

IS THE TEACHER PREPARED FOR A MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOM? TEACHERS' INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE AND PEDAGOGICAL COLLABORATION

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ABSTRACT

The increasing cultural, linguistic, and social diversity of contemporary classrooms raises critical questions about teacher preparedness for civic participation in multicultural education (Arnold & Rahimi, 2024). Drawing on research in multicultural education and teacher development, this article defines intercultural competence as a multidimensional construct encompassing both visible elements, such as culturally responsive instructional strategies, and less visible elements, including attitudes, beliefs, and values. In line with the Iceberg Model of Culture (Hall, 1976), the study emphasises that collaboration functions as the mechanism connecting these dimensions, enabling invisible attitudes to be reflected upon and transformed into inclusive actions. The aim is to examine whether teachers are prepared for multicultural teaching through the lens of their intercultural competence and responses regarding civic participation in schools. The following research question is proposed: How do teachers' intercultural competence and pedagogical collaboration influence their preparedness for multicultural education and support for student civic participation in schools? Seven focus group interviews were conducted with teachers from the IEA ICCS 2022 schools with the highest student civic participation scores. Data for interviews were collected in spring 2024. A critical synthesis of focus group interviews highlights the central role of pedagogical collaboration in strengthening teachers' intercultural capacity. The study shows that intercultural competence, when supported by collaborative pedagogical practices, fosters inclusive school environments and promotes equitable student civic participation, underscoring that individual competence alone is not enough for sustainable multicultural teaching. Moreover, effective multicultural education requires not only a general awareness of diversity but also the deliberate development of specific professional competencies and structured collaboration among teachers.

Keywords: *civic participation, intercultural competence, multicultural education, pedagogical collaboration, teacher preparedness*

Introduction

What never changes is the presence of change, as can be seen through the lens of global events over the centuries. Let us look at two interrelated global movements – the transformation of forms of public administration and the dynamics of globalisation, which undeniably influence trends in national security, educational content, and economic development.

From a global perspective, the world has experienced several waves of democratisation (Huntington, 1993) and its reversals (Lindberg, 2026) to date, during which the world order has changed and new states and forms of government have emerged. During this period, alongside global events, forms of government around the world also changed, shifting from autocratic or authoritarian systems to democratic ones and vice versa. For example, between 1970 and 2024, 149 democratisation processes occurred in 110 undemocratic countries, and since 2000, 105 trends towards autocratisation have emerged in 75 countries (Lindberg, 2026). These fluctuations point to instability and highlight the need for countries and their citizens to hold fast to their founding values while remaining flexible and able to adapt to changing circumstances.

Industrialisation and technological advancements have driven social processes that are defined as waves of globalisation (Huang, 2025; Zinkina et al., 2019), the beginnings of which can be traced to the late 19th century. At this time, people's desire to seek prosperity outside their home countries sparked the formation of a globalised society, marked by migration routes from Europe to America and from China to India, as well as by people moving to neighbouring countries. The second wave of globalisation following World War II prompted people to seek better jobs and a better life outside the occupied territories. Following the third wave of democracy after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, a third wave of globalisation emerged, characterised by economic fluctuations, digital transformation, and political migration. When these two layers are superimposed on a timeline (see Figure 1), a clear interaction emerges that serves as a catalyst for technological development, shifts in educational paradigms, and the formation of mutual relationships.

Both the waves of democratisation (and their reversals) and the broader trends of globalisation have brought teachers' preparedness for multicultural classrooms to the forefront of policymakers' agendas, as increasingly open and interconnected societies demand more inclusive and globally aware education systems. In this context, the three waves of globalisation have progressively expanded teachers' responsibilities, requiring educators to prepare students for participation in an interconnected and culturally diverse world.

An analysis of the results from the four cycles of the OECD PISA assessment in 2012, 2015, 2018, and 2022 (OECD, 2023a) shows that in 23 countries, the proportion of students with an immigrant background has increased since 2012. Moreover, results from TALIS (OECD, 2025) reported that only 33% of recent graduate teachers felt prepared to teach in a multicultural or multilingual setting. However, the situation in Latvia is better

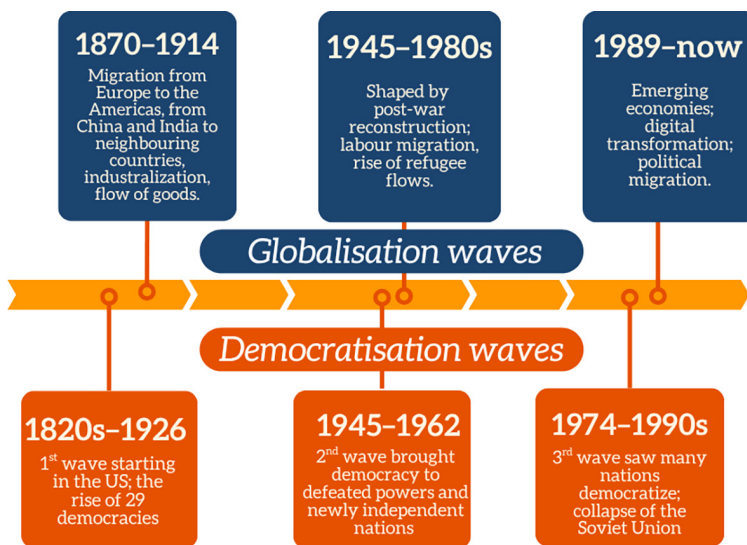


Figure 1. Three Globalisation Waves and Three Democracy Waves (constructed by authors after Huang, 2025; Huntington, 1993; Lindberg, 2026; Zinkina et al., 2019)

than the TALIS average. In Latvia, 7 out of 10 teachers report being able to encourage cooperation between students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, though only 5 out of 10 can prepare instructional content for a diverse classroom (Geske, 2025). However, global processes and the increasing cultural, linguistic and social diversity of contemporary classrooms evidently raise critical questions regarding teacher preparedness for civic participation in multicultural education (Arnold & Rahimi, 2024; Kalogerogianni, 2025).

Therefore, the aim of this article is to examine whether teachers are prepared for multicultural teaching, with a particular focus on their intercultural competence and attitudes towards civic participation in schools. Accordingly, the research question is formulated as follows: How do teachers' intercultural competence and pedagogical collaboration influence their preparedness for multicultural education and support for student civic participation in schools?

Theoretical Background

The Multicultural Classroom. Multicultural education, which emerged in the 1960s, conceptualises education through the lens of cultural diversity and power relations, emphasising the need to recognise and critically engage with cultural differences in both national and global contexts (Suri & Chandra, 2021; Yilmaz, 2016). It rests on the assumption that educational systems are not neutral but reflect and reproduce racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic inequalities that must be both acknowledged and addressed pedagogically, with diverse cultural experiences serving as epistemic resources rather than peripheral content (Yilmaz, 2016).

Multicultural education is conceptualised as a multidimensional and systemic framework that extends well beyond content integration, a reductionist interpretation that remains prevalent in educational practice (Banks, 2014; Banks & Banks, 2019). Instead, it encompasses interrelated dimensions, including knowledge construction, equity-oriented pedagogy, prejudice reduction, and the cultivation of an empowering school culture, collectively positioning education as a transformative process that interrogates how knowledge, power, and inclusion are produced and reproduced.

Research consistently indicates that many teachers report feeling insufficiently prepared to teach in multicultural classrooms, pointing to a widespread capacity challenge within the teaching profession (Arnold & Rahimi, 2024; Dursun, 2024; OECD, 2023a; Peköz & Gürşimşek, 2020; Romijn et al., 2021).

Teachers' Intercultural Competence. Preparedness to teach in a multicultural classroom depends not only on general pedagogical skills but also on teachers' intercultural competence, particularly their attitudes towards cultural diversity, which shape school diversity climates and have measurable effects on students' academic achievement (Batruch et al., 2026; Deardorff, 2006; Schotte et al., 2022). Intercultural competence refers to the interaction of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable teachers to teach effectively in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms, including cultural awareness, empathy, inclusive communication, and culturally responsive pedagogy. It is framed as a foundational condition for equitable access to learning, rather than a narrow instructional technique (Meca & Schwartz, 2024; OECD, 2023b).

Teachers' intercultural competence influences students' academic achievements through everyday teaching practices and interactions. Higher intercultural competence, indicated by culturally responsive teaching practices, inclusive communication, and teacher self-efficacy, reduces misinterpretation and cultural stress while increasing students' school belonging, engagement, and access to instructional support (Meca & Schwartz, 2024). These proximal outcomes facilitate learning and translate into higher academic achievement, measured by grades, standardised test scores, and educational progression (Will et al., 2025).

From this perspective, teachers who lack intercultural knowledge or hold ambivalent or negative attitudes towards diversity may struggle to respond effectively to students' educational needs (Deardorff, 2006; Romijn et al., 2021; Schotte et al., 2022). In contrast, teachers with strong intercultural attitudes, such as openness, respect, and reflexivity, are more likely to employ culturally responsive practices that foster inclusive learning environments and support academic success (Deardorff, 2006; Dzerviniks et al., 2024; Kalogerogianni, 2025; Ruales et al., 2020).

Given the rise of multicultural classrooms, teachers' intercultural competence emerges as one of the key determinants of inclusive classroom practices that shape students' engagement, sense of belonging, and ultimately their academic achievement, thus enabling teachers to adapt their instructional strategies to diverse linguistic and cultural learner needs. This process is further enabled and sustained through pedagogical collaboration among educators.

Teachers' Pedagogical Collaboration. Education is often viewed as a key actor in developing student-centred and collaborative skills before students enter the labour market. In the context of education, teacher collaboration is a pivotal factor in transforming students into proficient future collaborators and is described as the exchange of information, networking among teachers, and collaborative group work (Vangrieken et al., 2015). Collaborative practices have been identified as a key element in promoting effective teaching and learning outcomes, involving the engagement of teachers, students, and other relevant stakeholders in shared activities that facilitate collaborative decision-making, mutual support, and collective responsibility for enhancing educational outcomes (Arar et al., 2026). Other authors (e.g., Stoll et al., 2006), emphasise the importance of teachers' individual and collective capacity as a driver of the student learning process. Moreover, in a context where students, as future entrepreneurs and members of the labour force, are expected to develop skills for an evolving job market (World Economic Forum, 2020a, 2020b), teachers serve as exemplars by engaging in cooperative learning through collaborative teamwork, thereby fostering an environment conducive to the development of these competencies.

In the context of multicultural classrooms, teachers' involvement in pedagogical collaboration enhances their preparedness for teaching in diverse settings. Such preparedness is not solely an individual competence but also reflects an institutional and collective capacity of the school's teaching staff. This indicates that teachers must be capable of analysing students' needs, differentiating learning content, supporting inclusiveness, and fostering collaboration with other teachers, parents, and the wider community. This, in turn, foregrounds the notion of "productive professionalism" (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018a, 2018b) as targeted, shared time management within the school as a learning organisation, grounded in responsibility, reflection, and coordinated practice. Moreover, the concept of productive professionalism is predicated on structured, collective timeline management within the school's learning organisation framework, underpinned by responsibility and systematic reflection.

To summarise, it is evident that teachers' intercultural competence and pedagogical collaboration are of paramount importance in the contemporary educational environment. Students are required to navigate an increasingly unpredictable world characterised by diversity, inclusivity, polarisation, artificial intelligence, and digitalisation. They must also cultivate civic awareness and be prepared to participate actively in civic life.

Methodology

Study Sample, Methodology and Procedure

The data were collected through one-on-one interviews and small focus groups (2–4 people). Schools selected for the focus group interviews must have participated in the IEA ICCS 2022 study (Schulz, Ainley et al., 2023), and the average score of 8th-grade students on the civic knowledge test was required to be above the Latvian average of 492 points (Čekse et al., 2023; Schulz, Ainley et al., 2023). The researchers' objective in

the selection process was to choose schools that excel not only in civic education but also in other areas. Therefore, a ranking of participation scales was created, in which schools were ranked using six scales: S_SCACT ; S_SCHPART; S_CITEFF; S_POLDISC; S_COMPART; S_ENGDM (Schulz, Fraillon et al., 2023). The 10 schools with the highest scores were selected for participation, taking into account the school’s type (elementary, middle, or high school) and degree of urbanisation (Riga, regional city, town, or rural area) (Čekse & Alksnis, 2025). The study reached out to 10 schools, and seven general education schools responded to the invitation. The interviews lasted between one and two hours and were conducted with 14 teachers in spring 2024. The schools themselves were free to choose how many teachers would participate in the interviews, based on each teacher’s responsibilities and the needs of the study. Two interviews were conducted at one school, while the others included a single interview attended by one or more teachers. Table 1 presents a summary of the study sample regarding school type, urbanisation, teachers’ responsibilities at school, and years of service.

Table 1. Characteristics of the study participants

School type, urbanisation	Teacher’s responsibilities at school	Years of experience
Riga State Gymnasium	Russian language teacher, career counsellor, student council advisor, head of the methodological commission, class teacher	21 years
State City Gymnasium	Deputy Principal for student affairs, student council advisor, leadership teacher	Not disclosed
City Primary School	Music teacher, Deputy Principal, extracurricular activities coordinator, student council advisor	26 years
Rural Primary School	Latvian language and literature teacher, Deputy Principal, class teacher	30 years
Rural Secondary School	Head of IT and project work supervisor	40 years
	Class teacher, head of the local history museum, head of the school newspaper	Not disclosed
	Teacher of social studies, history, and local studies	Not disclosed
	English teacher, student council advisor, class teacher, methodologist of interest education	40 years
Rural Primary School	Deputy Principal for education, Erasmus+ project coordinator	Not disclosed
	Deputy Principal for student affairs, class teacher, student council advisor	Not disclosed
City Secondary School	Teacher of social studies, economics, and Russian language	40 years
	Teacher of social studies and history at upper secondary level	35 years
	Deputy Principal, project work coordinator	4 years
	Deputy Principal for student affairs, career counsellor, head of the student council	2 years

The audio recordings were automatically transcribed using a paid version of <https://transkriptor.com>. Each transcript was subsequently reviewed in full against the corresponding audio recording and manually corrected where discrepancies were identified. Unclear passages were checked by replaying the relevant audio segments. Only the verified transcripts were used in the subsequent manual analysis. The research data were analysed manually.

Limitations of the Study

The schools selected for the interviews participated in the ICCS 2022 study, in which students had completed the survey instruments in Latvian and where Latvian was the language of instruction. Students were not included in the qualitative study because their views were assessed based on their specific school's ICCS 2022 results, which served as the selection criterion for examples of good practice.

Data Analysis Methodology

This study applies a general deductive approach (Gilgun, 2019), using Hall's (1976) Iceberg Model of Culture as the analytical framework. This framework provides a useful lens for asking a central question: Are teachers ready for multicultural classrooms? It does so by showing that intercultural competence operates across three interconnected levels of culture.

Guided by the Iceberg Model of Culture, a three-level deductive coding scheme was developed to analyse the qualitative data: (1) surface level, capturing observable practices and behaviours; (2) intermediate level, capturing norms, values, and interaction patterns; and (3) deep level, capturing underlying beliefs such as diversity as a resource and education as a process of dialogue and civic development.

The framework guided the systematic categorisation and organisation of the data across the three analytical levels. The model suggests that a comprehensive understanding of culture requires examination beyond observable behaviours and practices to the deeper core values, beliefs, and assumptions that shape them.

Research Ethics

The ICCS 2022 study adhered to international IEA standards, which were monitored by the IEA Ethics Committee. The focus group questions were reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences (No. 71-43/53, April 17, 2024).

Results

General Data Analysis

The qualitative data analysis identified three interconnected levels that characterise teachers' perceptions of school culture in relation to intercultural competence, multicultural education, and civic participation. Figure 2 summarises the categories and



Figure 2. Visualisation of the categories and subcategories according to focus group data

Note. The authors identified the categories and subcategories by analysing the data manually. ChatGPT was only used to create the layout (OpenAI, 2026).

subcategories identified through the data analysis to analyse and explain teachers' preparedness for multicultural education and support for student civic participation in schools, as well as their intercultural competence and pedagogical collaboration.

The results show that teachers' answers focus on their intercultural competence and attitudes towards civic participation in schools. The *Surface Level: Visible Practices* category reflects the observable aspects of school culture, including traditions, routines, and forms of participation described by teachers. De Schaepmeester et al. (2022) previously showed that teaching patterns and civic actions in formal and informal school activities could serve as indicators. The *Shallow Level: Norms and Values* category encompasses eight subcategories related to the values, norms, and relational

practices that shape everyday interactions and the sense of belonging within the school community. It should be noted that the development of norms and values is a long and time-consuming process involving behavioural change and the transformation of core beliefs, in accordance with the concept of multicultural education (Banks, 2014), as well as the development of teachers' intercultural competence as an important prerequisite for a multicultural environment. Finally, the *Deep Level: Core Beliefs* category comprises five subcategories that highlight teachers' underlying beliefs and assumptions concerning the role of the family, student responsibility, teacher influence, and broader educational practices. Analysis of the interview results demonstrates that core beliefs shape teachers' attitudes, decisions, and collaboration. It is important to recognise that, according to cognitive behavioural psychology, core beliefs (Beck, 2020) are not merely "thoughts" but deeply ingrained assumptions that influence self-perception, relationships, choices, and emotional responses. In this study, core beliefs are reflected in teachers' accounts of how collaboration is established and how teachers themselves operate within a heterogeneous environment.

Surface Level: Family Involvement in Activities

The analysis of teacher focus group interviews for the *Surface Level: Visible Practices* category highlights school traditions and civic activities as evidence of teachers' ability to operate in a multicultural environment and engage in pedagogical collaboration while applying their intercultural competencies. This category encompasses the observable activities, routines, and forms of participation through which school culture becomes visible in everyday educational practice.

School traditions emerged as a significant visible element of school culture, which, in this study, was expressed through civic participation and activities within the school (Ekman & Amnå, 2012). Previous civic education studies demonstrate that civic knowledge has a strong relationship with students' attitudes and behaviour (Geske & Cekse, 2013; Schulz, Ainley et al., 2023). Teacher-guided discussions promote student participation and responses to one another, as well as the transformation of ideas, and these features relate to the quality of argumentation and future participation in society (Schuitema et al., 2018).

However, analysis of the interviews emphasises that many traditions originated from student initiatives and were sustained through long-term community participation. For example, one teacher from a city school described a Christmas donation initiative for a social care centre that had been started by students more than 20 years earlier and had since become an established annual tradition. According to the teacher, students themselves now anticipated and continued the initiative each year. Attention was also given to the role of the student council, in which students plan celebrations, organise events, and contribute to the social life of the school community. Teachers frequently positioned themselves as facilitators who supported student participation.

Community work also emerged as a visible expression of collective responsibility and a sense of belonging: clean-up campaigns, environmental activities, and community

improvement projects as experiences that united students, teachers, and families around shared goals, strengthening collective identity and social cohesion within the school environment. Volunteering emerged as another significant aspect of visible participation practices. Interview participants described students' involvement in volunteer activities both within and outside the school environment, including support initiatives, community assistance, and participation in socially oriented projects. Joint activities involving parents, teachers, students, and alumni represented another visible aspect of school culture. Teachers particularly emphasised celebrations, excursions, and sports initiatives, such as annual walking activities that continued even during the pandemic period.

Teachers also emphasised the integration of cultural experiences, traditions, languages, and historical perspectives into classroom activities and project work. These practices promoted inclusion and diversity awareness while making learning more meaningful and culturally responsive for students from different backgrounds. The findings also highlighted the importance of student council traditions: students participate in decision-making and contribute to school life through meetings, collaborative planning, and student-led initiatives, strengthening their sense of agency and belonging within the school community. Finally, interview participants highlighted school-wide initiatives involving families, particularly charity campaigns and support activities related to broader social issues. One frequently mentioned example concerned support campaigns for Ukraine, with students, teachers, and parents collectively participating in donation and assistance activities.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that intercultural competence was visible in teachers' professional practice through inclusive collaboration, equal participation opportunities, civic engagement, and active cooperation within the school community.

Shallow Level: Shared Responsibility, Collaboration, and Active Participation

The *Shallow Level: Norms and Values* category highlights the shared values and relationship patterns that shape everyday school life. Surveys emphasise that the values and norms in civic education are not neutral – schools always shape the idea of what constitutes a “good citizen”, which means that how a teacher teaches is of crucial importance, underlining that democracy is not about arbitrary choices but rather politically grounded choices that have political consequences (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). However, most teachers frequently referred to school values and philosophy as an important foundation for participation and collaboration within the school environment and emphasised shared institutional values that shape both relationships among colleagues and the organisation of school activities. One teacher highlighted that school events and collaborative practices were consistently guided by “our school values,” helping to maintain coherence within the school community. Interviewees also described the school philosophy as encouraging active participation, responsibility, and engagement, whereby students were expected not only to attend activities but also to contribute ideas, participate in decision-making, and take responsibility for school life. These results suggest that teachers intuitively understand and use the concept of school organisation (Kools & Stoll, 2016).

Teachers also described adaptation activities organised at the beginning of the school year to introduce students to opportunities for participation and student self-government structures. There are several examples from the interviews in which teachers demonstrate the importance of norms in action. One teacher explained that students were informed from their first days at school that every student could participate in the student council. Social responsibility emerged as another important dimension. One teacher emphasised that students should be willing to “stand for an idea” and actively participate in shaping school life, including expressing disagreement or advocating for change when necessary. In another focus group, collective responsibility and teamwork were emphasised several times as important values within school culture, highlighting the importance of shared values and beliefs.

Moreover, the results also show that student collaboration is important. Teachers described collaboration as a skill that students need to develop through shared activities and collective responsibility, and emphasised that, through the process of collaboration, students learn to represent not only themselves but also the wider community to which they belong. It may be assumed that teachers implement and promote the concept of intercultural education through their everyday practices and interactions within the school environment. This suggests that teachers intuitively understand and apply the concept of school organisation (Kools & Stoll, 2016), even when they do not explicitly recognise the presence of multiculturalism within the school environment.

The development of transversal skills also reflected important value-oriented dimensions of teachers’ work, as creativity, communication, presentation skills, and collaboration were described as essential competencies developed through participatory learning processes. The results of the analysis show that teachers frequently encouraged students to organise tasks independently, distribute responsibilities within groups, negotiate decisions, and collectively prepare presentations or projects. Cooperation with parents represented another important relational aspect of school culture, with teachers describing family involvement not only through participation in school activities but also through regular communication and shared responsibility for students’ well-being and learning via individual consultations, assessment tools to identify students’ emotional or learning difficulties and support collaborative discussions with parents about improving students’ behaviour, emotional well-being, and academic progress. These conversations helped to strengthen mutual understanding between families and the school while also ensuring that both students and parents felt heard and supported. Finally, teachers emphasised the importance of community-building and teacher-led engagement efforts within school life. Teachers actively facilitated participation, encouraged cooperation, and created opportunities for students, parents, and colleagues to become involved in collective activities.

This layer demonstrates that teachers’ actions are guided by a value system oriented towards equity and community. Taken together, the findings from the shallow-level analysis suggest that teachers’ support for the development of transversal skills is closely connected with the broader relational and value-oriented dimensions of school culture.

These include student agency, cooperation, parental involvement, and community building.

Deep Level: The Belief that Shared Values Matter for Success

At the deep level, the analysis reveals core beliefs that underpin both practices and values. Teachers demonstrate an understanding of diversity as a resource, a belief in every student's capacity to contribute, and a view of education as a process that fosters dialogue, social cohesion, and civic responsibility.

Previous research highlights the importance of teachers' core beliefs in shaping educational values and teaching practices (Deardorff, 2006; De Schaepmeester et al., 2022). Analysis of the interviews showed that the role of school values and the teacher's influence in navigating cultural differences within the classroom was an important theme. Teachers emphasised the importance of maintaining a strong, value-based foundation within the school while respecting students' cultural diversity. A gymnasium deputy principal explained that their school's core values were clearly introduced to students upon entry, helping to establish common expectations and support adaptation within a culturally diverse learning environment. Teachers also acknowledged that different cultural backgrounds may "pull in different directions," underscoring the importance of both teachers and students remaining grounded in shared principles and mutual respect. In this context, teachers' personalities, attitudes, and communication styles were perceived as highly influential in shaping how cultural differences were experienced and managed within the classroom.

The findings also highlighted beliefs regarding the importance of family as an external influence on students' participation and civic engagement. Teachers emphasised that family traditions, values, and involvement strongly affected whether students became socially active and engaged within school life. One teacher noted that participation in school activities often extended beyond students themselves and included graduates and families, becoming part of wider family traditions.

Finally, the deep-level analysis revealed the importance of a theme concerning teachers' reflective practices and the emotional demands of teaching. Teachers described the need to continuously reflect on their own work, their relationships with students, and their teaching approaches within changing educational contexts. One teacher emphasised that meaningful and respectful classroom interaction requires significant preparation and emotional investment from teachers, particularly when educational resources or teaching materials are insufficient.

Discussion

This study examined whether teachers are prepared for multicultural teaching, with a particular focus on their intercultural competence and attitudes towards civic participation in schools. The findings provide a nuanced response to the research question concerning how teachers' intercultural competence and pedagogical collaboration are

reflected in their preparedness for multicultural education and support for student civic participation. In the results of interview data, preparedness was not represented as a single set of observable teaching techniques. Instead, it was found that the concept manifested across three interconnected levels: visible practices, shared norms and interaction patterns, and underlying beliefs about diversity, participation, and the purpose of education. The maintenance of visible activities was attributed to relational norms and shared values, which were, in turn, founded on teachers' beliefs concerning students' ability to contribute to school and community life. This interpretation corresponds to Hall's (1976) distinction between the visible and less visible dimensions of culture.

In this study, the teachers' preparedness was reflected in school traditions, student council activities, volunteering, community projects, and joint activities involving students, families, and teachers. These practices furnished students with opportunities to initiate activities, participate in decision-making, and assume responsibility for school and community life. Teachers frequently described their role as facilitating rather than replacing student participation. This finding is consistent with research showing that citizenship education is shaped by the forms of citizenship and participation promoted through educational practice (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Furthermore, the findings align with the extant literature, which demonstrates that teachers' pedagogical approaches to facilitating classroom interaction exert a significant influence on both student participation and the quality of civic discourse (Schuitema et al., 2018).

At the shallow level, participation was embedded in shared norms of responsibility, cooperation, parental involvement, and community building. Pedagogical collaboration was therefore described not only as an occasional exchange between individual teachers but also as a relational characteristic of school culture. Teachers' answers indicated that shared values provided a framework for coordinating activities, supporting student initiatives, and involving families in school life. This interpretation is consistent with qualitative evidence showing that school culture, shared responsibility, trust, and participatory practices shape how teacher collaboration is organised and experienced (Arar et al., 2026). In the study, these collaborative conditions were also connected with teachers' preparedness to respond to cultural diversity and support civic participation.

At the deep level, results of teachers' interview analyses highlighted beliefs concerning diversity as a resource, the capacity of every student to contribute, the importance of shared values, and the role of education in fostering dialogue and civic responsibility. These findings support a multidimensional understanding of intercultural competence in which attitudes and internal orientations interact with knowledge, skills, and observable behaviour (Deardorff, 2006). They also correspond with evidence that teachers' citizenship beliefs are reflected in the content they prioritise and in the professional roles they adopt in citizenship education (De Schaepmeester et al., 2022). Nevertheless, it is important to note that teachers' reported beliefs should not be equated with measurable student outcomes. For instance, Schotte et al. (2022) found no consistent relationship between teachers' cultural beliefs and the examined indicators of students' school adaptation. Consequently, the present findings should be interpreted as evidence

of how teachers understand and describe their practices, rather than as evidence of a causal effect on students.

Across the three analytical levels, pedagogical collaboration appeared to connect individual intercultural orientations with collective school practices. Analyses demonstrate that teachers' experiences of cooperation with colleagues, students, families, student councils, and members of the wider community are indicative of the prevailing conditions in the field. The establishment of such cooperative relationships has yielded opportunities for the coordination of activities, the reflection on educational practices, and the maintenance of participation initiatives over time. Consequently, pedagogical collaboration can be conceptualised as both an observable professional practice and a school-level condition through which intercultural values are translated into collective action. The findings suggest that teacher preparedness for multicultural education is not exclusively an individual characteristic but also reflects the collaborative capacity of the school community.

These interpretations must be considered in relation to the study design. The participants represented 14 teachers from seven schools selected based on their ICCS 2022 results, including civic knowledge and participation indicators. The schools selected the teachers who participated, and the qualitative study included neither student interviews nor classroom observations. Consequently, the findings identify patterns in a purposively selected group of schools and cannot be interpreted as representative of all teachers or schools in Latvia. Future research could compare schools with different contextual characteristics, include students' perspectives and classroom observations, and examine more directly how teachers' core beliefs are related to their collaborative practices.

Conclusions

In order to provide a direct response to the research question, the findings indicate that teachers' preparedness for multicultural education and their support for student civic participation is manifested through the interaction of intercultural competence and pedagogical collaboration. The concept of intercultural competence manifested not only in observable teaching and participation practices but also in teachers' values and fundamental beliefs concerning diversity, inclusion, dialogue, and student agency. Pedagogical collaboration provided the collective context in which these orientations could be expressed through coordinated practices involving colleagues, students, families, and the wider school community. Preparedness was therefore represented in the interview data as both an individual professional competence and a collective capacity of the school.

Overall, the results indicate that teachers' intercultural competence extends beyond visible actions and is deeply rooted in their beliefs and value orientations. This highlights the importance of addressing not only pedagogical practices but also the underlying assumptions that shape inclusive and intercultural education, as well as teachers'

preparedness for multicultural teaching, which is closely linked to both their intercultural competence and their attitudes towards civic participation within the school environment. Nevertheless, the qualitative design does not establish that these factors cause higher levels of student civic participation. Future studies could examine how core beliefs influence teachers' collaboration practices and their competence in teaching within multicultural classrooms. Such studies could also explore how teachers support democratic values within society and encourage students' civic participation and involvement in community activities, how teachers' core beliefs, intercultural competence, and collaborative practices are related across different school contexts and how these relationships are perceived by students.

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