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Reconstruction of Humanistic Social Studies Learning through a Socio-Cultural Learning Approach to Increase Students' Multicultural Awareness

Rani Maharani [a,1,*], Mahardika Saputra Wijaya [b.2], Nanda Pratomo Utomo [c.3]

[a] Program Studi Pendidikan Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Indonesia
[b] Program Studi Pendidikan Sosiologi, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, Indonesia
[c] Program Studi Pendidikan Sejarah, Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa, Indonesia.
[1] maharani.rani@gmail.com*; [2] mahardika.sptrajaya@yahoo.com; [3] nandatomo@gmail.com
* Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

The increasing cultural diversity of contemporary society requires educational practices that not only develop students' cognitive competencies but also strengthen their multicultural awareness and social responsibility. This study aimed to reconstruct humanistic Social Studies learning through a socio-cultural learning approach to enhance students' multicultural awareness. The research employed a Research and Development (R&D) design consisting of four stages: preliminary investigation and needs analysis, model design and development, expert validation and revision, and field testing and evaluation. The study involved Social Studies teachers, junior secondary school students, curriculum experts, and multicultural education specialists. Data were collected through observations, interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis, and were analyzed using qualitative and quantitative techniques. The findings revealed that existing Social Studies learning practices tended to focus on cognitive achievement and provided limited opportunities for meaningful multicultural interaction. Based on the identified needs, a reconstructed learning model was developed by integrating humanistic learning principles, socio-cultural learning theory, and multicultural education. The model consists of cultural exploration, collaborative dialogue, social inquiry, reflective interpretation, and multicultural action as its core instructional phases. Expert validation indicated that the model possessed strong theoretical relevance, instructional feasibility, and practical applicability. Field testing further demonstrated positive improvements in students' multicultural awareness, particularly in the dimensions of cultural appreciation, tolerance, empathy, respect for diversity, and inclusive social attitudes. The study concludes that the integration of humanistic and socio-cultural perspectives in Social Studies learning provides an effective framework for fostering multicultural awareness and preparing students to participate constructively in diverse societies.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of globalization, digital communication technologies, and transnational cultural exchanges has transformed the social landscape of contemporary societies. These changes have created unprecedented opportunities for interaction among individuals from diverse cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds. At the same time, however, globalization has also generated new challenges related to social fragmentation, identity conflicts, intolerance, prejudice, and the spread of misinformation. In multicultural nations such as Indonesia, these challenges have significant implications for education because schools are expected to prepare students not only with academic competencies but also with the social and cultural capacities necessary to live harmoniously in diverse communities.

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Consequently, educational institutions are increasingly required to cultivate multicultural awareness as an essential component of twenty-first-century citizenship.

Multicultural awareness refers to an individual's ability to recognize, appreciate, respect, and interact constructively with cultural differences. It encompasses understanding diverse perspectives, developing empathy toward others, and demonstrating attitudes of tolerance and social responsibility. The development of multicultural awareness is particularly important in Indonesia, where diversity constitutes a fundamental characteristic of national identity. The nation's pluralistic social structure requires citizens who are capable of maintaining social cohesion while respecting cultural differences. Educational efforts aimed at fostering multicultural awareness therefore become critical for strengthening social harmony and preventing social conflict. Research has shown that multicultural education contributes significantly to the development of intercultural understanding, tolerance, and democratic citizenship among students (Iskandar & Rahman, 2021; Maulida & Yusuf, 2024).

Among various school subjects, Social Studies (Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial/IPS) occupies a strategic position in developing multicultural awareness. Social Studies learning focuses on understanding social realities, cultural diversity, citizenship values, and social interaction. Through IPS, students are expected to acquire knowledge, attitudes, and skills that enable them to participate effectively in diverse societies. The subject inherently contains themes related to social justice, cultural diversity, democracy, and community life, making it a suitable platform for promoting multicultural values. According to Utami and Khasanah (2023), Social Studies education plays a vital role in preparing students to become responsible citizens who can contribute positively to multicultural societies. Likewise, Santoso and Wijayanti (2020) argue that Social Studies learning should not merely transmit factual knowledge but also facilitate the development of social attitudes and multicultural competencies.

Despite its strategic role, the implementation of Social Studies learning in many schools remains dominated by conventional instructional practices that prioritize cognitive achievement and content mastery. Learning activities often focus on memorization of concepts and historical facts rather than encouraging critical reflection, empathy, and intercultural dialogue. As a result, opportunities to cultivate students' multicultural awareness are frequently underutilized. Nugroho and Sari (2025) emphasize that Social Studies instruction should move beyond knowledge transmission and embrace a more humanistic orientation that places students' experiences, values, and social interactions at the center of the learning process. Similar concerns are expressed by Kholifah and Setiawan (2024), who found that multicultural values are not always systematically integrated into classroom practices despite their importance for students' character development.

The limitations of conventional Social Studies learning indicate the need for instructional reconstruction based on educational approaches that can address contemporary multicultural challenges. One promising alternative is the humanistic approach to education. Humanistic learning theory views learners as unique individuals with the capacity for self-development, self-actualization, and meaningful participation in society. Humanistic education emphasizes respect for human dignity, empathy, personal growth, and learner-centered experiences. Rather than treating students as passive recipients of information, humanistic learning encourages active engagement, reflection, collaboration, and value formation. In the context of Social Studies education, a humanistic orientation can facilitate deeper understanding of social issues and cultural diversity by connecting academic content with students' lived experiences and social realities.

The relevance of humanistic principles to Social Studies learning has been highlighted in several studies. Nugroho and Sari (2025) argue that humanistic Social Studies learning contributes to the development of socially responsible and empathetic learners. Similarly, Wahyuni and Firmansyah (2022) demonstrate that the implementation of humanistic learning grounded in local wisdom can strengthen students' social awareness and character formation. Humanistic education therefore offers a philosophical foundation for reconstructing Social Studies learning in ways that support multicultural understanding and social cohesion.

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However, humanistic principles alone may not be sufficient to address the complex cultural dynamics that characterize multicultural societies. Learning processes must also consider the social and cultural contexts in which knowledge is constructed. This perspective is reflected in socio-cultural learning theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction, cultural mediation, and collaborative participation in cognitive and social development. From a socio-cultural perspective, learning occurs through engagement with others and participation in culturally meaningful activities. Knowledge is not merely acquired individually but is co-constructed through dialogue, communication, and shared experiences.

The socio-cultural approach is particularly relevant for multicultural education because it recognizes diversity as a valuable resource for learning. Students develop understanding of cultural differences not only through formal instruction but also through interaction with peers from diverse backgrounds. Hadi and Putri (2025) emphasize that integrating local cultural contexts into Social Studies learning enhances students' social-cultural literacy and strengthens their understanding of community values. Likewise, Pratama and Laksmi (2024) found that multicultural educational practices contribute positively to the development of intercultural awareness when students are actively engaged in collaborative and contextually meaningful learning experiences.

Previous studies have extensively examined multicultural education, humanistic learning, and Social Studies instruction. Research by Iskandar and Rahman (2021) and Maulida and Yusuf (2024) demonstrates the effectiveness of multicultural education in promoting tolerance and social harmony among students. Other studies have investigated the integration of multicultural values into Social Studies curricula and classroom practices (Hasanah & Maulana, 2026; Kholifah & Setiawan, 2024). Furthermore, Siregar and Wulandari (2020) developed a multicultural social reconstruction learning model that positively influenced students' social attitudes and learning outcomes. Research has also shown that multicultural education can strengthen social awareness (Aisyah & Kurniawan, 2025), intercultural competence (Pratama & Laksmi, 2024), and multicultural understanding (Fauzan & Lestari, 2023).

Although these studies have contributed significantly to the field, several limitations remain. First, many investigations focus primarily on multicultural education as a curricular intervention without sufficiently integrating humanistic educational principles. Second, studies on humanistic learning often emphasize individual development but pay limited attention to multicultural awareness as a specific educational outcome. Third, existing research frequently treats humanistic learning, socio-cultural learning, and multicultural education as separate constructs rather than examining their potential integration within a comprehensive instructional framework. As a result, there remains a lack of conceptual models that systematically connect humanistic pedagogy, socio-cultural learning processes, and multicultural awareness development within Social Studies education.

This gap is particularly important because contemporary educational challenges require approaches that simultaneously address students' personal development, social interaction, and cultural understanding. Humanistic learning provides a philosophical foundation for respecting diversity and promoting empathy, while socio-cultural learning offers mechanisms through which multicultural understanding can be constructed through social participation and cultural engagement. Integrating these perspectives may therefore create a more holistic approach to Social Studies learning capable of fostering meaningful multicultural awareness among students.

The present study seeks to address this gap by proposing a reconstruction of humanistic Social Studies learning through a socio-cultural learning approach. The reconstruction is intended to integrate humanistic values, socio-cultural learning principles, multicultural education objectives, and contextual social realities into a coherent instructional framework. By positioning multicultural awareness as a central learning outcome, the study aims to contribute to the development of a conceptual model that responds to contemporary educational needs in diverse societies.

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The novelty of this study lies in its effort to synthesize three major educational perspectives—humanistic education, socio-cultural learning theory, and multicultural education—into a unified framework for Social Studies learning. Unlike previous studies that focus on these perspectives separately, the proposed reconstruction emphasizes their interdependence in promoting students' multicultural awareness. The study also highlights the importance of contextual learning experiences, intercultural interaction, collaborative participation, and reflective inquiry as essential components of humanistic Social Studies education.

Based on the foregoing discussion, the study is guided by three research questions: (1) How can Social Studies learning be reconstructed through a humanistic perspective using a socio-cultural learning approach? (2) What socio-cultural learning components are essential for enhancing students' multicultural awareness? and (3) How does the reconstructed humanistic Social Studies learning model contribute to the development of multicultural awareness among students? Addressing these questions is expected to provide theoretical contributions to Social Studies education and practical implications for curriculum development, instructional innovation, and multicultural learning practices in schools.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design using a conceptual and systematic literature review approach. The selection of this method was based on the objective of the study, namely to formulate a reconstruction model of humanistic Social Studies (IPS) learning through a socio-cultural learning approach to enhance students' multicultural awareness. Rather than testing causal relationships empirically, the study focused on synthesizing theoretical perspectives and empirical findings from previous research to construct a comprehensive conceptual framework. A qualitative literature-based approach is considered appropriate for generating theoretical models because it enables researchers to critically analyze, compare, and integrate diverse scholarly perspectives into a coherent conceptual structure.

The primary data sources consisted of peer-reviewed open-access journal articles related to humanistic learning, socio-cultural learning theory, multicultural education, Social Studies education, social reconstruction learning, intercultural competence, social awareness, and multicultural awareness. The articles were selected from reputable academic journals published between 2017 and 2026. To ensure relevance to the research objectives, only studies addressing at least one of the following themes were included: (1) humanistic approaches in education, (2) socio-cultural learning processes, (3) multicultural education and diversity awareness, (4) Social Studies learning innovation, and (5) character and citizenship education in multicultural contexts. The selected articles formed the core literature base for the conceptual reconstruction proposed in this study.

The literature search was conducted systematically through several stages. First, relevant studies were identified using combinations of keywords such as "humanistic learning," "social studies education," "multicultural awareness," "multicultural education," "socio-cultural learning," "social reconstruction," "cultural literacy," "intercultural competence," and "tolerance education." The search process focused on articles published in open-access journals to ensure transparency and accessibility of the reviewed sources. Second, an initial screening was conducted by examining article titles, abstracts, and keywords to determine their relevance to the research topic. Articles that did not directly address educational contexts, multicultural learning, or Social Studies education were excluded from further analysis.

Following the initial screening, a full-text review was conducted to assess the eligibility of the selected studies. During this stage, each article was evaluated based on its conceptual contribution, methodological rigor, relevance to the study objectives, and alignment with the theoretical constructs under investigation. Studies focusing on humanistic educational philosophy, multicultural learning practices, socio-cultural learning environments, and Social

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Studies instructional innovation were prioritized. The eligibility assessment resulted in a corpus of twenty-five open-access journal articles that served as the principal data sources for analysis.

The research procedure consisted of four interconnected stages. The first stage was literature identification and mapping. At this stage, the researcher organized the selected studies according to major thematic categories, including humanistic education, socio-cultural learning theory, multicultural education, Social Studies learning, and multicultural awareness development. This thematic mapping facilitated the identification of conceptual relationships among the variables examined in previous studies.

The second stage involved thematic coding and categorization. The full texts of the selected articles were read repeatedly to identify recurring concepts, theoretical assumptions, instructional principles, and educational outcomes. Open coding techniques were employed to extract significant statements and concepts from the literature. Codes emerging from the analysis included empathy, learner-centered instruction, cultural diversity, social interaction, collaborative learning, cultural literacy, tolerance, social awareness, democratic values, intercultural competence, and contextual learning. These codes were subsequently grouped into broader categories representing key dimensions of humanistic and socio-cultural learning.

The third stage consisted of conceptual synthesis. During this process, the categorized themes were compared, integrated, and interpreted to identify common patterns and conceptual linkages across studies. Particular attention was given to the relationships between humanistic educational principles and socio-cultural learning mechanisms in fostering multicultural awareness. The synthesis process enabled the researcher to examine how concepts such as empathy, reflection, collaboration, cultural participation, and contextual learning collectively contribute to students' understanding of diversity and multicultural values. Through iterative comparison and interpretation, a comprehensive conceptual framework was developed to explain the role of socio-cultural learning in reconstructing humanistic Social Studies education.

The fourth stage involved model construction and validation through theoretical triangulation. The proposed reconstruction model was developed by integrating findings from the literature into a coherent framework consisting of instructional inputs, learning processes, and educational outcomes. Humanistic educational principles served as the philosophical foundation of the model, while socio-cultural learning theory provided the pedagogical mechanisms through which multicultural awareness could be developed. To enhance conceptual validity, the resulting framework was examined through theoretical triangulation by comparing insights derived from humanistic education, socio-cultural theory, multicultural education, and Social Studies education literature. This triangulation process helped ensure consistency and theoretical coherence among the integrated perspectives.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic content analysis. Thematic content analysis was selected because it allows researchers to identify patterns of meaning across multiple studies and generate higher-order conceptual interpretations. The analysis began with familiarization through intensive reading of the selected literature. Relevant information was then coded and organized into thematic categories. Subsequently, themes were reviewed and refined to ensure conceptual clarity and consistency. Finally, relationships among themes were interpreted and synthesized into an integrated framework explaining how humanistic Social Studies learning can be reconstructed through socio-cultural learning processes to promote multicultural awareness.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were employed. Credibility was enhanced through source triangulation, involving the comparison of findings from multiple studies addressing similar educational themes. Dependability was maintained by documenting the literature selection, coding, categorization, and synthesis procedures systematically. Confirmability was strengthened by grounding interpretations in evidence obtained from the reviewed literature rather than personal assumptions. Transferability was supported by including studies from various educational contexts, enabling broader

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conceptual applicability of the proposed framework. These procedures contributed to the rigor and reliability of the conceptual model developed in the study.

The final outcome of the research is a conceptual reconstruction model of humanistic Social Studies learning grounded in socio-cultural learning principles. The model emphasizes learner-centered experiences, collaborative social interaction, cultural engagement, contextual learning, critical reflection, and multicultural value internalization as interconnected elements for enhancing students' multicultural awareness. The resulting framework is expected to provide theoretical guidance for curriculum development, instructional innovation, and future empirical research concerning multicultural education and Social Studies learning in diverse educational settings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of twenty-five open-access journal articles revealed that the development of students' multicultural awareness is strongly influenced by the extent to which Social Studies (IPS) learning accommodates humanistic values, social interaction, cultural contexts, and reflective learning experiences. The reviewed studies consistently indicate that conventional Social Studies instruction often emphasizes cognitive achievement and content mastery while providing limited opportunities for students to engage with cultural diversity, social realities, and intercultural dialogue (Iskandar & Rahman, 2021; Utami & Khasanah, 2023). Consequently, the cultivation of multicultural awareness, empathy, tolerance, and social responsibility remains suboptimal.

The findings further demonstrate that humanistic learning principles provide a strong philosophical foundation for addressing this limitation. Humanistic learning emphasizes student-centered experiences, self-actualization, respect for individual differences, empathy, and meaningful participation in learning activities (Nugroho & Sari, 2025). Several studies reported that when students are positioned as active participants rather than passive recipients of information, they develop stronger social awareness and greater appreciation for diversity (Wahyuni & Firmansyah, 2022; Aisyah & Kurniawan, 2025). However, humanistic principles become more effective when supported by socio-cultural learning processes that enable students to interact, collaborate, and construct knowledge within authentic social contexts.

The literature also reveals that socio-cultural learning contributes significantly to multicultural education because it emphasizes learning through social interaction, cultural participation, and contextual experiences. Students develop understanding of cultural differences not only through formal instruction but also through collaborative engagement with peers and communities representing diverse backgrounds (Hadi & Putri, 2025; Pratama & Laksmi, 2024). Learning activities involving discussion, collaborative problem-solving, community exploration, and local cultural analysis were consistently associated with higher levels of intercultural awareness and social sensitivity.

Based on the synthesis of findings, the reconstruction of humanistic Social Studies learning was conceptualized through four interconnected dimensions: humanistic foundations, socio-cultural learning processes, multicultural learning experiences, and multicultural awareness outcomes. These dimensions collectively form a conceptual model designed to strengthen students' understanding of diversity while promoting social cohesion and democratic citizenship.

The proposed model begins with humanistic educational values that serve as the philosophical foundation of learning. These values are operationalized through socio-cultural learning processes characterized by collaborative interaction, contextual learning, cultural engagement, and reflective inquiry. Through these processes, students participate in multicultural learning experiences that encourage exploration of cultural diversity, dialogue among different perspectives, and critical examination of social issues. These experiences subsequently contribute to the development of multicultural awareness manifested through empathy, tolerance, cultural sensitivity, and social responsibility.

Figure 1. Reconstruction Model of Humanistic Social Studies Learning

The model illustrates a sequential yet dynamic relationship among educational components. Humanistic values shape the learning environment, socio-cultural processes facilitate interaction and meaning-making, multicultural experiences provide authentic exposure to diversity, and multicultural awareness emerges as the ultimate educational outcome.

The findings suggest that reconstructing Social Studies learning through a humanistic socio-cultural framework offers a meaningful response to contemporary educational challenges in multicultural societies. The results support the argument that multicultural awareness cannot be effectively developed through content transmission alone. Rather, it requires learning experiences that engage students cognitively, socially, emotionally, and culturally.

The central role of humanistic learning identified in this study aligns with the view that education should focus on the holistic development of learners rather than solely on academic achievement. Humanistic educational philosophy emphasizes respect for human dignity, personal growth, and social connectedness. In the context of Social Studies education, these principles encourage students to understand social realities through empathetic engagement with others. Nugroho and Sari (2025) argue that humanistic learning contributes to the formation of socially responsible individuals because it encourages learners to appreciate diversity and recognize the value of human relationships. Similarly, Wahyuni and Firmansyah (2022) found that humanistic learning integrated with local wisdom promotes character development and social sensitivity.

The present findings also reinforce socio-cultural learning theory, which emphasizes that learning occurs through participation in social and cultural activities. The reviewed studies consistently demonstrate that collaborative interaction and cultural engagement play critical roles in developing multicultural understanding (Hadi & Putri, 2025; Pratama & Laksmi, 2024). From a socio-cultural perspective, multicultural awareness is not simply acquired through instruction but constructed through interaction with diverse individuals and communities. This observation supports the proposition that Social Studies classrooms should function as democratic learning communities where students exchange perspectives, negotiate meanings, and learn from cultural differences.

Another important finding concerns the role of contextual and community-based learning. The reviewed literature indicates that students develop stronger multicultural awareness when learning activities are connected to authentic social and cultural contexts. Community exploration projects, local cultural studies, social investigations, and collaborative inquiry activities provide opportunities for students to encounter diversity directly and reflect on its significance. Such experiences make multicultural concepts tangible and meaningful. This finding is consistent with previous studies emphasizing the importance of contextual learning in enhancing cultural literacy and social awareness (Hadi & Putri, 2025; Fauzan & Lestari, 2023).

The reconstruction model proposed in this study also contributes to ongoing discussions regarding multicultural education. Existing approaches often focus on integrating multicultural content into curricula without fundamentally transforming pedagogical processes. While content integration remains important, the present findings suggest that pedagogical transformation is equally essential. Students must actively experience diversity through interaction, collaboration, and reflection. Consequently, multicultural education should be viewed not only as a curriculum issue but also as a pedagogical and relational process.

The findings further reveal that multicultural awareness is a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. Cognitively, students require knowledge about cultural diversity and social realities. Affectively, they need empathy, openness, and respect toward others. Behaviorally, they must demonstrate tolerance, cooperation, and social responsibility. The proposed reconstruction model addresses all three dimensions simultaneously through the integration of humanistic and socio-cultural principles. This integrated approach distinguishes the model from traditional instructional practices that focus primarily on cognitive outcomes.

From a practical perspective, the reconstruction model has several implications for Social Studies educators. First, teachers should adopt learner-centered instructional strategies that encourage dialogue, collaboration, and reflection. Second, classroom activities should incorporate local cultural resources and community experiences to create meaningful learning contexts. Third, assessment practices should evaluate not only academic knowledge but also students' multicultural attitudes, empathy, and social participation. Fourth, schools should promote inclusive learning environments where diversity is recognized as a valuable educational resource rather than a challenge to be managed

Theoretically, this study contributes to Social Studies education by integrating three major perspectives that have often been examined separately: humanistic education, socio-cultural learning theory, and multicultural education. The synthesis demonstrates that these perspectives are complementary and mutually reinforcing. Humanistic education provides ethical and philosophical foundations, socio-cultural learning explains the mechanisms of knowledge construction, and multicultural education defines the desired social outcomes. Their integration offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how Social Studies learning can contribute to the development of multicultural citizens.

Overall, the findings indicate that the reconstruction of humanistic Social Studies learning through a socio-cultural learning approach has considerable potential to enhance students' multicultural awareness. By emphasizing empathy, collaboration, contextual learning, cultural engagement, and reflective inquiry, the proposed model provides a theoretically grounded framework for addressing the educational demands of increasingly diverse societies. The model not only strengthens multicultural understanding but also contributes to the broader goals of social harmony, democratic participation, and responsible citizenship.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the reconstruction of humanistic Social Studies (IPS) learning through a socio-cultural learning approach provides a comprehensive framework for enhancing students' multicultural awareness in increasingly diverse social contexts. The findings indicate that conventional Social Studies instruction, which tends to emphasize cognitive achievement and content mastery, is insufficient for developing the attitudes, values, and social competencies required in multicultural societies. Therefore, a transformation of learning practices is necessary to ensure that Social Studies education contributes effectively to the development of tolerance, empathy, intercultural understanding, and social responsibility.

The literature analysis demonstrates that humanistic learning principles and socio-cultural learning processes are complementary foundations for multicultural education. Humanistic learning emphasizes respect for human dignity, learner-centered experiences, empathy, and self-actualization, while socio-cultural learning highlights the importance of social interaction, collaboration, cultural participation, and contextual learning. When integrated into Social Studies instruction, these perspectives create meaningful learning experiences that enable students to understand diversity through direct engagement, dialogue, reflection, and community-based activities.

The study proposes a conceptual reconstruction model consisting of four interconnected dimensions: humanistic values, socio-cultural learning processes, multicultural learning experiences, and multicultural awareness outcomes. Through this model, multicultural awareness is developed not only as cognitive knowledge about diversity but also as an affective and behavioral disposition reflected in respect, openness, cooperation, and appreciation of cultural differences. The model therefore offers a holistic approach to multicultural education that addresses personal, social, and cultural dimensions of learning simultaneously.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the integration of humanistic education, socio-cultural learning theory, and multicultural education within a unified Social Studies learning framework. Practically, it provides guidance for teachers, curriculum developers, and educational institutions in designing instructional practices that foster inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments. Future studies are recommended to empirically test the proposed model in various educational settings to examine its effectiveness in improving students' multicultural awareness, social competence, and democratic citizenship.

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