

World Literature and the Development of Cultural Sensitivity and Global Awareness among Secondary School Students in Kenya: A Pedagogical and Intercultural Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of world literature in fostering intercultural competence and global awareness among secondary school students in under-resourced rural schools in Kenya. The study critiques the exam-oriented implementation of literature education by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development despite its policy emphasis on global citizenship and intercultural learning. Anchored in multicultural education and postcolonial literary theories, the research interrogates curricular representation, pedagogical practices, and issues of educational equity in the teaching of world literature.

A qualitative descriptive research design was employed across six secondary schools in Elgeyo-Marakwet County, Uasin Gishu County, and Nandi County. The study sample (n = 85) comprised 60 students, 12 literature teachers, 6 heads of department, 3 curriculum support officers, 2 booksellers, and 2 publishers. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and stakeholder consultations, and analyzed thematically. Trustworthiness was enhanced through triangulation, peer debriefing, and prolonged engagement in the field.

Findings indicate that although world literature has considerable potential to promote intercultural understanding, its implementation remains constrained by structural and pedagogical limitations. The prescribed literature syllabus contains only a limited range of texts, predominantly Western and Anglophone African works, with minimal representation of Asian, Latin American, and Indigenous literary traditions. Significant disparities in access to literary texts were observed across schools, with resource shortages compelling students to share or rely on photocopied materials. Students demonstrated stronger engagement with culturally relatable themes, particularly those addressing gender and social identity, which contributed to the development of empathy and global consciousness. However, unfamiliar cultural settings and limited contextual scaffolding reduced comprehension of some texts. While most participants reported enhanced global awareness, teachers acknowledged inadequate preparation in intercultural pedagogy, resulting in predominantly examination-oriented instructional practices.

The study identifies curriculum rigidity, socio-economic inequalities, and limited transparency in text selection as major barriers to effective world literature instruction. Conversely, student curiosity, ongoing Competency-Based Curriculum reforms, and teacher interest in professional development emerged as important enabling factors. The study recommends diversification of prescribed texts, institutionalization of intercultural pedagogical training, equitable allocation of literary resources to rural schools, and adoption of comparative and context-responsive teaching approaches. By foregrounding Global South perspectives, the study contributes to ongoing debates on decolonizing literature education and advancing culturally responsive global citizenship education in Kenya.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In an increasingly interconnected and globalized world, the development of intercultural competence and global awareness has become a central objective of contemporary education systems. Educational institutions are

increasingly expected to prepare learners not only for academic achievement but also for meaningful participation in culturally diverse and globally interdependent societies. Recent global education frameworks emphasize the need for learners to develop empathy, cultural sensitivity, critical thinking, and the ability to engage constructively across cultural boundaries (UNESCO, 2021; OECD, 2023). Within this context, literature, and particularly world literature, has emerged as a powerful pedagogical tool for promoting intercultural understanding by exposing learners to diverse histories, identities, belief systems, and lived experiences.

Contemporary scholarship demonstrates that world literature enhances learners' intercultural communicative competence by enabling them to encounter multiple perspectives beyond their immediate social and cultural environments. According to Deardorff (2020), intercultural competence involves the capacity to communicate effectively and appropriately across cultural contexts through attitudes of openness, curiosity, and respect. Similarly, UNESCO (2021) identifies literary education as an important pathway toward cultivating global citizenship and inclusive worldviews among young learners. Through engagement with texts from diverse societies, students develop interpretive flexibility, empathy, and awareness of global social issues such as inequality, migration, identity, conflict, and human rights (Xu, Shi, & Liu, 2023).

Globally, many education systems have integrated multicultural and world literature into their curricula to strengthen intercultural learning. In countries such as Canada, Singapore, Australia, and Finland, literature education increasingly incorporates transnational and multicultural texts to encourage critical reflection on identity, diversity, and coexistence (Dervin, 2021; Yuen, 2022). Research conducted in Asian and European contexts indicates that exposure to culturally diverse literary texts enhances students' self-awareness, tolerance, and ability to engage in cross-cultural dialogue (Byram, 2021; Porto & Houghton, 2020). Similarly, multicultural literary approaches in the United States and Europe continue to be used to address historical exclusion, racial representation, and social justice within educational systems (Banks, 2021).

Within African education systems, intercultural education has gained increasing policy attention in response to globalization, migration, and postcolonial debates surrounding curriculum relevance and identity formation. In countries such as Rwanda and South Africa, literary education has been used to support social cohesion, reconciliation, and democratic citizenship by incorporating culturally responsive and historically reflective texts (Waghid, 2021). African scholars further argue that literature plays a significant role in challenging colonial epistemologies and affirming indigenous and local knowledge systems within formal education (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020).

In Kenya, educational reforms under the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) have increasingly emphasized the development of critical thinking, communication skills, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity (Ministry of Education, 2022). The literature curriculum at secondary school level incorporates selected African and international literary texts intended to expose learners to diverse cultural experiences and global perspectives. Texts such as *Blossoms of the Savannah* by H.R. Ole Kulet and *The River and the Source* by Margaret Ogola are taught alongside internationally recognized works such as *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen and *The Pearl* by John Steinbeck. This integration reflects broader educational goals aimed at nurturing globally aware and culturally responsive citizens.

However, recent studies suggest that the implementation of world literature within Kenyan secondary schools remains constrained by several structural and pedagogical challenges. Scholars have criticized the continued dominance of Western and Anglophone literary traditions within the curriculum, arguing that the prescribed texts insufficiently represent Asian, Latin American, Indigenous, and broader African literary voices (Mwangi, 2021; Wanjala, 2022). This limited representation restricts students' exposure to diverse global experiences and undermines efforts to create a genuinely inclusive and decolonized literature curriculum. Furthermore, critics argue that the persistence of colonial literary hierarchies within African education systems continues to privilege foreign epistemologies at the expense of local and regional intellectual traditions (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 2021).

Another significant concern relates to the pedagogical orientation of literature instruction in Kenyan schools. Studies conducted recently indicate that literature teaching remains heavily examination-oriented, with teachers often focusing on content mastery and examination performance rather than critical engagement and intercultural exploration (Ochieng', 2022; Chikafa-Chipiro, 2021). As a result, literary texts are frequently approached as

examinable content rather than as opportunities for dialogue, reflection, and cultural interpretation. This pedagogical limitation reduces students' ability to meaningfully engage with unfamiliar cultural contexts and global issues presented in literary works.

Teacher preparedness also remains a major challenge in the effective implementation of intercultural literary pedagogy. Research across sub-Saharan Africa demonstrates that many literature teachers have limited training in multicultural education and intercultural instruction, thereby constraining their capacity to facilitate comparative literary analysis and culturally responsive discussions in classrooms (Tikly, 2021; Abdi, 2020). In Kenya, professional development opportunities specifically addressing world literature pedagogy remain limited, particularly in rural and under-resourced schools. Consequently, teachers often rely on traditional teacher-centered approaches that may not adequately support learners' intercultural development.

Resource inequality further complicates the implementation of world literature education in Kenyan secondary schools. Studies by UNESCO (2022) and the Ministry of Education (2023) reveal persistent disparities in access to literary materials, qualified teachers, and instructional support between urban and rural schools. In many rural schools, shortages of prescribed texts force students to share books or rely on photocopied materials, limiting independent reading and critical engagement. These inequities disproportionately affect learners in marginalized communities and undermine the equitable realization of CBC goals related to global citizenship and intercultural competence.

Recent studies on curriculum reform and culturally responsive pedagogy in Kenya indicate that educational research has predominantly concentrated on policy implementation, teacher perceptions, and curriculum structures, with comparatively limited attention given to learners' lived experiences and intercultural meaning-making processes (Mutuota, 2023). Similarly, studies examining competency-based curriculum implementation in East Africa emphasize structural and institutional challenges while offering limited empirical evidence on how students in rural and under-resourced schools engage with globally oriented literary and cultural content (Kretzer & Oluoch-Suleh, 2022; Mwangi & Barasa, 2025).

It is against this background that the present study seeks to examine the role of world literature in promoting intercultural competence and global awareness among secondary school students in Kenya. The study specifically investigates students' experiences with world literature texts, teacher preparedness in intercultural pedagogy, and the structural factors influencing the implementation of world literature instruction in selected Kenyan secondary schools.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the increasing emphasis on global citizenship, intercultural competence, and cultural inclusivity within Kenya's education system, the teaching of world literature in secondary schools continued to face significant curricular and pedagogical challenges. The literature curriculum remained largely dominated by Western and Anglophone texts, with limited representation of diverse global, indigenous, and local literary traditions. Consequently, learners experienced limited opportunities to engage meaningfully with diverse cultural perspectives and realities through literature.

Additionally, literature instruction in many Kenyan secondary schools remained heavily examination-oriented, focusing primarily on content mastery and preparation for national examinations rather than critical reflection, intercultural dialogue, and global awareness. This pedagogical approach limited students' interpretive engagement with literary texts and reduced the potential of world literature to promote empathy, cultural sensitivity, and intercultural understanding. The situation was further compounded by inadequate teacher preparation in intercultural pedagogy and multicultural literary instruction, particularly in rural and under-resourced schools where access to instructional materials and professional development opportunities remained limited.

Although world literature was increasingly recognized globally as an important tool for fostering intercultural competence, there remained limited empirical research on how Kenyan secondary school students experienced and interpreted world literature texts and how such experiences influenced their global awareness and cultural

attitudes. Existing studies largely concentrated on curriculum policies and teacher perspectives while giving insufficient attention to students' lived experiences, classroom interactions, and contextual learning realities. Furthermore, limited research examined how factors such as teacher preparedness, curriculum design, and socio-economic conditions affected the implementation of world literature instruction in resource-constrained learning environments.

Consequently, there was insufficient evidence on the effectiveness of world literature education in promoting intercultural competence and global awareness among secondary school learners in Kenya. This study therefore sought to investigate the role of world literature in fostering intercultural competence and global awareness by examining students' experiences, teacher preparedness, and the contextual factors influencing the teaching and learning of world literature in Kenyan secondary schools

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the integration and impact of world literature in Kenyan secondary schools, with a specific focus on how it contributes to the development of students' intercultural competence and global awareness.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the range, diversity, and contextual relevance of world literature texts taught in Kenyan secondary schools.
2. To explore students' perceptions, lived experiences, and intercultural interpretations of world literature texts.
3. To evaluate the preparedness of literature teachers to deliver cross-cultural and intercultural content using world literature.
4. To identify the challenges and opportunities in implementing world literature instruction in resource-constrained and culturally diverse school settings.
5. To propose practical, evidence-based strategies for improving the teaching and learning of world literature in Kenyan secondary schools

Research Questions

1. What types of world literature texts are taught in Kenyan secondary schools, and how do they vary across school types, regions, and socio-economic contexts?
2. How do students perceive and interpret world literature, and in what ways do these texts influence their intercultural understanding and global awareness?
3. How prepared are secondary school literature teachers to teach world literature with a focus on intercultural pedagogy?
4. What are the key barriers and enablers to implementing effective world literature instruction in rural and under-resourced school environments?
5. What pedagogical strategies and policy interventions can enhance the effective integration of world literature in Kenyan secondary schools?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Conceptualization of the Study

This study was grounded on the assumption that exposure to world literature influences students' intercultural competence and global awareness through classroom interactions, pedagogical approaches, and engagement with culturally diverse literary texts. The framework conceptualized world literature as the independent variable

influencing the dependent variables, intercultural competence and global awareness, while teacher preparedness, pedagogical practices, curriculum design, and school resources functioned as intervening variables.

The framework was informed by multicultural education theory and intercultural communicative competence theory. Multicultural education theory emphasizes the inclusion of diverse cultural perspectives in curriculum and instruction to promote equity, empathy, and cultural understanding (Banks, 2021). Intercultural communicative competence theory argues that meaningful exposure to diverse cultural narratives enhances learners' attitudes of openness, tolerance, empathy, and cross-cultural interaction skills (Deardorff, 2020; Byram, 2021).

In the context of this study, students' interaction with world literature texts from diverse cultural settings was expected to shape their understanding of global issues, cultural diversity, identity, and social coexistence. However, the effectiveness of this process depended on contextual factors such as teacher preparedness in intercultural pedagogy, availability of literary materials, curriculum diversity, and classroom teaching approaches.

Variables in the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was structured around independent, dependent, and intervening variables that collectively explained the relationship between world literature instruction and the development of intercultural competence and global awareness among secondary school students in Kenya.

The independent variable in the study was world literature instruction. This variable encompassed students' exposure to culturally diverse literary texts drawn from different regions and traditions across the world. It also included the integration of global, African, indigenous, and multicultural literary voices within the literature curriculum. The study further considered literary themes explored in the selected texts, including identity, culture, gender, migration, conflict, social justice, and human relationships, as these themes were expected to shape students' understanding of diverse societies and lived experiences. In addition, the level of students' engagement with literary narratives through reading, interpretation, classroom discussions, and critical reflection formed an important aspect of world literature instruction. The dependent variables were intercultural competence and global awareness. Intercultural competence referred to students' ability to understand, appreciate, and interact respectfully with people from different cultural backgrounds. It was reflected through indicators such as cultural sensitivity, empathy toward other cultures, respect for diversity, openness to different worldviews, and the development of cross-cultural understanding. The study assumed that meaningful engagement with world literature would enhance students' capacity to appreciate cultural differences and promote tolerance and mutual understanding.

Global awareness, on the other hand, referred to students' understanding of global issues and their consciousness of the interconnected nature of contemporary societies. This variable was reflected in learners' awareness of international social, political, cultural, and economic realities, as well as their appreciation of multiculturalism and global citizenship. The study also examined students' ability to think critically about global challenges and social experiences presented in literary texts from different cultural contexts.

The relationship between world literature instruction and the development of intercultural competence and global awareness was influenced by several intervening variables. These included teacher preparedness in intercultural pedagogy, particularly teachers' ability to facilitate culturally responsive literary discussions and comparative analysis. Teaching methodologies employed in literature classrooms also influenced the effectiveness of literary engagement and intercultural learning outcomes. Additionally, curriculum design and the selection of prescribed texts determined the extent to which students were exposed to diverse cultural perspectives. The availability of literary resources, including textbooks and supplementary learning materials, further affected the implementation of world literature instruction, especially in rural and under-resourced schools. Socio-economic conditions within schools also influenced learners' access to literary materials and quality instruction. Moreover, the dominance of examination-oriented teaching approaches limited opportunities for critical reflection, intercultural dialogue, and creative interpretation of literary texts, thereby affecting the transformative potential of world literature education.

Diagrammatic Illustration of the Conceptual Framework

Independent Variable

World Literature Instruction

- Diverse literary texts
- Global cultural narratives
- Indigenous and local voices
- Literary themes and experiences



Classroom Engagement

- Literary interpretation
- Cultural discussions
- Comparative analysis



Dependent Variables

Intercultural Competence

- Empathy
- Cultural sensitivity
- Respect for diversity
- Openness to other cultures



Global Awareness

- Global citizenship
- Awareness of global issues
- Critical global consciousness
- Appreciation of multiculturalism

Intervening Variables

- Teacher preparedness
- Teaching methodologies
- Curriculum design
- School resources
- Socio-economic conditions
- Examination orientation

Explanation of the Framework

The framework illustrated that exposure to world literature texts was expected to influence students' intercultural competence and global awareness through active classroom engagement and interpretation of culturally diverse narratives. However, the extent to which these outcomes were achieved depended on intervening variables such

as teacher competence, curriculum inclusivity, resource availability, and pedagogical practices. Effective intercultural instruction and inclusive literary representation were therefore expected to enhance students' empathy, openness, and understanding of global cultural diversity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

World literature in secondary education has increasingly gained recognition as an important pedagogical resource for promoting intercultural competence, critical literacy, and global awareness among learners. Contemporary policy frameworks and educational research emphasize its role in enabling students to engage meaningfully with cultural diversity and to interpret complex global realities within an interconnected world (UNESCO, 2021; OECD, 2022). Through exposure to diverse literary traditions and narratives, learners are expected to develop the capacity to understand multiple perspectives and to respond thoughtfully to global social and cultural issues.

In this context, this literature review critically examines how world literature is conceptualized, selected, taught, and experienced in secondary school education. It also explores how these processes influence the development of learners' intercultural competence and global awareness. The review is organized around key thematic areas, including the types of world literature texts commonly taught in secondary schools, students' perceptions and attitudes towards cultural diversity as shaped by literary exposure, and the ways in which teachers integrate cross-cultural themes in literature instruction.

Further attention is given to the impact of reading world literature on students' understanding of global issues and intercultural relations, as well as the challenges and opportunities associated with using world literature to promote global and cultural competencies in classroom settings. Through these themes, the review provides a comprehensive analysis of the structural, pedagogical, and institutional factors that shape the teaching and learning of world literature in secondary education.

Types of World Literature Texts Commonly Taught in Secondary Schools

Recent scholarship indicates that the teaching of world literature in secondary schools continues to be strongly influenced by European and Anglophone literary traditions. Canonical texts such as *The Merchant of Venice*, *Animal Farm*, and *Cry, the Beloved Country* remain central in many school syllabi across different educational systems (UNESCO, 2022; OECD, 2023). Although these works are widely valued for their historical significance and universal themes, scholars argue that their continued dominance reflects persistent structural inequalities in global knowledge production and curriculum development (Banda & Peters, 2022; Singh, 2021). Decolonial perspectives further suggest that curriculum selection processes often privilege Western literary traditions as normative, resulting in a conception of "world literature" that is more Western-centered than genuinely global (Zezeza, 2021; Adebayo, 2023).

In African secondary education contexts, attempts to diversify literature curricula have achieved only partial success. Research from East and Southern Africa shows that African literature in schools is frequently limited to a small group of canonical authors, with texts such as Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* often treated as representative of African literary experience as a whole (Kigotho & Njoroge, 2022; Ndlovu, 2023). Kenya demonstrates similar trends. While the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) includes African texts such as *Blossoms of the Savannah* and *The River and the Source*, these are taught alongside longstanding Western classics including *The Pearl* and *A Doll's House* (Wachira & Muthoni, 2021; KICD Review Report, 2023). Scholars therefore argue that the curriculum remains insufficiently responsive to Kenya's growing literary landscape, particularly contemporary East African, Indigenous, and multilingual literary traditions (Wanjala, 2022; Otieno, 2024).

Beyond the issue of text selection, literature teaching in many schools is shaped by examination-oriented pedagogies that prioritize factual recall and textual analysis over interpretive engagement and critical reflection (Ouma & Kafuko, 2022; Njagi, 2025). Consequently, students are often encouraged to approach literature as

examinable content rather than as a cultural and dialogic practice through which broader social meanings can be explored. Recent scholarship also critiques the narrow conceptualization of world literature within curriculum frameworks, noting that many education systems continue to equate world literature primarily with translated Western canonical works. This marginalizes literary traditions such as African oral literature, Latin American magical realism, and South Asian postcolonial fiction despite their relevance to contemporary discussions on identity, power, and resistance (UNESCO, 2021; Singh & Verma, 2022).

In Kenya, concerns have also been raised regarding the limited integration of culturally diverse local literature into school programmes. Scholars argue that the continued reliance on Anglophone literary frameworks reinforces colonial epistemologies within education systems and restricts students' exposure to Kenya's multilingual literary traditions (Ngugi & Wainaina, 2022; Mazrui & Ochieng, 2023). At the institutional level, curriculum selection processes remain insufficiently transparent. Policy analyses suggest that KICD text selection criteria are not clearly documented, limiting accountability and stakeholder participation in curriculum development (KICD, 2023; Odhiambo, 2024). As a result, canonical literary traditions continue to dominate literature instruction.

Despite increasing attention to curriculum reform, several research gaps remain evident. Existing studies provide limited evidence regarding the diversity of texts actually implemented across Kenyan schools, particularly across rural–urban and public–private contexts (Mugo & Nyaga, 2023). Similarly, there is insufficient research on how students interpret culturally distant texts or how teachers contextualize global literature for Kenyan learners (Kamau, 2024; Chege & Otieno, 2025). Addressing these gaps requires moving beyond descriptive curriculum analysis toward more critical and context-sensitive investigations of how literary meaning is negotiated within classroom settings.

Students' Perceptions and Attitudes Towards Cultural Diversity as Influenced by Exposure to World Literature

Recent scholarship increasingly conceptualizes world literature as a space through which learners develop attitudes toward cultural diversity and global interconnectedness (UNESCO, 2021; OECD, 2023). Literary texts function not only as sources of cultural information but also as social and interpretive tools that shape learners' understanding of identity, difference, and human relationships. Through engagement with narratives from different cultural settings, students are exposed to alternative perspectives that may challenge familiar assumptions and broaden their cultural awareness.

Texts such as Adichie's *Americanah*, Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, and Orwell's *Animal Farm* introduce learners to themes of migration, political conflict, inequality, and identity formation. Studies suggest that exposure to such texts can expand learners' cultural imaginaries and encourage more critical reflection on social realities (UNESCO, 2022; Mwangi & Otieno, 2024). However, scholars emphasize that the educational value of world literature depends largely on the quality of pedagogical mediation rather than exposure alone.

Empirical research across different educational contexts indicates that engagement with culturally diverse literature can strengthen empathy and intercultural sensitivity. Kim (2021), for instance, found that Korean students developed more nuanced cultural reasoning through sustained engagement with translated literary texts, while Singh and Verma (2022) report similar outcomes in South Asian classrooms. African studies also indicate that students exposed to both African and non-African literature are more likely to demonstrate comparative cultural awareness, particularly when teachers facilitate structured classroom discussion (Awuor & Mensah, 2022; Ouma & Kafuko, 2023). Nevertheless, these opportunities are often unevenly distributed, with better-resourced urban schools offering broader literary exposure than rural or under-resourced institutions.

Within Kenya, research suggests that students are more likely to engage in comparative cultural reasoning when African texts such as *A Grain of Wheat* and *Things Fall Apart* are taught alongside Western literary works (Kamau, 2024; Mugo & Nyaga, 2023). However, examination-driven pedagogies frequently limit deeper interpretive engagement by emphasizing memorization and content recall over critical reflection (Njagi, 2025; Otieno & Chege, 2024).

Contemporary scholarship also questions the assumption that literary exposure automatically leads to intercultural competence. Liddicoat (2022) argues that without culturally responsive pedagogy, literary texts may reinforce stereotypes rather than challenge them. Similarly, postcolonial scholars contend that simplified representations of “other cultures” can reproduce cultural binaries when historical context, narrative voice, and authorial positioning are not critically examined (Zeleza, 2021; Adebayo, 2023).

Several structural factors continue to constrain intercultural learning through literature. Examination-oriented education systems prioritize factual reproduction over critical interpretation, while rigid syllabi limit pedagogical flexibility and opportunities for exploratory discussion (Otieno, 2024; Wanjala, 2023). Teacher preparedness also remains a major concern, as many educators lack formal training in intercultural literary pedagogy (Muthoni, 2022). In addition, the continued dominance of Western canonical texts narrows epistemic diversity and reinforces longstanding cultural hierarchies within school curricula (Zeleza, 2021).

Research gaps remain particularly evident in relation to classroom practice and contextual variation. Few studies examine how teachers conceptualize intercultural pedagogy, how teacher–student interactions shape cultural meaning-making, or how experiences differ across rural, urban, and peri-urban schools in Kenya. Consequently, further research is needed to understand not only the texts students read, but also how institutional and pedagogical contexts influence learners’ interpretations of cultural diversity.

How Teachers Integrate Cross-Cultural Themes When Teaching World Literature

Teachers play a central role in transforming world literature from textual content into meaningful intercultural learning experiences. Contemporary scholarship increasingly describes teachers as “cultural brokers” who mediate understanding across cultural boundaries and influence whether literature reinforces stereotypes or promotes intercultural awareness (Banks, 2021; UNESCO, 2023). Their instructional choices therefore shape the extent to which learners critically engage with cultural difference and global perspectives.

Research on culturally responsive pedagogy emphasizes that effective integration of cross-cultural themes requires deliberate instructional planning rather than incidental treatment of cultural issues. Teachers who provide historical background, contextual explanations, and opportunities for critical dialogue are more likely to facilitate deeper interpretive engagement with literary texts (Gay, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 2021). In contrast, the absence of such scaffolding often results in superficial understandings of cultural difference.

Several instructional strategies have been identified as effective in promoting intercultural engagement in literature classrooms. These include comparative textual analysis, dialogic discussion, reflective journaling, role-play, and multimodal interpretation tasks (OECD, 2022; UNESCO, 2023). In African classrooms, teachers have also incorporated oral traditions and comparative cultural analysis to contextualize global texts and make them more accessible to learners (Ochieng’, 2021; Omollo, 2022). Such approaches are associated with increased student participation, empathy, and critical cultural reasoning.

Despite these promising practices, implementation remains constrained by significant structural challenges. Studies across East and West Africa indicate that many teachers lack formal preparation in intercultural pedagogy, resulting in descriptive and examination-focused approaches to literature teaching (Ofoegbu & Okonkwo, 2021; Kigotho, 2022). Pressure to complete prescribed syllabi further encourages teachers to prioritize content coverage over exploratory and dialogic learning (Omollo & Njoroge, 2024).

In Kenya, literature texts such as *A Doll’s House*, *The Pearl*, and *An Enemy of the People* are commonly taught through frameworks that emphasize plot, characterization, and stylistic devices rather than ethical, political, and cultural interpretation (Kamau & Chege, 2022; Wanjala, 2023). Teacher education programmes similarly provide limited grounding in intercultural literary pedagogy, leaving many teachers dependent on intuition or exam-oriented methods (Muthoni, 2022; Otieno, 2025). Where professional development opportunities exist, they are often fragmented and insufficiently aligned with classroom realities.

Current scholarship also reveals several unresolved research gaps. Limited evidence exists regarding how teachers conceptualize cross-cultural pedagogy, the strategies they employ in classroom practice, and the ways

teacher–student interactions shape cultural meaning during literature lessons. Comparative studies across rural, urban, and peri-urban schools in Kenya also remain limited. Addressing these gaps requires more classroom-based and practice-oriented research capable of illuminating how intercultural literature pedagogy operates in diverse educational contexts.

The Impact of Reading World Literature on Students' Awareness of Global Issues and Intercultural Understanding

Recent scholarship increasingly positions world literature as an important pedagogical resource for developing learners' awareness of global issues and intercultural understanding. Rather than functioning merely as literary content, world literature serves as a cultural and ethical lens through which students engage with complex social realities such as migration, inequality, gender relations, colonial histories, and political conflict. Through this engagement, literature enables learners to reflect on their own cultural positioning while simultaneously encountering diverse worldviews and experiences.

Global research highlights the transformative potential of literary engagement in developing twenty-first century competencies. Stromberg (2016) and OECD (2018) argue that exposure to culturally diverse literary texts enhances critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and global awareness. Similarly, Damrosch (2003) conceptualizes world literature as a dynamic field shaped by circulation, translation, and cross-cultural interaction, emphasizing that literary meaning emerges through intercultural encounter rather than geographical origin alone. More recent policy-oriented studies by UNESCO (2023) and OECD (2022) reinforce this perspective by identifying literature as a strategic tool for promoting global citizenship and intercultural literacy within education systems.

Empirical studies across different educational contexts further suggest that engagement with culturally diverse literature can significantly influence students' interpretive frameworks and social attitudes, although these outcomes are shaped by pedagogy and context. Chikumbutso and Dube (2020), for example, found that students in Southern African classrooms who studied both African and non-African literary texts developed stronger critical awareness of issues such as xenophobia, postcolonial identity, and social exclusion. However, the authors also note that such outcomes depend heavily on teachers' ability to mediate historical and cultural context effectively.

Despite these positive findings, African education systems continue to face structural limitations that constrain the full educational potential of world literature. Curriculum structures in many contexts still reflect colonial legacies in which Western literary traditions are disproportionately prioritized, thereby limiting epistemic diversity and reinforcing unequal knowledge hierarchies (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986; Zeleza, 2021). Teacher preparedness also remains a major concern. Studies by Osei-Tutu et al. (2019) and Adu-Gyamfi (2021) indicate that many teachers lack formal training in intercultural literary pedagogy, limiting their capacity to guide learners through culturally complex interpretations and discussions.

In East Africa, curriculum reforms increasingly emphasize the development of global competencies, although implementation remains uneven. Uganda's revised lower secondary curriculum, for instance, explicitly promotes global citizenship through literature education, yet practical implementation is constrained by limited teacher capacity and inadequate instructional resources (Byaruhanga, 2021). Similarly, Mbise (2018) observes that students in Tanzania who engage with both African and Western literary texts often develop more nuanced understandings of power, resistance, and identity, although examination-oriented instruction frequently reduces literary study to simplified content intended primarily for assessment purposes.

Kenya presents a comparable but evolving context under the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), which emphasizes critical thinking, cultural literacy, and global awareness. Literature texts such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *The River Between*, Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, and El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* provide opportunities for learners to engage with themes of colonialism, gender inequality, identity, and social transformation. Mwangi (2021) argues that when such texts are taught through student-centered and interpretive approaches, they can significantly strengthen learners' critical awareness and social sensitivity. However, Kamau and Chege (2019) note that the transformative potential of these texts is often undermined by examination-oriented pedagogies and insufficient teacher preparation in intercultural instruction.

Access to diverse literary materials also plays a significant role in shaping learning outcomes. In many Kenyan schools, particularly in rural and under-resourced settings, students encounter a relatively narrow literary canon dominated by Western texts, limiting opportunities to engage with alternative cultural perspectives (Otieno, 2020). Consequently, students in better-resourced schools are often exposed to a wider range of global literary voices and richer intercultural learning experiences than their counterparts in marginalized contexts.

Recent scholarship identifies several interconnected factors that continue to shape the teaching and learning of world literature in secondary schools. One major concern is the persistence of examination-centered curricula, which limit opportunities for reflective and interpretive engagement with literary texts (Otieno, 2024; UNESCO, 2023). This challenge is closely linked to teacher capacity gaps, as many educators have limited preparation in intercultural and critical literary pedagogy (Muthoni, 2022; Kamau & Chege, 2019). In addition, unequal access to literary resources contributes to uneven learning experiences across schools, while the continued dominance of Western literary traditions marginalizes Global South perspectives and Indigenous knowledge systems (Zezeza, 2021; Adebayo, 2023).

Although the educational value of world literature is increasingly acknowledged, several research gaps remain evident. Existing studies provide limited empirical evidence on how exposure to world literature specifically shapes students' intercultural competence and global awareness within African and East African contexts. Furthermore, few studies foreground students' own interpretations and experiences of literary texts, as much of the existing literature focuses primarily on curriculum analysis or teacher perspectives. There is also limited research on pedagogical frameworks suitable for culturally diverse and resource-constrained classrooms, as well as a shortage of longitudinal studies examining how sustained engagement with world literature influences learners' worldview development over time. Addressing these gaps is essential for strengthening the role of world literature in promoting intercultural understanding and global competence in secondary education.

Challenges and Opportunities Associated with Using World Literature to Promote Global and Cultural Competencies in the Classroom

The use of world literature in classroom practice is increasingly recognized as an important strategy for developing learners' intercultural understanding, critical thinking, and global awareness. However, its implementation is shaped by a complex interaction of pedagogical, institutional, and structural factors that both enable and constrain meaningful engagement with literary texts.

One of the major global challenges concerns the uneven representation of literary voices within school curricula. Although world literature is intended to reflect cultural diversity, many syllabi remain heavily dominated by Western canonical texts, thereby limiting students' exposure to Global South perspectives and reinforcing epistemic inequalities (Damrosch, 2003; Spivak, 1993; Zezeza, 2021). In addition, unfamiliar linguistic structures and cultural contexts often create comprehension difficulties when literary texts are not supported through culturally responsive teaching approaches (Zhou & Yaworski, 2020). These challenges are further intensified by standardized assessment systems that prioritize measurable outcomes and content recall over interpretive discussion and critical reflection (Apple, 2012).

In African contexts, literature education continues to be influenced by postcolonial curricular traditions, resource limitations, and unequal access to diverse literary materials (Chikumbutso & Dube, 2020). Teacher preparedness also remains a major concern, as many educators report limited exposure to global literature and intercultural pedagogy during their professional training (Osei-Tutu et al., 2019). Similar challenges are evident across East Africa, where curriculum reforms increasingly emphasize global competencies but implementation remains inconsistent due to limited resources, rigid syllabi, and inadequate professional development opportunities (Byaruhanga, 2021; Mbise, 2018).

Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) offers a stronger policy framework for integrating world literature into the development of global competencies. Nevertheless, examination-oriented teaching practices continue to dominate classroom instruction, limiting opportunities for culturally reflective and interpretive learning (Obonyo, 2017). Resource disparities between rural and urban schools also restrict equitable access to

diverse literary texts and digital learning materials, while teacher education programmes continue to provide limited grounding in intercultural literary pedagogy (Kamau & Chege, 2019; Otieno, 2020).

Despite these constraints, significant opportunities are emerging. Digital platforms such as Worldreader and eKitabu, together with initiatives by the Kenya National Library Service (KNLS), are expanding access to global and African literary texts, particularly in under-resourced settings. Regional publishers, literary festivals, and collaborations involving organizations such as the British Council and Goethe-Institut are also contributing to broader literary engagement and teacher development. Furthermore, studies indicate that culturally responsive pedagogies—including comparative reading, reflective journaling, role-play, and structured debate—can significantly strengthen learners' empathy, intercultural awareness, and critical engagement with global issues (Mwangi, 2021).

Recent scholarship also highlights several persistent structural constraints affecting world literature education, including rigid and examination-centered curricula, unequal resource distribution, the continued dominance of Western literary traditions, and language barriers that limit engagement with culturally distant texts (Otieno, 2024; Wanjala, 2023; Kamau, 2024). Disparities in digital infrastructure and digital literacy further contribute to unequal access to electronic literary resources across different educational settings (UNESCO, 2023; OECD, 2022).

At the same time, important research gaps remain. Existing studies provide limited longitudinal evidence on how sustained engagement with world literature shapes learners' global perspectives over time. There is also insufficient classroom-based research examining how students from diverse backgrounds interpret literary texts and how specific pedagogical strategies function in culturally diverse and resource-constrained environments. Addressing these gaps is essential for developing more inclusive, context-sensitive, and effective approaches to world literature education.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study investigated the role of world literature in fostering intercultural competence among students in Kenyan public secondary schools, particularly within rural and under-resourced contexts. The chapter outlines the research design, study area, target population, sampling procedures, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, trustworthiness measures, and ethical considerations that guided the study.

The study adopted a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the diversity of world literature texts taught in schools, students' perceptions of culturally diverse literature, teacher preparedness, and the opportunities and challenges associated with teaching world literature. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and stakeholder consultations. The methodology was designed to generate rich and contextually grounded insights into how literature education contributes to intercultural understanding, empathy, cultural sensitivity, and awareness of global issues among learners in rural Kenyan secondary schools.

Study Design

The study employed a qualitative descriptive research design. This design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and educational practices within their natural school environments without introducing experimental manipulation. Qualitative descriptive inquiry was particularly suitable for this study because the research sought to provide detailed and straightforward accounts of how world literature is taught, interpreted, and experienced in rural public secondary schools.

The design supported the study's objective of examining how world literature contributes to the development of intercultural competence among students. Intercultural competence in this study was understood to include indicators such as empathy toward culturally different groups, openness to alternative perspectives, cultural sensitivity, respect for diversity, and the ability to reflect critically on social and cultural issues emerging from

literary texts. These indicators were identified from participants' narratives, classroom interactions, and interpretive responses during interviews, focus group discussions, and observations.

The study further explored:

1. The range and diversity of world literature texts taught in schools;
2. Students' perceptions and attitudes toward world literature;
3. Teachers' preparedness and pedagogical approaches;
4. Opportunities and challenges associated with implementing world literature; and
5. The extent to which literature instruction promoted intercultural understanding and global awareness.

Although the study was primarily qualitative, limited descriptive percentages were used to summarize the prevalence of recurring responses and themes across participant groups. These percentages were not intended for statistical generalization but rather to provide descriptive indications of how commonly particular views, experiences, or practices emerged within the dataset. The use of descriptive frequencies therefore complemented the qualitative analysis by enhancing clarity and illustrating thematic patterns identified during interpretation.

The qualitative descriptive design also accommodated multiple methods of data collection, thereby enabling triangulation and strengthening the credibility and contextual richness of the findings.

Study Area

The study was conducted in selected rural public secondary schools in Elgeyo Marakwet, Uasin Gishu, and Nandi Counties in Kenya. These counties were selected because they represented rural and semi-rural educational contexts characterized by varying levels of access to literary resources, teacher training opportunities, and curriculum support.

The selected schools were classified as under-resourced based on indicators such as limited library facilities, inadequate teaching materials, large class sizes, and constrained access to contemporary literary texts. Focusing on these regions enabled the study to examine how educational inequalities influence the teaching of world literature and the development of intercultural competence among learners.

Target Population

The target population comprised Form Three and Form Four students, literature teachers, Heads of English/Languages Departments, curriculum officers, publishers, and booksellers involved in literature education in rural Kenyan public secondary schools.

Form Three and Form Four students were selected because they had substantial exposure to prescribed literary texts and were actively engaged in literature instruction. Their experiences and interpretations were therefore central to understanding how world literature influenced intercultural awareness, empathy, and cultural sensitivity.

Literature teachers were included because they directly implemented the curriculum and mediated students' engagement with culturally diverse texts. Heads of English/Languages Departments provided curricular and administrative perspectives regarding text selection, instructional supervision, and resource allocation. Curriculum officers contributed policy-level insights concerning curriculum implementation and the integration of global literary perspectives within Kenyan education. Publishers and booksellers were included to provide information regarding the availability, accessibility, and circulation of world literature texts in rural schools.

Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

The study employed purposive sampling, maximum variation sampling, and snowball sampling techniques to obtain rich and diverse qualitative data.

Selection of Schools

Six rural public secondary schools were purposively selected from Elgeyo Marakwet, Uasin Gishu, and Nandi Counties. Selection was guided by the following criteria:

1. Classification as rural or under-resourced schools;
2. Implementation of the Kenyan secondary school literature curriculum;
3. Availability of literature classes involving African and world literary texts; and
4. Willingness to participate in the study.

Maximum variation sampling was used to ensure diversity in school characteristics, including gender composition, school performance levels, and geographical location. This diversity enabled the study to capture varied experiences and perspectives regarding world literature instruction.

Selection of Participants

A total of 85 participants participated in the study, distributed as follows:

Participant Category	Number	Sampling Technique	Purpose
Form Three and Four Students	60	Purposive and maximum variation	To explore students' perceptions and intercultural experiences
Literature Teachers	12	Purposive	To examine pedagogical practices and teacher preparedness
Heads of English/Languages Departments	6	Purposive	To provide curriculum and administrative perspectives
Curriculum Officers	3	Snowball	To provide policy and implementation insights
Booksellers	2	Snowball	To examine availability and accessibility of literary texts
Publishers	2	Snowball	To explore publishing trends and curriculum alignment

The 60 students were selected proportionately from the six schools, with approximately ten students from each school. Selection ensured gender balance, variation in academic performance, and representation of diverse ethnic and socio-cultural backgrounds. This diversity was necessary for capturing a broad range of intercultural experiences and interpretations of literary texts.

The 12 literature teachers were purposively selected based on their experience teaching literature and familiarity with world literature texts included in the curriculum. Variation in gender, years of teaching experience, and educational background was also considered.

The Heads of Department were selected because of their supervisory roles in curriculum implementation. Curriculum officers, publishers, and booksellers were identified through snowball sampling, where initial participants recommended additional stakeholders with relevant knowledge regarding literature curriculum implementation and text distribution.

The sample size was considered adequate for achieving thematic saturation while remaining manageable within the study period.

Data Collection Methods

The study employed multiple qualitative data collection methods to ensure methodological triangulation and a

comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. These methods included semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and stakeholder consultations.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted in one rural public secondary school that did not participate in the main study. The pilot study aimed to test the clarity, relevance, cultural appropriateness, and effectiveness of the research instruments. Interview guides, observation checklists, and focus group discussion protocols were revised based on feedback obtained during the pilot phase. Data collected during the pilot study were excluded from the final analysis.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 literature teachers, 6 Heads of English/Languages Departments, and 3 curriculum officers. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was guided by open-ended interview schedules.

The interviews explored:

1. Experiences teaching world literature;
2. Pedagogical strategies used to promote intercultural understanding;
3. Teacher preparedness and professional training;
4. Curriculum implementation challenges; and
5. Perceptions of students' responses to culturally diverse texts.

The semi-structured format allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences while maintaining consistency across interviews.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Twelve focus group discussions were conducted with students, with two discussions in each school consisting of one male group and one female group. Each group comprised approximately five students.

The FGDs explored:

1. Students' attitudes toward world literature;
2. Interpretation of intercultural themes in literary texts;
3. Experiences interacting with unfamiliar cultures through literature;
4. Expressions of empathy, cultural sensitivity, and openness toward cultural diversity; and
5. Perceived relevance of world literature to students' lives and communities.

The group setting encouraged interaction, reflection, and the sharing of collective experiences.

Classroom Observations

The researcher conducted two classroom observations in each participating school, resulting in twelve observations overall. Observations focused on literature lessons involving culturally diverse texts such as *The Pearl* and *A Doll's House*.

A structured observation checklist guided the observations, focusing on:

1. Teacher–student interactions;
2. Instructional methods;
3. Student participation and engagement;
4. Integration of intercultural themes;
5. Evidence of empathy, cultural sensitivity, and reflective dialogue; and
6. Classroom discussions relating to cultural diversity and global perspectives.

Field notes were also used to capture contextual details and non-verbal interactions that did not emerge during interviews or discussions.

Stakeholder Consultations

Consultations were conducted with publishers and booksellers to examine issues relating to text availability, curriculum inclusivity, and representation of diverse global voices in literature materials. These consultations provided additional contextual understanding regarding the accessibility and distribution of world literature texts in rural schools.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis began immediately after data collection and followed a systematic thematic analysis approach. Interviews and FGDs were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim, while observation and field notes were typed and organized electronically.

The analysis process involved several stages:

1. Transcripts and field notes were read repeatedly to develop familiarity with the data;
2. Meaningful segments of data were identified and assigned initial codes;
3. Similar codes were grouped into categories reflecting recurring ideas and experiences;
4. Categories were refined into broader themes aligned with the study objectives and research questions; and
5. Themes were interpreted in relation to existing literature and the study's theoretical framework.

Emerging themes included cultural empathy, cultural sensitivity, openness to diversity, representation of global voices, pedagogical challenges, interpretive engagement, and resource accessibility.

To determine thematic prevalence within the qualitative framework, the researcher examined how frequently particular themes, experiences, or viewpoints appeared across interviews, FGDs, and observations. A theme was considered prevalent when it recurred consistently across multiple participant groups and schools. Descriptive percentages were therefore used only to indicate the relative recurrence of themes within the qualitative dataset. For example, references to empathy, openness toward unfamiliar cultures, or examination-oriented teaching practices were quantified descriptively based on the number of participants or discussion groups in which these ideas appeared. These percentages served illustrative rather than statistical purposes and were used to strengthen transparency in reporting patterns within the data.

Coding was conducted manually and supported by qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo where necessary. To enhance trustworthiness, data from interviews, FGDs, observations, and stakeholder consultations were triangulated during analysis. Direct participant quotations were also incorporated to support interpretation and preserve the authenticity of participants' voices.

Trustworthiness of the Study

The study employed several strategies to ensure credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

Credibility

Credibility was enhanced through:

1. Triangulation of multiple data sources and methods;
2. Prolonged engagement in the field over one school term;
3. Member checking, where participants reviewed summaries of interview responses; and
4. Peer debriefing with academic supervisors and colleagues.

Dependability

Dependability was ensured through detailed documentation of the research process, including interview guides, observation protocols, coding procedures, and analytical decisions.

Confirmability

An audit trail was maintained to demonstrate how interpretations and conclusions were reached. Reflexive notes were also kept throughout the research process to minimize researcher bias.

Transferability

Thick descriptions of the study context, participants, and procedures were provided to enable readers to assess the applicability of findings to similar educational contexts.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical standards governing educational research. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant Institutional Review Board (IRB), while authorization was secured from the Kenyan Ministry of Education and participating school administrations before commencement of the study.

Participation was voluntary. Written informed consent was obtained from teachers, curriculum officers, publishers, and booksellers, while assent and parental consent were obtained for student participants below eighteen years of age. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any stage, and the intended use of the collected data.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through the use of pseudonyms and the removal of identifying information from transcripts and reports. Digital data were password-protected, while hard-copy materials were securely stored and accessed only by the researcher.

Given the intercultural nature of the study, cultural sensitivity was prioritized throughout the research process. Interview and discussion questions were framed respectfully to avoid stereotyping or discomfort, while focus group discussions were conducted in environments that promoted openness, safety, and mutual respect among participants.

Study Findings

Introduction

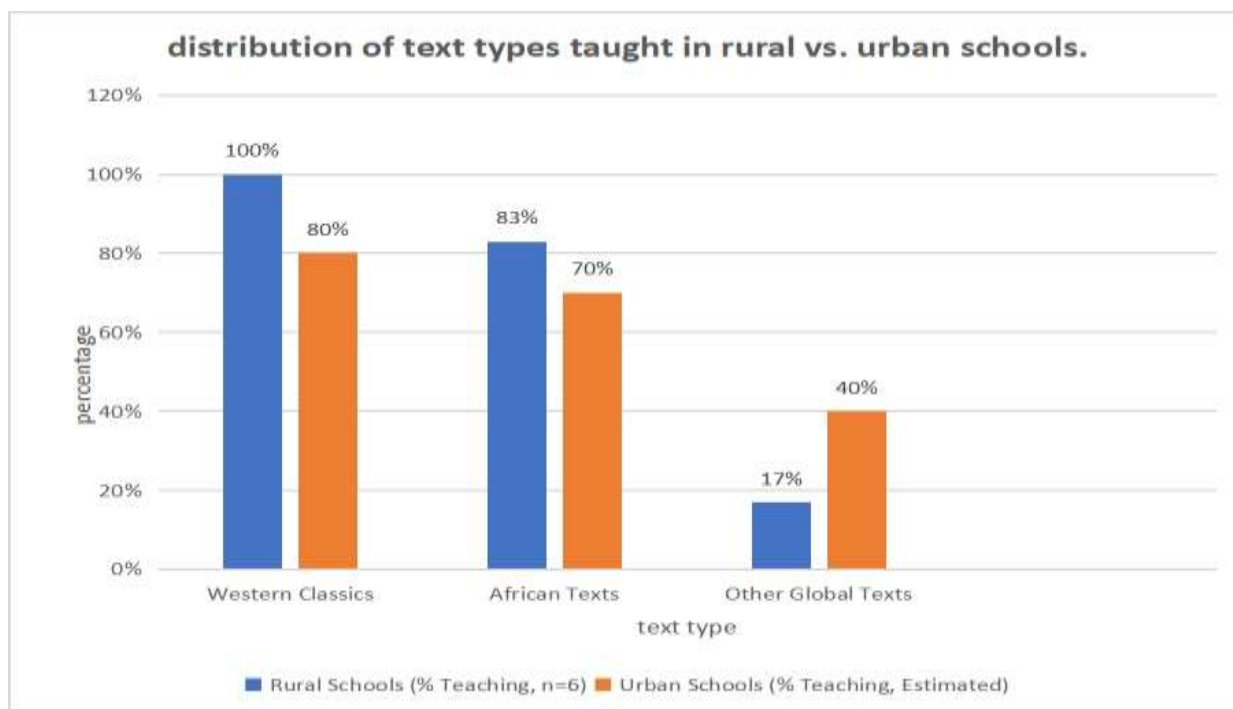
This chapter presents the findings of a study examining the role of world literature in fostering intercultural competence among students in six rural, under-resourced Kenyan public secondary schools in Elgeyo Marakwet, Uasin Gishu, and Nandi counties. Findings are organized by five research questions, addressing the range and diversity of world literature texts, students' perspectives, teacher preparedness, barriers and enablers, and pedagogical strategies/policy interventions. Percentages reflect thematic prevalence (e.g., 48/60 students = 80%) for quantitative clarity. Tables are provided to support graphical visualization of key trends.

Types of World Literature Texts Taught in Kenyan Secondary Schools and Their Variation Across School Types and Regions

This section presents findings on the first research question: What types of world literature texts are taught in Kenyan secondary schools, and how do they vary across school types and regions? The analysis moves beyond description to examine how curriculum structures, institutional inequalities, and cultural representation shaped students' exposure to world literature. The findings are interpreted through the lens of intercultural competence theory, particularly the view that exposure to diverse cultural narratives promotes empathy, global awareness, and critical understanding of cultural differences.

Table 4.2: Distribution of Text Types Taught in Rural and Urban Schools

Text Type	Rural Schools (% Teaching, n=6)	Urban Schools (% Teaching, Estimated)
Western Classics	100% (6/6 schools)	80%
African Texts	83% (5/6 schools)	70%
Other Global Texts	17% (1/6 schools)	40%



The findings revealed that the teaching of world literature in Kenyan secondary schools remained heavily dominated by Western canonical texts and a limited number of African literary works. All rural schools in the study taught Western classics such as *The Pearl* by John Steinbeck and *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen, while only one school reported using texts from other global regions such as Asia, Latin America, or the Middle East. Although African texts such as *Blossoms of the Savannah* and *The River and the Source* were relatively common, the overall range of literary representation remained narrow.

This pattern suggests that the notion of “world literature” within the Kenyan secondary school curriculum was largely interpreted through a Eurocentric framework. While the prescribed texts addressed universal themes such as gender inequality, greed, oppression, and social responsibility, they offered limited opportunities for students to engage with multiple cultural epistemologies and diverse global identities. From an intercultural competence perspective, this restricted literary exposure constrained students’ ability to develop broader cultural empathy and global literacy. Intercultural competence theory emphasizes that meaningful engagement with diverse cultural narratives enables learners to challenge stereotypes, negotiate cultural differences, and develop openness toward unfamiliar worldviews. However, the dominance of Western classics appeared to reproduce a narrow understanding of global culture rather than fostering genuinely pluralistic perspectives.

Students consistently expressed awareness of this limitation. Although 80% (48/60) reported familiarity with prescribed texts, many indicated a desire for broader cultural representation in literature classes. One Form Four student explained:

“We keep reading *The Pearl* and *A Doll’s House*, but I want to read stories from places like India or South America to know how people live there.”

This response illustrates that students did not merely consume prescribed texts passively; rather, they demonstrated curiosity about cultures beyond those represented in the syllabus. Such findings are significant because they challenge assumptions that rural learners are disconnected from global cultural interests. Instead, the study revealed that students desired intercultural exposure but were constrained by curriculum limitations and resource inequalities.

The findings further demonstrated that access to literary texts varied significantly across regions and school contexts. Rural schools experienced severe shortages of prescribed books, with 70% (42/60) of students reporting shared, outdated, or torn copies. Resource disparities were particularly visible in Nandi County, where only 60% of students reported adequate access to texts, compared to 75% in Uasin Gishu. These disparities reflected broader socio-economic inequalities affecting educational infrastructure and learning opportunities in rural Kenya.

From a sociocultural theoretical perspective, unequal access to texts limited students’ opportunities for dialogic learning and intercultural engagement. Literature functions not only as academic content but also as a cultural tool through which learners encounter alternative identities, values, and social realities. Where access to texts was limited, students’ participation in critical discussion and independent reading was similarly constrained. One student explained:

“Our library has only one copy of *The Pearl*, and it’s torn.”

This statement reflects more than a material shortage; it highlights how structural inequalities mediate students’ intercultural learning experiences. In under-resourced schools, literature teaching became heavily examination-oriented because teachers focused on maximizing limited resources for test preparation rather than encouraging exploratory or comparative reading practices.

Teachers overwhelmingly identified the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) syllabus as a major factor shaping literary diversity. Nearly all teachers interviewed (92%, 11/12) argued that the prescribed curriculum restricted their ability to introduce texts from other cultural traditions. A teacher observed:

“We are stuck with the same texts every year. I’d love to teach a novel from Asia, but the syllabus doesn’t allow it.”

This finding suggests that teachers possessed intercultural aspirations that extended beyond the official curriculum. However, institutional constraints limited pedagogical flexibility and reinforced reliance on examination-approved texts. The data therefore revealed a tension between teachers’ professional awareness of global literary diversity and the rigid examination structures governing secondary education in Kenya.

The findings also demonstrated that curriculum policy indirectly reinforced cultural hierarchies within literature education. Although African texts were included in the syllabus, non-Western and non-Anglophone voices remained significantly underrepresented, accounting for less than 10% of texts mentioned across participating schools. Consequently, students encountered a curriculum that privileged certain global narratives while marginalizing others. This imbalance reflects postcolonial critiques of literary canon formation, which argue that educational systems in formerly colonized societies often continue to prioritize Western literary traditions at the expense of broader global representation.

Department heads similarly emphasized the restrictive nature of the curriculum and its uneven implementation across school contexts. One Head of Department stated:

“The syllabus is too narrow. We need texts that reflect global diversity, not just Western classics or a few African novels.”

This perspective indicates growing recognition among educational practitioners that intercultural competence requires exposure to multiple global voices rather than limited engagement with a small canon of approved texts.

Curriculum officers presented a more institutional perspective. While 67% (2/3) defended the current syllabus on the basis that prescribed texts addressed universal human experiences, they also acknowledged the need for gradual curriculum reform. One curriculum officer noted:

“We need to review the syllabus to include more global voices, but funding and approval processes are slow.”

This response revealed the structural complexity of curriculum reform in Kenya. Although policymakers recognized the importance of diversity, bureaucratic procedures, funding limitations, and examination systems slowed curricular transformation.

Publishers and booksellers reinforced the argument that examination culture significantly shaped literary consumption in schools. All stakeholders interviewed reported that schools primarily purchased KICD-approved texts, while non-prescribed global literature attracted minimal demand. A bookseller explained:

“Schools only buy what’s on the syllabus because of exams.”

Similarly, a publisher stated:

“We’d love to publish more global literature, but schools won’t buy it if it’s not KICD-approved.”

These findings demonstrate that literary diversity was constrained not only by curriculum design but also by market dynamics linked to examination performance. Consequently, the education system created a self-reinforcing cycle in which publishers prioritized examinable texts, schools purchased only approved books, and students remained exposed to a limited literary canon.

Overall, the findings revealed that world literature instruction in Kenyan secondary schools remained characterized by three major patterns: curricular rigidity, unequal resource distribution, and limited cultural representation. While the prescribed texts addressed important social themes, they did not adequately reflect the diversity of global cultural experiences necessary for robust intercultural competence development.

The findings contribute uniquely to the field by demonstrating that intercultural limitations in literature education are not solely pedagogical issues but are structurally embedded within curriculum policy, examination systems, and resource inequalities. Unlike previous studies that focused primarily on literary content or language outcomes, this finding connected literary access, curriculum regulation, and intercultural competence within under-resourced rural contexts. The findings therefore highlight the need for curriculum reform that expands literary diversity while simultaneously addressing structural inequalities affecting access to global literature in Kenyan secondary schools.

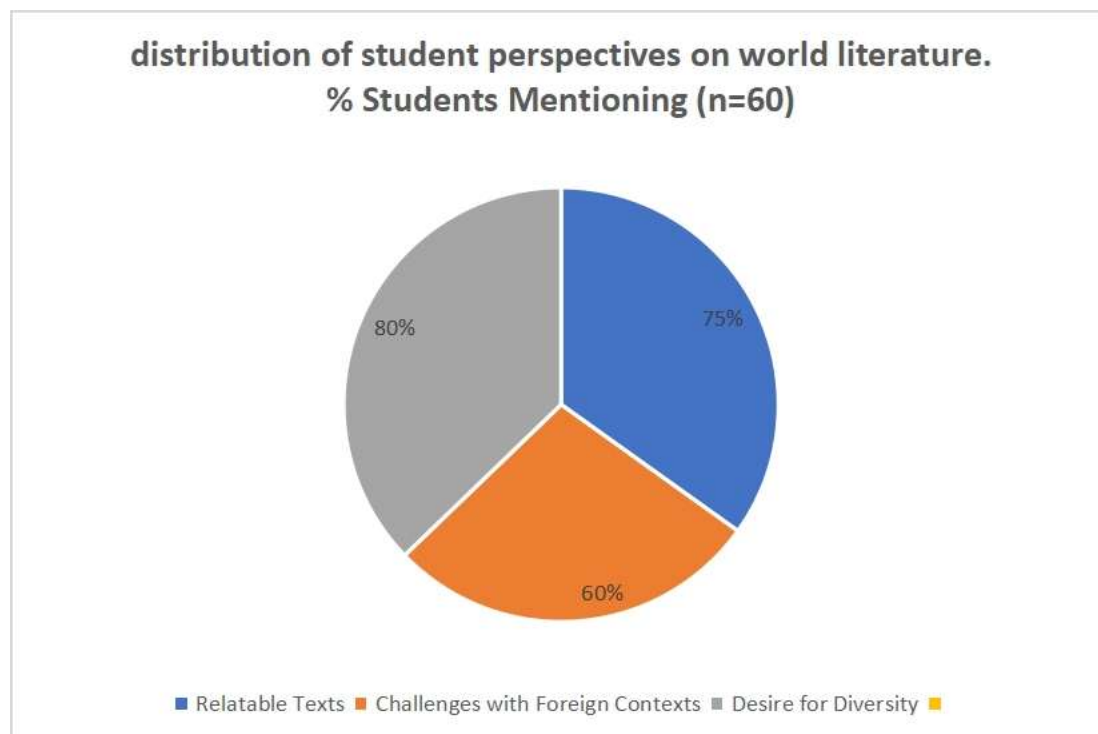
Students' Perspectives and Interpretations of World Literature and Its Influence on Intercultural Understanding and Global Awareness

This section presents findings on the second research question: How do students interpret world literature, and how does it influence their intercultural understanding and global awareness? The findings demonstrate that students' engagement with world literature was shaped by the cultural relevance of texts, pedagogical approaches used by teachers, and the extent to which literary content connected to students' lived experiences. The discussion further reveals that world literature had significant potential to foster intercultural awareness, although this potential was frequently constrained by examination-oriented teaching practices and limited textual diversity.

Table 4.3: Students' Perspectives on World Literature

Purpose: To show the distribution of student perspectives on world literature.

Perspective Theme	% Students Mentioning (n=60)
Relatable Texts	75%
Challenges with Foreign Contexts	60%
Desire for Diversity	80%



The findings revealed that students responded most positively to world literature texts when they identified parallels between the narratives and their own social realities. Approximately 75% (45/60) of students reported that texts such as *A Doll's House* became meaningful when discussions connected the themes to local experiences of gender inequality, family expectations, and social pressure. Students interpreted these texts not as distant foreign stories, but as mirrors through which they could critically reflect on issues within their own communities.

One Form Three female student explained:

“Reading *A Doll's House* made me think about women's struggles in my village. Nora's story feels like my aunt's life.”

This response demonstrates how intercultural learning occurred through processes of comparison and emotional identification. Although *A Doll's House* originated from a nineteenth-century Norwegian context, students localized its themes and connected them to contemporary Kenyan realities. From the perspective of intercultural competence theory, such interpretive engagement reflects the development of empathy and perspective-taking, both of which are central components of intercultural understanding. The findings therefore suggest that students developed intercultural awareness not simply by encountering foreign texts, but by recognizing shared human experiences across cultures.

The findings also support reader-response theory, which emphasizes that meaning is actively constructed by readers based on their personal and cultural experiences. Students interpreted literary texts through their own social contexts, thereby transforming foreign narratives into culturally meaningful learning experiences. This process challenges assumptions that students in rural Kenyan schools are unable to engage critically with texts from unfamiliar societies. Instead, the findings revealed that students actively negotiated meaning by drawing connections between global narratives and local realities.

However, the study also found that cultural distance sometimes limited comprehension and engagement. Approximately 60% (36/60) of students reported difficulties understanding texts rooted in unfamiliar historical or cultural contexts. *The Pearl*, for example, prompted discussions on greed, poverty, and materialism, but many students struggled to relate to its Mexican setting. One male student stated:

“The Pearl is hard to understand because I don’t know much about Mexican culture.”

This finding illustrates that exposure to foreign literature alone does not automatically produce intercultural competence. Without adequate contextualization, students may struggle to interpret unfamiliar cultural symbols, traditions, and historical experiences. Intercultural competence theory emphasizes the importance of cultural mediation in helping learners move beyond superficial understanding toward deeper cultural interpretation. In this study, students engaged more meaningfully with world literature when teachers provided contextual explanations, comparative examples, and opportunities for discussion.

The findings further revealed that students demonstrated strong curiosity about cultures beyond those represented in the prescribed syllabus. A significant majority, 80% (48/60), expressed a desire to read stories from regions such as Asia and Latin America. One student remarked:

“I want to read about Chinese or Japanese stories to learn how they think.”

This response is analytically important because it reflects students’ intrinsic motivation toward intercultural exploration. Rather than resisting unfamiliar cultures, students actively sought broader global exposure. Such curiosity aligns with intercultural competence frameworks that identify openness, curiosity, and willingness to engage with cultural difference as foundational attitudes for global citizenship. The findings therefore challenge deficit narratives that portray rural students as culturally isolated or uninterested in global issues. Instead, the study revealed that students possessed strong intercultural curiosity, but the curriculum provided limited opportunities to satisfy it.

Teachers similarly recognized that students became more engaged when literary discussions connected global themes to local concerns. Approximately 75% (9/12) of teachers observed higher levels of participation when comparative teaching approaches were used. One teacher explained:

“When we discussed *Blossoms of the Savannah* alongside *A Doll's House*, students saw similarities in cultural expectations for women.”

This finding highlights the pedagogical significance of comparative literary instruction. By juxtaposing African and Western texts, teachers enabled students to identify both cultural differences and shared social struggles. Such comparative engagement encouraged critical reflection rather than passive acceptance of cultural narratives. From a sociocultural learning perspective, classroom discussions functioned as dialogic spaces where students collaboratively negotiated cultural meanings and developed intercultural understanding.

Nevertheless, the study found that the transformative potential of world literature was significantly constrained by examination-oriented teaching practices. Approximately 83% (10/12) of teachers reported that pressure to prepare students for examinations limited opportunities for deeper cultural discussions. Literature lessons therefore focused heavily on plot summaries, character analysis, and predictable examination questions rather than intercultural interpretation or global reflection.

Department heads reinforced this concern. About 67% (4/6) emphasized that world literature possessed untapped potential to broaden students' perspectives, but this potential remained underutilized because of the exam-driven nature of the curriculum. One Head of Department observed:

"Students could learn so much about global issues, but we focus on exam questions instead of cultural themes."

This finding reveals a structural contradiction within literature education. While world literature theoretically offers opportunities for intercultural learning, institutional emphasis on examination performance narrows pedagogical priorities and reduces literature to examinable content. Consequently, intercultural competence development becomes secondary to academic assessment objectives.

Curriculum officers acknowledged similar implementation challenges. Although 67% (2/3) stated that the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) aimed to promote global awareness and critical thinking, they admitted that teachers often lacked sufficient training to facilitate intercultural literary discussions. One curriculum officer explained:

"Teachers need training to help students connect texts to global issues like migration or climate change."

This response suggests that curriculum reform alone is insufficient without corresponding investment in teacher preparation and pedagogical support. Intercultural competence requires teachers who can guide students in analyzing global issues, comparing cultural perspectives, and critically engaging with literary representations. The findings therefore indicate that teacher preparedness remains central to successful implementation of intercultural literary education.

Publishers and booksellers also identified examination culture as a major barrier to broader global literary exposure. Approximately 75% (3/4) observed that students rarely purchased non-syllabus literature because schools prioritized examination texts. One publisher noted:

"We could produce books that spark global awareness, but schools prioritize exam texts."

This finding demonstrates how market forces and curriculum structures mutually reinforced limited literary diversity. Because schools focused almost exclusively on prescribed texts, publishers had little incentive to invest in alternative global literature for secondary students. As a result, students' exposure to diverse cultural narratives remained constrained despite evident interest in broader world literature.

Overall, the findings demonstrated that world literature contributed meaningfully to intercultural understanding when students encountered relatable themes, culturally contextualized teaching, and opportunities for comparative discussion. Approximately 65% (39/60) of students reported that studying world literature improved their awareness of global issues and different cultural experiences. However, the study also revealed that intercultural learning remained uneven due to limited textual diversity, insufficient cultural contextualization, and examination-driven pedagogy.

The findings contribute uniquely to the field by demonstrating that students in rural Kenyan secondary schools were not passive recipients of literary knowledge but active interpreters who used world literature to negotiate local and global identities. Unlike previous studies that primarily measured literary appreciation or language outcomes, this research shows how intercultural competence emerged through students' emotional connections, comparative interpretations, and curiosity about unfamiliar cultures. At the same time, the findings reveal that institutional structures, including curriculum rigidity, teacher preparation gaps, and exam-oriented instruction, significantly shaped the extent to which world literature fostered meaningful global awareness.

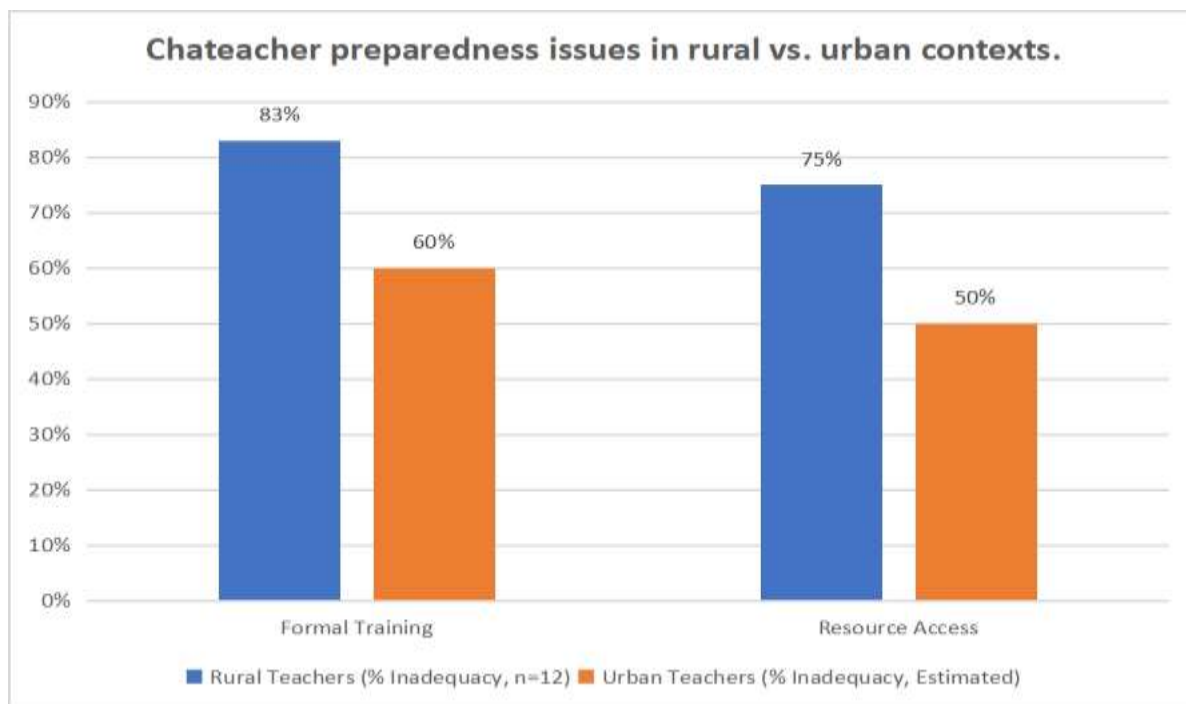
Preparedness of Secondary School Literature Teachers to Teach World Literature with a Focus on Intercultural Pedagogy

This section presents findings on the third research question: How prepared are secondary school literature teachers to teach world literature using intercultural pedagogical approaches? The findings revealed significant gaps in teacher preparedness, particularly in relation to intercultural pedagogy, cultural contextualization, and learner-centered literary engagement. Although many teachers demonstrated content knowledge of prescribed texts, the study found that most lacked formal preparation for facilitating intercultural discussions and global perspectives in literature classrooms.

Table 4.4: Teacher Preparedness in Rural and Urban Contexts

Purpose: To compare teacher preparedness issues in rural vs. urban contexts.

Preparedness Aspect	Rural Teachers (% Inadequacy, n=12)	Urban Teachers (% Inadequacy, Estimated)
Formal Training	83%	60%
Resource Access	75%	50%



The findings indicated that teacher preparedness for intercultural pedagogy was generally low, with teachers assigning themselves an average preparedness rating of 4 out of 10. Approximately 83% (10/12) of teachers reported that they had never received formal training in intercultural teaching approaches during their pre-service or in-service education. Consequently, most relied heavily on traditional and examination-oriented methods of literature instruction.

This finding is analytically significant because it demonstrates that intercultural competence development within literature classrooms depended not only on the availability of diverse texts but also on teachers' ability to mediate cultural understanding. Intercultural competence theory emphasizes the importance of guided reflection, cultural interpretation, and dialogic engagement in helping learners appreciate cultural diversity. However, where teachers lacked pedagogical preparation in these areas, literature instruction often became limited to factual recall, plot analysis, and examination preparation.

Students themselves recognized this pedagogical limitation. Although 65% (39/60) acknowledged that some teachers attempted to make literature meaningful by connecting texts to local experiences, many observed that lessons remained primarily exam-focused. One Form Four student stated:

“Our teacher explains *The Pearl* well, but it’s all about passing exams, not understanding other cultures.”

This response highlights a central tension identified throughout the study: literature classrooms possessed significant intercultural potential, yet institutional examination pressures narrowed instructional priorities. Students were therefore exposed to literary texts without consistently engaging in deeper cultural reflection or comparative analysis.

Teachers openly acknowledged their lack of preparation for intercultural literary instruction. Approximately 83% (10/12) admitted that they had not been trained to teach cultural themes or facilitate intercultural discussions. One teacher explained:

“I was never trained to teach cultural themes in literature. I follow the syllabus and hope students understand.”

This finding suggests that many teachers approached world literature with uncertainty and limited pedagogical confidence. Rather than functioning as facilitators of intercultural dialogue, teachers often positioned themselves as transmitters of examinable content. From a sociocultural learning perspective, this reduced opportunities for collaborative meaning-making and critical cultural inquiry within the classroom.

The study further revealed that teachers strongly desired professional development opportunities related to intercultural pedagogy. Nearly all teachers interviewed (92%, 11/12) expressed interest in workshops and training programs that could help them teach global literature more effectively. One teacher noted:

“I’d love workshops on how to teach global texts effectively.”

This finding demonstrates that the lack of intercultural pedagogy was not caused by teacher resistance or disinterest. Instead, it reflected structural gaps within teacher education and curriculum support systems. Teachers recognized the educational value of world literature but lacked the pedagogical tools necessary to maximize its intercultural potential.

Department heads unanimously emphasized the absence of specialized training programs focused on intercultural competence. All Heads of Department (100%, 6/6) observed that literature teachers were generally competent in teaching literary techniques such as plot, characterization, and thematic analysis, but struggled to guide students through broader cultural discussions. One Head of Department remarked:

“Our teachers are good at teaching plot and characters, but they struggle with cultural discussions because they weren’t trained for it.”

This finding reinforces the argument that conventional literature instruction in Kenyan secondary schools remains heavily text-centered and examination-oriented rather than culturally interpretive. The dominance of traditional literary analysis appeared to marginalize critical engagement with issues such as identity, migration, globalization, gender relations, and cultural diversity.

From a theoretical perspective, this limitation is important because intercultural pedagogy requires more than textual comprehension; it requires teachers to facilitate critical encounters with cultural difference. According to intercultural learning theory, effective intercultural education involves encouraging learners to question assumptions, compare cultural perspectives, and reflect on their own identities in relation to others. The findings revealed that many teachers lacked preparation in these dialogic and reflective teaching strategies.

Curriculum officers similarly acknowledged systemic shortcomings in teacher preparation. Approximately 67% (2/3) admitted that teacher training institutions continued to prioritize traditional instructional methods over intercultural approaches. One curriculum officer explained:

“We need to revise teacher training to include global literature and cultural teaching methods, but it’s not a priority yet.”

This response demonstrates that the challenge extended beyond individual teachers to broader institutional and policy frameworks. Although the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) emphasized global citizenship and critical thinking, teacher education programs had not fully adapted to these objectives. As a result, a disconnect existed between curriculum aspirations and classroom realities.

The findings also revealed disparities in access to teaching resources between rural and urban schools. Approximately 75% of rural teachers reported inadequate access to teaching materials, supplementary guides, and professional support resources, compared to an estimated 50% in urban schools. Rural teachers frequently relied on outdated textbooks, photocopied materials, and examination revision guides.

Booksellers and publishers confirmed this trend. Approximately 75% (3/4) observed that teachers primarily requested examination-oriented materials rather than resources designed to support intercultural teaching. One bookseller remarked:

“Teachers ask for exam guides, not resources on how to teach culture.”

This finding highlights how examination culture shaped not only classroom instruction but also the educational publishing market. Publishers prioritized revision materials because schools and teachers demanded resources that directly supported examination performance. Consequently, pedagogical materials encouraging intercultural dialogue, comparative literary analysis, or global thematic exploration remained scarce.

The findings therefore, found that teacher preparedness was constrained by three interconnected factors: inadequate professional training, limited pedagogical resources, and examination-oriented institutional structures. These constraints significantly reduced teachers’ ability to facilitate meaningful intercultural engagement with world literature texts. Although teachers recognized the value of intercultural learning, many lacked the confidence, institutional support, and methodological training necessary to move beyond conventional literary instruction.

Importantly, the findings revealed that teacher preparedness functioned as a critical mediating factor between curriculum content and students’ intercultural development. Even when globally relevant themes existed within prescribed texts, the absence of intercultural pedagogical skills limited opportunities for students to critically engage with issues such as cultural identity, globalization, social inequality, and cross-cultural understanding.

The findings contribute uniquely to the field by demonstrating that intercultural competence in literature education cannot be achieved through curriculum reform alone. While previous studies have focused primarily on literary content or student outcomes, this research highlights the central role of teacher preparedness in transforming world literature into a meaningful site of intercultural learning. The findings further show that in under-resourced rural contexts, teacher capacity, institutional priorities, and examination culture collectively shape the extent to which world literature promotes global awareness and intercultural understanding.

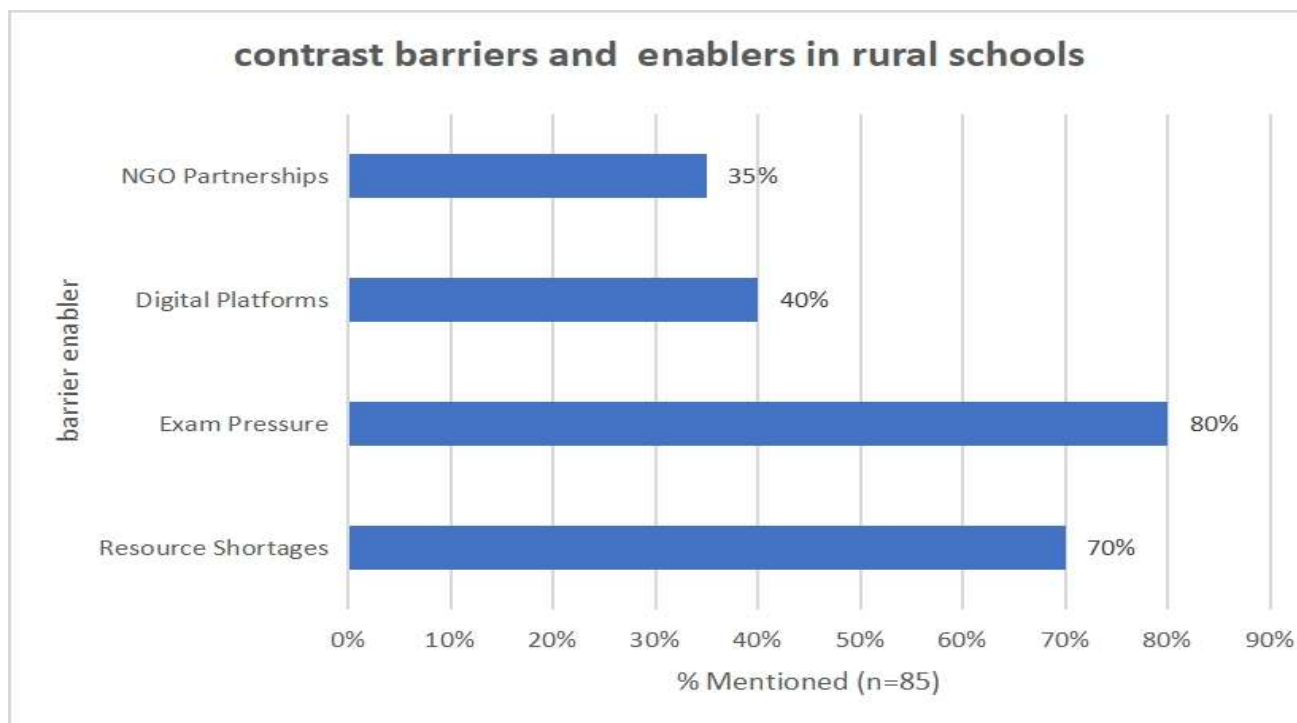
Key Barriers and Enablers to Implementing Effective World Literature Instruction in Rural and Under-Resourced School Environments

This section addresses the fourth research question: What barriers and enabling factors influence the effective implementation of world literature instruction in rural and under-resourced secondary schools? The findings revealed that the implementation of world literature in rural Kenyan schools was shaped by a complex interaction of structural, pedagogical, and institutional factors. While teachers and students demonstrated strong interest in intercultural literary learning, persistent inequalities in resources, examination pressures, and infrastructural limitations constrained effective implementation. At the same time, emerging digital platforms, community initiatives, and NGO partnerships provided important opportunities for expanding access to world literature.

Table 4.5: Barriers and Enablers to World Literature Instruction

Purpose: To contrast barriers and enablers in rural schools.

Barrier/Enabler	% Mentioned (n=85)
Resource Shortages	70%
Exam Pressure	80%
Digital Platforms	40%
NGO Partnerships	35%



The findings demonstrated that resource shortages constituted the most visible and immediate barrier to effective world literature instruction. Approximately 70% (60/85) of stakeholders identified inadequate access to literary texts, poorly stocked libraries, and insufficient teaching materials as major obstacles to intercultural literary education. In many schools, students shared limited copies of prescribed texts, reducing opportunities for independent reading, reflective engagement, and deeper cultural analysis.

Students consistently emphasized how resource scarcity affected their learning experiences. About 70% (42/60) reported difficulties accessing books both in school and at home. One Form Three student explained:

“We share one book among five students, and it’s hard to read at home.”

This statement reflects the broader structural inequalities affecting rural education in Kenya. From a sociocultural learning perspective, access to texts is essential because literature functions as a cultural tool through which learners encounter diverse worldviews and social experiences. Where access remained limited, opportunities for intercultural engagement and reflective learning were similarly constrained. The findings therefore suggest that intercultural competence development cannot be separated from material conditions of educational access.

Examination pressure emerged as the most frequently cited systemic barrier, mentioned by 80% (68/85) of participants. Teachers, department heads, and students consistently observed that the examination-oriented nature of secondary education narrowed literature instruction to predictable test preparation rather than intercultural exploration. Consequently, teachers prioritized examinable themes, literary techniques, and revision exercises at the expense of broader cultural discussions.

The dominance of examination culture reflects what critical pedagogy scholars describe as instrumental approaches to education, where learning is reduced to measurable outcomes rather than transformative intellectual engagement. In this study, literature was often treated as a subject for academic performance rather than as a space for intercultural dialogue and critical global reflection. This institutional orientation significantly limited the transformative potential of world literature.

Teachers particularly emphasized the combined effects of overcrowded classrooms and inadequate resources. Approximately 92% (11/12) identified large class sizes and textbook shortages as major obstacles to effective instruction. One teacher stated:

“With 50 students and only 10 books, it’s impossible to teach effectively.”

This finding highlights how structural conditions shaped pedagogical possibilities. Intercultural pedagogy typically requires discussion-based learning, collaborative interpretation, and individualized engagement with texts. However, overcrowded classrooms restricted teachers’ ability to facilitate meaningful literary discussions or support critical cultural analysis. The findings therefore demonstrate that pedagogical challenges in rural schools were deeply connected to broader educational inequalities rather than individual teacher limitations alone.

Despite these constraints, the study identified several enabling factors that supported world literature instruction. Approximately 50% (30/60) of students appreciated creative teaching methods such as dramatization, debates, and group discussions. One student noted:

“Our teacher acts out *A Doll’s House*, and it makes it fun to learn.”

This finding demonstrates that interactive pedagogies enhanced student engagement and cultural interpretation even in resource-constrained environments. Through dramatization and collaborative discussion, students became active participants in meaning-making processes rather than passive recipients of literary information. From a constructivist perspective, such participatory learning strategies enabled students to connect literary themes to their own lived experiences and cultural contexts.

Digital platforms also emerged as important enablers of access to world literature. Approximately 58% (7/12) of teachers identified platforms such as eKitabu as useful resources for accessing texts online. One teacher explained:

“eKitabu has helped us access some texts online.”

Similarly, 75% (3/4) of booksellers and publishers identified digital platforms such as Worldreader as promising opportunities for expanding literary access in rural schools. These findings indicate that technology has the potential to reduce geographical and economic barriers to literary resources. However, participants also emphasized that digital solutions remained unevenly accessible because many rural schools lacked reliable internet connectivity, adequate devices, and electricity infrastructure.

Department heads further identified systemic institutional constraints, including underfunded libraries and limited teacher autonomy. Approximately 83% (5/6) argued that schools lacked sufficient budgets to diversify literary resources or experiment with alternative texts. One Head of Department remarked:

“We could do more if we had a budget for books and freedom to choose texts.”

This finding reveals that curriculum centralization and financial limitations jointly restricted innovation in literature instruction. Teachers and schools remained heavily dependent on prescribed KICD texts because examination systems and funding structures discouraged curricular flexibility.

At the same time, some department heads highlighted community-based initiatives as valuable support mechanisms. Approximately 67% (4/6) identified community book clubs and reading programs as emerging enablers of literary engagement. These initiatives created informal spaces where students could encounter

additional texts, discuss literary themes, and strengthen reading cultures beyond the classroom. Such findings suggest that intercultural literary learning may be strengthened not only through formal curriculum reform but also through community participation and local educational partnerships.

Curriculum officers similarly acknowledged the unequal distribution of educational resources between rural and urban schools. All curriculum officers interviewed (100%, 3/3) recognized that rural schools required greater infrastructural support, particularly regarding libraries, internet access, and digital learning resources. One officer stated:

“Rural schools need more support for libraries and internet access to use digital texts.”

This response demonstrates institutional awareness of educational inequities but also highlights the slow pace of structural intervention. Although digital learning was increasingly promoted within the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), many rural schools lacked the infrastructure necessary to implement technology-supported literary instruction effectively.

NGO partnerships emerged as another important enabling factor. Approximately 67% (2/3) of curriculum officers and 35% (30/85) of stakeholders overall viewed partnerships with educational organizations as viable mechanisms for improving access to texts, teacher training, and reading programs. These findings suggest that collaboration between government institutions, NGOs, publishers, and schools could help address resource disparities affecting rural learners.

Publishers and booksellers reinforced the importance of affordability in improving literary access. All publishers and booksellers interviewed (100%, 4/4) noted that high textbook costs limited schools’ ability to purchase diverse world literature texts. One publisher suggested:

“If KICD approved more affordable global texts, rural schools could access them.”

This finding reveals how curriculum policy, publishing economics, and educational inequality intersected to shape literary access. Because schools focused on prescribed texts, publishers prioritized examination-oriented materials, thereby limiting investment in diverse or alternative global literature.

Overall, the findings revealed that barriers significantly outweighed enabling factors, with structural inequalities and examination pressures exerting the strongest influence on literature instruction. Resource shortages and exam-oriented teaching created conditions in which intercultural learning remained secondary to survival-oriented educational practices focused on academic performance. However, the findings also demonstrated that creative pedagogy, digital innovation, community initiatives, and institutional partnerships offered meaningful pathways for improving access and engagement.

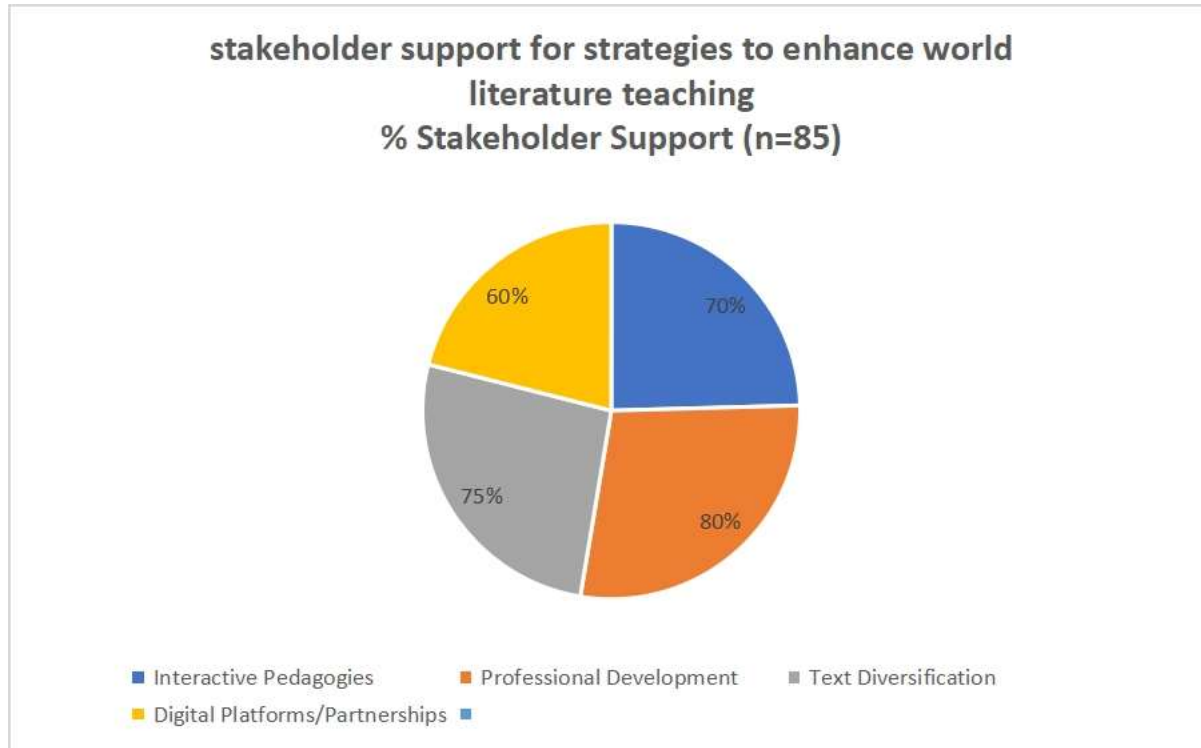
The study contributes uniquely to the field by showing that the challenges facing world literature instruction in rural Kenyan schools are not merely pedagogical but deeply structural. Unlike studies that focus solely on teacher practices or curriculum content, this research demonstrates how educational inequality, infrastructural limitations, and policy frameworks collectively shape students’ opportunities for intercultural learning. The findings therefore position intercultural literary education as both a pedagogical and social justice issue within under-resourced educational contexts.

Pedagogical Strategies and Policy Interventions to Enhance the Effective Integration of World Literature in Kenyan Secondary Schools

This section addresses the fifth research question: What pedagogical strategies and policy interventions can enhance the effective integration of world literature in Kenyan secondary schools? The findings revealed strong stakeholder support for reforms aimed at strengthening intercultural pedagogy, diversifying literary texts, and reducing the dominance of examination-oriented instruction. Participants emphasized that effective world literature instruction requires both classroom-level innovation and broader institutional transformation.

Table 4.6: Strategies and Interventions to Enhance World Literature Teaching

Strategy/Intervention	% Stakeholder Support (n=85)
Interactive Pedagogies	70%
Professional Development	80%
Text Diversification	75%
Digital Platforms/Partnerships	60%



The findings demonstrated that interactive and learner-centered pedagogies were widely viewed as effective approaches for enhancing student engagement with world literature. Approximately 70% (60/85) of stakeholders supported the use of strategies such as role-playing, debates, dramatization, and group discussions. Students particularly emphasized the value of participatory learning experiences in helping them understand literary themes and cultural perspectives.

A Form Four student explained:

“I understand Blossoms of the Savannah better when we act it out or discuss it in groups.”

This finding highlights the importance of dialogic and experiential learning within intercultural literary education. Interactive pedagogies encouraged students to move beyond memorization toward interpretation, empathy, and collaborative meaning-making. From a constructivist perspective, these approaches enabled learners to actively negotiate cultural understanding through discussion and performance rather than passively receiving information from teachers.

The findings further demonstrated that professional development for teachers was considered essential for strengthening intercultural pedagogy. Approximately 80% (68/85) of stakeholders identified workshops and specialized training as critical interventions. Teachers argued that many educators lacked the methodological skills necessary to facilitate comparative cultural discussions or connect literary texts to contemporary global issues. One teacher suggested:

“Training on how to compare global texts with local issues would help us teach better.”

This response reinforces earlier findings regarding teacher preparedness and indicates that professional development could significantly improve the quality of intercultural literary instruction. From an intercultural competence framework, teachers require not only literary knowledge but also the ability to guide reflective discussion, challenge stereotypes, and encourage critical engagement with cultural difference.

Teachers also advocated for greater curricular flexibility. Approximately 75% (9/12) recommended revising the syllabus to allow schools and teachers more autonomy in selecting culturally diverse texts. This recommendation reflected frustration with rigid examination requirements and limited literary representation.

Department heads similarly emphasized the need for policy reform. Approximately 83% (5/6) argued that the curriculum should include broader global representation and reduce the dominance of exam-centered instruction. One Head of Department remarked:

“KICD should approve texts from Asia, Latin America, and more African authors, and exams should test cultural understanding.”

This finding is analytically significant because it shifts the discussion from simple curriculum expansion toward deeper transformation of educational priorities. Participants were not merely requesting additional texts; they were advocating for a redefinition of literature education itself—from an examination-driven subject to a platform for intercultural understanding and global citizenship.

The findings also revealed strong support for revising the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) to emphasize intercultural competence more explicitly. Approximately 67% (2/3) of curriculum officers argued that current implementation guidelines lacked sufficient clarity regarding intercultural learning outcomes. One officer explained:

“We need a framework that encourages teachers to explore global themes, supported by training and resources.”

This response demonstrates recognition at policy level that curriculum goals and classroom realities remain insufficiently aligned. Although the CBC promotes critical thinking and global awareness, schools often lack the pedagogical guidance and institutional support necessary to translate these objectives into practice.

Publishers and booksellers highlighted the importance of affordable resources and culturally responsive teaching materials. Approximately 95% (3/4) recommended the production of low-cost editions and teacher guides containing intercultural teaching strategies. A bookseller observed:

“Digital libraries could make texts accessible to rural schools if the government invests in infrastructure.”

This finding reinforces the idea that educational technology and affordable publishing could significantly expand literary access in under-resourced contexts. However, participants consistently emphasized that digital innovation alone would not solve existing inequalities without parallel investment in internet connectivity, electricity, and teacher training.

The study further found that partnerships between schools, NGOs, publishers, and digital platforms could play an important role in strengthening world literature instruction. Approximately 60% (51/85) of stakeholders viewed digital platforms and educational partnerships as practical mechanisms for reducing resource gaps and improving access to culturally diverse texts. Such partnerships were particularly important for rural schools, where conventional textbook acquisition remained financially challenging.

Overall, the findings demonstrated that effective integration of world literature requires interconnected reforms at pedagogical, institutional, and policy levels. Interactive teaching methods enhanced student engagement and intercultural reflection, while teacher training emerged as central to improving instructional quality. At the policy level, stakeholders emphasized the need for curriculum diversification, reduced examination pressure, and greater support for digital and community-based learning initiatives.

The findings contribute uniquely to the field by demonstrating that successful intercultural literary education depends on the alignment of curriculum policy, teacher preparedness, pedagogical practice, and educational infrastructure. Unlike previous studies that treat literature teaching primarily as a classroom issue, this research shows that meaningful integration of world literature requires systemic educational reform, particularly in rural and under-resourced contexts. The findings therefore position world literature not simply as an academic subject, but as a critical pathway for fostering intercultural competence, global awareness, and educational equity in Kenyan secondary schools

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusion of the study, recommendations arising from the findings, and suggestions for further research. The study examined the role of world literature in fostering intercultural competence among students in Kenyan public secondary schools, particularly in rural and under-resourced contexts. The findings demonstrated that although world literature possesses significant potential to promote intercultural understanding and global awareness, its implementation remains constrained by curriculum rigidity, examination-oriented teaching, inadequate teacher preparation, and unequal access to educational resources.

Conclusion

The study concluded that world literature plays an important role in promoting intercultural competence among secondary school students by exposing them to diverse cultural experiences, social realities, and global perspectives. Students demonstrated the ability to connect literary themes to their lived experiences and showed strong curiosity about cultures beyond their immediate environments. Texts such as *A Doll's House* and *Blossoms of the Savannah* enabled students to reflect critically on issues such as gender roles, social inequality, and cultural expectations, thereby supporting the development of empathy, perspective-taking, and intercultural awareness.

However, the study also concluded that the range of world literature texts taught in Kenyan secondary schools remains limited and heavily dominated by Western canonical texts and a small number of African works. Non-Western and non-Anglophone voices were significantly underrepresented, limiting students' exposure to broader global cultural perspectives. This narrow literary representation constrained the development of more comprehensive intercultural competence.

The findings further revealed that students' engagement with world literature depended largely on the relevance of texts to local realities and the pedagogical approaches used by teachers. Where teachers connected literary themes to students' experiences through discussions, dramatization, and comparative analysis, students demonstrated higher levels of engagement and intercultural reflection. Conversely, examination-oriented instruction often reduced literature teaching to memorization and test preparation, limiting opportunities for deeper cultural interpretation.

The study also established that most literature teachers were insufficiently prepared to implement intercultural pedagogy effectively. Many teachers lacked formal training in teaching cultural themes, facilitating intercultural dialogue, or linking literary texts to contemporary global issues. Although teachers recognized the importance of intercultural learning, they often relied on traditional instructional approaches because of limited professional development opportunities and inadequate teaching resources.

Resource shortages emerged as a major barrier to effective world literature instruction, particularly in rural schools. Inadequate libraries, limited textbook availability, overcrowded classrooms, and poor digital infrastructure significantly constrained students' access to diverse literary materials. At the same time, examination pressures reinforced dependence on prescribed texts and discouraged experimentation with broader global literature.

Despite these challenges, the study identified several opportunities for strengthening world literature instruction in Kenyan secondary schools. Interactive pedagogies, digital learning platforms, NGO partnerships, community reading initiatives, and curriculum reforms were identified as practical strategies for enhancing literary diversity and intercultural engagement. Stakeholders strongly supported professional development for teachers, diversification of prescribed texts, and reforms aimed at reducing excessive examination orientation within literature education.

Overall, the study concluded that world literature can serve as a powerful tool for fostering intercultural competence and global awareness in Kenyan secondary schools, but its transformative potential can only be realized through systemic reforms addressing curriculum policy, teacher preparedness, educational inequality, and access to diverse literary resources.

The study contributes uniquely to the field by demonstrating that intercultural literary education in rural Kenyan schools is shaped not only by textual content and pedagogy but also by broader structural and institutional conditions. It therefore expands existing scholarship by linking intercultural competence, curriculum policy, teacher preparedness, and educational inequality within under-resourced educational contexts.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were made:

Recommendations to the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD)

1. The KICD should diversify the secondary school literature syllabus to include texts from a wider range of cultural and geographical contexts, including Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and additional African regions.
2. Curriculum review processes should prioritize intercultural competence and global awareness as core objectives of literature education.
3. Examination structures should be revised to assess critical thinking, cultural interpretation, and intercultural understanding rather than emphasizing rote memorization and predictable textual analysis.
4. Schools should be granted greater flexibility to incorporate supplementary world literature texts alongside prescribed materials.

Recommendations to Teacher Training Institutions and the Ministry of Education

1. Teacher education programs should incorporate intercultural pedagogy, global literature studies, and culturally responsive teaching methods into pre-service and in-service training.
2. The Ministry of Education should organize regular professional development workshops to equip literature teachers with strategies for facilitating intercultural discussions and comparative literary analysis.
3. Training programs should focus on helping teachers connect literary texts to contemporary global issues such as migration, climate change, gender equality, and globalization.
4. More specialized teaching guides should be developed to support intercultural approaches to literature instruction.

Recommendations to Schools and Teachers

1. Teachers should adopt learner-centered and interactive teaching approaches such as role-playing, debates, dramatization, storytelling, and group discussions to enhance student engagement with world literature.

2. Schools should establish reading clubs and intercultural discussion forums to encourage broader literary exploration beyond examination requirements.
3. Teachers should contextualize foreign literary texts by linking them to students' local experiences and cultural realities to improve comprehension and intercultural reflection.
4. Schools should encourage independent reading by providing students with access to supplementary world literature texts through libraries and digital platforms.

Recommendations on Educational Resources and Infrastructure

1. The government should increase funding for rural school libraries and ensure equitable distribution of literary resources across regions.
2. Investment in digital infrastructure, including internet connectivity and access to e-learning devices, should be prioritized in rural schools to support digital literary resources such as eKitabu and Worldreader.
3. Partnerships between schools, NGOs, publishers, and community organizations should be strengthened to improve access to affordable and culturally diverse literary texts.
4. Publishers should produce affordable editions of world literature texts and develop teaching resources that promote intercultural competence.

Suggestions for Further Research

The present study focused on rural public secondary schools in selected counties in Kenya. Further studies could therefore expand knowledge in the following areas:

1. A comparative study between rural and urban secondary schools on the teaching of world literature and intercultural competence development.
2. Research examining the effectiveness of specific intercultural pedagogical strategies, such as role-playing and digital storytelling, in literature classrooms.
3. A longitudinal study investigating how exposure to diverse world literature influences students' intercultural attitudes and global awareness over time.
4. Studies exploring the role of digital platforms and online literary resources in improving access to world literature in under-resourced schools.
5. Research examining how the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) can better integrate intercultural competence into literature education.
6. Further investigation into the perspectives of parents, policymakers, and community leaders regarding world literature and cultural education in Kenyan schools.
7. Studies focusing on the representation of African and non-Western voices in secondary school literature curricula across East Africa.
8. Research exploring the relationship between literature education, national identity, and global citizenship among secondary school students.

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