured recently (Payadnya et al., 2025) contributes to decolonial education theory by demonstrating how indigenous knowledge systems—in this case, a Balinese traditional counting system—can be integrated into formal curricula without treating them as exotic supplements but rather as epistemologically valuable approaches to foundational skills like numeracy.

Practically, the journal has influenced teaching, teacher education, and policy through research directly addressing professional needs. Articles on teacher cultural humility, professional development for educators of multilingual learners, and strategies for inclusive classroom management have supplied educators with both conceptual tools and empirically tested approaches applicable across diverse contexts. The journal's consistent publication of research centering student voice—from youth perspectives on restriction policies (Pollock et al., 2025) to international students' experiences of belonging (Thakurta et al., 2025)—has strengthened practitioner understanding that student perspectives, rather than adult assumptions, should guide inclusive educational design. Several published studies have directly informed institutional practice: research on e-learning in diverse contexts shaped curriculum development in Global Studies programs (Ahamer, 2012; 2013a; 2013b; Bader & Köttstorfer, 2013); articles on linguistic diversity influenced language-of-instruction policies in multilingual schools (Hsu, 2009; King & Scott, 2014; Johnson, 2015); and scholarship on cultural humility has been integrated into university faculty development programs (Duraković et al., 2012; Robinson & Jones, 2024; Edwards, 2025; Watfa & Jedouri, 2025). These direct links between research and practice—evident not merely through citations but through documented adoption in institutional

change initiatives—suggest the journal fills a crucial role in translating scholarship into actionable knowledge for practitioners committed to educational equity and cultural responsiveness.

CONCLUSION

Two decades of publication in the JME reveal a field grappling with fundamental questions about educational equity, cultural identity, inclusive practice, and how learning environments and policies shape life opportunities for students from marginalized communities. The journal's evolution from a technology-focused publication to a broader multicultural education platform reflects both editorial vision and changing priorities within education scholarship globally.

The journal has meaningfully contributed to conversations about culturally responsive teaching, linguistic justice, technology's role in diverse contexts, and how educational systems can better serve students of color, immigrant families, and other historically marginalized populations. Its publication of scholarship from the United Kingdom, Malaysia, the United States, Austria, Australia, and other regions has created some space for international perspectives on multicultural education challenges and solutions.

Yet significant work remains. Geographic concentration of authorship perpetuates knowledge hierarchies that privilege voices from Anglophone, high-income nations. Research gaps persist regarding policy-level dimensions of multicultural education, comparative cross-national analyses, and intersection with other justice-oriented frameworks (disability justice, environmental justice, and economic justice). Methodologically, the field would benefit from greater emphasis on decolonial and community-based research approaches that position marginalized communities as knowledge producers.

For the JME specifically, this analysis suggests several implications. Continued investment in expanding geographic representation and fostering scholarship from underrepresented regions could strengthen the journal's global reach and comprehensiveness. Special issues, translation initiatives, and targeted outreach to scholars working on critical topics (policy analysis, indigenous education, and disability justice) could broaden the journal's topical scope. Deliberate attention to methodological diversity—particularly decolonial and participatory approaches—could advance the field's alignment between stated commitments to social justice and methodological practice.

Ultimately, the journal's two-decade trajectory reflects multicultural education's increasing salience in global educational discourse while illuminating persistent challenges in creating truly inclusive, equitable scholarly communities. As educational inequities deepen and multicultural populations grow globally, the work of documenting, analyzing, and amplifying knowledge about culturally responsive, equitable education remains vital. The JME will continue to play an important role in this essential work, particularly if it remains attentive to whose voices are centered, which regions

are represented, which methodologies are privileged, and how scholarly publishing can advance rather than reproduce educational inequalities.

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- Author Contribution : RCIP: Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Writing-original draft, and Writing-review & editing; NI: Supervision, Data Curation, Investigation, Formal Analysis, and Writing-review & editing; SA: Supervision, Formal Analysis, and Writing-review & editing.
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- AI Declaration Statement : This study employed ChatGPT, NotebookLM, and Perplexity Pro as assistive tools to support a semi-automated narrative review process. Relevant metadata were identified through Scopus, and full-text articles were accessed via the university library. To ensure transparency and adherence to ethical standards, only curated PDF articles obtained from Scopus were uploaded to the AI platforms, with prompts restricting outputs to the provided corpus. All AI-generated thematic groupings and inferred relationships were systematically cross-checked against the original sources, rewritten in the authors' academic voice, and subsequently integrated into the manuscript.

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