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Study on the Pathways of Cultural Embedding in Humanizing Education Under Malaysia's Multicultural Context: A Case Study of Tzu Chi Kindergarten and the Han Academy

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how cultural embedding supports the localization of humanizing education in Malaysia, a multicultural country facing challenges such as cultural identity conflicts and value differences. Using a qualitative, multiple-case comparison method, the research analyzes two culturally rooted institutions—one Buddhist-centered and one Confucian-centered. Findings show that both schools embed cultural values through tailored curricula, fostering students' identity and development. However, challenges remain, including weak policy support, limited teacher cultural literacy, and poor home-school collaboration. The study emphasizes the need for systematic support through curriculum standardization, teacher cultural training, and institutionalized home-school engagement. It concludes that culturally embedded educational practices are essential for advancing humanizing education in multicultural societies and proposes a "culture-practice management" three-layer embedding model as an integrated practical and theoretical framework. The findings underscore the broader impact of culturally grounded schooling in strengthening students' identity formation, promoting intercultural understanding, and contributing to social cohesion in diverse national contexts.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Humanizing Education, as an educational philosophy that focuses on individual value, respects cultural differences, and advocates social care, has received increasing attention in global educational reform in recent years, particularly in research on humanizing pedagogy and curriculum development that emphasizes inclusive, reflective, and equity-oriented practices (Soares et al., 2024). Especially in multicultural societies, how to achieve both cultural identity construction and holistic individual development through education has become a central concern in contemporary international education research, with scholars emphasizing the role of multicultural educational practices in fostering students' cultural identity, social inclusion, and overall engagement in learning environments (Lee et al., 2023; Porras, 2026). In the ongoing development of humanizing educational philosophy, multicultural education has become an important supporting path, emphasizing the promotion of social justice and individual dignity through cultural understanding and identity.

As a typical multicultural country, Malaysia has long existed under complex cultural tensions. Religious differences, language barriers, and ethnic policies intertwine, making the educational field a concentrated display of multicultural conflict and integration (Mariyah et al., 2022). Although the Malaysian government put forward a student-centered educational reform goal in the "2013–2025 Education Development Blueprint" (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013), the implementation of the humanizing education philosophy at the grassroots level remains insufficient due to the exam-oriented tendency and fragmented policy execution (Yu & Luen, 2025). This reality makes "cultural embedding" an important breakthrough for localizing humanizing education.

Existing research mainly focuses on policy-level discussions of Malaysian education reform (Mariyah et al., 2022). But generally has two deficiencies: first, most studies refer to Western experiences, ignoring the internal cultural complexity and particularity of non-Western societies. second, they lack systematic analysis of the micro mechanisms by which culture is concretely embedded in the educational process (Naz et al., 2024; Stein, 2020). Particularly at the levels of school curricula, teacher practice, and home–school relations, empirical research on how local educational institutions respond to cultural differences is still weak.

Based on this, this study selects Tzu Chi Kindergarten (Buddhist background) and the Han Academy (Confucian background) as typical cases, adopts qualitative research and multiple-case comparison methods, and deeply explores the pathways and mechanisms of cultural embedding in the localization process of humanizing education. These two institutions, as "marginal innovators" outside the policy system, have accumulated rich and unique practical experience in multicultural education exploration, with high representativeness and referential value.

This research centers around the main question: How does cultural embedding promote the development of humanizing education under Malaysia's multicultural background? Three sub-questions are derived: First, how have the two institutions effectively constructed humanizing education through Buddhist and Confucian cultures? Second, how does culture function in curriculum implementation, teacher-student interaction, and home-school collaboration? Third, in the face of multicultural social tension, how does cultural embedding respond to the challenges of ethnic integration and value integration?

On a theoretical basis, this paper draws on Banks's multicultural education theory and Bourdieu's cultural capital conversion theory, proposing "cultural embedding" as a procedural mechanism of cultural capital conversion, aiming to fill the gap in research on mechanisms of culture-education integration in non-Western contexts (Akcaoglu & Arsal,

2022). Through systematic case analysis of the two institutions, this paper not only provides empirical support for the localization and humanization of education under Malaysia's multicultural background, but also offers a reference model with universal significance for educational reform in multicultural societies globally (Verdeja Muñiz et al., 2020).

Literature Review and Theoretical Foundations

The Concept and Development of Humanizing Education

Humanizing education refers to an educational concept that centers on respecting individuals, stimulating potential, and promoting social care. Its development can be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s, during which Brazilian educator Paulo Freire advocated for "education as the practice of freedom" in his representative work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Reigota, 2020; Villares Nascimento et al., 2022). Freire emphasized that education should break the oppressive relationship between teachers and students and achieve mutual liberation between teachers and learners. He proposed dialogical education and critical consciousness, emphasizing that education should not only transmit knowledge but also stimulate learners' critical thinking and creativity.

Following Freire, humanizing education has continued to evolve globally. In the Asian context, particularly under Malaysia's multicultural background, humanizing education places more emphasis on the respect for cultural diversity and the pursuit of educational equity. According to Huda & Bakar (2024); Mohiuddin (2024) Malaysia's multicultural education must reflect social justice and cross-cultural understanding, ensuring that educational resources serve all ethnic groups fairly. Therefore, humanizing education in the Malaysian context should not only focus on individual development but also emphasize intercultural respect and localized practices.

Connotation and Types of Cultural Embedding

Cultural embedding refers to the process of integrating cultural elements into social systems, institutions, and practices to ensure that cultural characteristics can be reflected in specific social practices. Zair (2025) pointed out that culture is both shared and diverse, and embedding culture into social institutions can help maintain cultural identity while promoting cross-cultural understanding. In the field of education, cultural embedding specifically refers to integrating cultural characteristics, values, and educational concepts of different ethnic groups into the educational process to achieve cultural integration, transmission, and innovation.

From the perspective of educational practice, cultural embedding can be divided into three types: explicit embedding, implicit embedding, and mixed embedding (Akcaoglu & Arsal, 2022). Explicit embedding refers to directly incorporating cultural content into educational curriculum and activities; implicit embedding refers to embedding culture into daily educational concepts and behavior patterns; mixed embedding refers to flexibly adopting explicit and implicit methods in different educational contexts to ensure comprehensive cultural expression. In Malaysia's multicultural background, educational institutions need to adopt a mixed embedding strategy to balance educational fairness with cultural particularity.

The Connotation and Practical Significance of Educational Localization

Educational localization refers to the process of adjusting and transforming external educational concepts, systems, and practices based on local cultural backgrounds, social needs, and developmental goals to make them more suitable for local development (Kandiko Howson & Lall, 2020; Seife, 2020). In multicultural countries, educational localization is not

only an educational innovation but also a practical need for educational fairness and social harmony.

From a theoretical perspective, educational localization emphasizes integrating global advanced educational concepts with local cultural characteristics, forming a unique local educational model. In practice, educational localization requires schools, teachers, and policymakers to adjust curriculum content, teaching methods, and evaluation systems based on local cultural traditions and community needs (Li, 2025). For Malaysia, educational localization not only helps promote the national identity of different ethnic groups but also facilitates the construction of an educational system with multicultural characteristics, thereby enhancing social cohesion and national competitiveness.

Theoretical Framework of This Study

Based on the above literature review, this study constructs a theoretical framework from three dimensions: humanizing education, cultural embedding, and educational localization. Among them, the humanizing education theory provides the value orientation of this study, emphasizing that education should respect individual dignity and promote all-round development; cultural embedding theory provides the practical path, pointing out that multicultural integration is the key to constructing humanizing education; educational localization theory provides the contextual foundation, ensuring that humanizing education can find practical realization paths in Malaysia's multicultural society.

2. METHODS

2.1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, using the multiple case study method to conduct an in-depth analysis of the cultural embedding pathways of humanizing education in Malaysia's multicultural context. The multiple case study method helps researchers to compare and analyze different cases to reveal the similarities and differences in the implementation of cultural embedding in different educational institutions (Cleland et al., 2021). By selecting representative educational institutions as research objects, this study aims to deeply explore their experiences and strategies in humanizing education practice.

2.2 Research Subjects

The selected cases in this study include Tzu Chi Kindergarten and Han Academy. Tzu Chi Kindergarten is a well-known private kindergarten in Malaysia that adheres to the educational philosophy of compassion and emphasizes the integration of traditional Chinese culture and modern educational concepts. Han Academy is a private school committed to promoting Chinese language education and cultural transmission, with an educational model featuring multicultural integration. Both institutions have accumulated rich practical experiences in the implementation of humanizing education and cultural embedding, making them representative research subjects for this study.

2.3 Data Collection Methods

Data collection in this study mainly adopts the following three methods:

- 1) Semi-structured Interviews: Conduct interviews with school administrators, teachers, and parents to understand their views, experiences, and specific practices regarding humanizing education and cultural embedding. The interviews focus on exploring how the schools integrate cultural elements in daily educational practices and how they perceive the relationship between multiculturalism and humanizing education.

- 2) Field Observations: Conduct on-site observations of the daily teaching activities, classroom arrangements, and cultural activities of the schools to record the specific forms and characteristics of cultural embedding in practice. Observation emphasizes recording the actual behaviors of teachers and students in educational scenarios to supplement the interview data.
- 3) Document Analysis: Collect and analyze relevant school documents, such as school development plans, curriculum design documents, and cultural activity plans, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the schools' cultural embedding strategies.

2.4 Data Analysis Methods

This study uses thematic analysis to process the collected qualitative data (Byrne, 2022). Through coding, classification, and summarization of the interview, observation, and document data, this study extracts key themes related to cultural embedding and humanizing education. By comparing the two cases, the study identifies their common characteristics and unique experiences to form research conclusions with explanatory power.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 How Cultural Resources Are Transformed into Humanizing Education Concepts

In the context of multicultural education in Malaysia, the localization of humanizing education is not based on abstract concepts but grounded in tangible and perceptible cultural resources. Tzu Chi Kindergarten and Han Academy have respectively transformed the intellectual traditions of Buddhism and Confucianism into educational pathways that are practical, experiential, and comprehensible for children. This transformation process not only reflects the "activation" of cultural education but also provides humanizing education with a profound foundation.

3.1.1 Modern Translation of Buddhist Culture: Tzu Chi's Concept of "Compassion and Gratitude"

The Tzu Chi educational system emphasizes the core values of "compassion, gratitude, and respect for life," systematically transforming these Buddhist principles into concrete educational practices. At the linguistic level, profound Buddhist wisdom is translated into child-friendly expressions through the use of "Jing Si Aphorisms," such as "A calm heart brings coolness naturally" and "Speak good words, do good deeds." These simplified moral phrases function as daily self-reminders and emotional regulation tools for children, enabling them to internalize ethical reflection in accessible language. At the level of ritual behavior, traditional Buddhist ceremonies are adapted into educational activities, including parent-child tea appreciation, the Five Contemplations before meals, and expressions of "Gratitude to Parents" during the Buddha Bathing Festival. Through this transformation, religious rituals are reframed within contexts of family ethics and interpersonal gratitude, making spiritual values relevant to everyday life. Furthermore, mindfulness education integrates the Buddhist concept of "being present in the moment" into classroom practice through short exercises such as "one-minute mindfulness" and guided breathing, helping students cultivate self-awareness and emotional regulation. As a result, the sacred dimension of traditional religious culture is translated into the ordinariness of educational practice. By embedding cultural rituals into daily schooling, Tzu Chi education constructs harmonious relationships between children and themselves, others, and nature, thereby advancing the core aims of humanizing education, particularly emotional self-control and empathetic care.

3.1.2 Educational Construction of Confucian Culture: Han Academy’s Practice of “Benevolence, Righteousness, Propriety, Wisdom, and Trust”

Han Academy, rooted in Confucian thought, builds “benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trust” as the fundamental framework for moral character through the following strategies. First, the Behavioral Internalization Pathway utilizes morning bowing ceremonies, pre-meal gratitude rituals, and respectful teacher-student interactions to cultivate children’s moral habits through embodied practices. Second, the Linguistic Cognitive Pathway employs simplified versions of *Di Zi Gui* and adapted *Analects* texts for recitation, transforming Confucian philosophy into daily behavioral guidelines. Third, the Seasonal Curriculum integrates traditional cultural festivals (e.g., Winter Solstice, Qingming, Mid-Autumn Festival) into life education, creating an organic connection between cultural cognition, nature, time, and emotion. As a transformation outcome, Han Academy localizes the Confucian idea of “self-cultivation, family harmony, and governance” into children’s daily ethics, embedding humanizing education within children’s behavior and social awareness through norms and responsibilities.

3.1.3 Comparative Analysis: Three-Dimensional Transformation Model of Cultural Resources

The three-dimensional transformation process of cultural resources within the Tzu Chi (Buddhist culture) educational system is illustrated in **Figure 1**.



Figure1: Three-dimensional transformation model of cultural resources Tzu Chi (Buddhist Culture)

Culture is not merely external content to education but is actively educationalized. Through language, rituals, behaviors, and emotional management mechanisms, traditional cultural resources are activated into experiential, comprehensible, and replicable educational forms, thereby serving the localization of humanizing education.

3.2 Cultural Embedding in Teacher-Student Interaction, Curriculum, and Home-School Relationships

Cultural embedding is not only present in textbooks and curriculum structures but also deeply integrated into teacher identity, teaching interaction styles, home-school

collaboration mechanisms, and the construction of campus cultural atmosphere. This study found that although Tzu Chi and Han Academy differ in value systems and methodologies, both have systematic practices in constructing humanizing relationships through cultural frameworks.

3.2.1 Teachers' Cultural Roles and Educational Context Construction

Tzu Chi Teachers (e.g., Lin Huizhen) act more as companion-like guides, emphasizing listening and guidance in teaching, often using mindful language such as “May you be happy” and “You did very well” to stabilize children’s emotions and cultivate relational warmth and empathy. In contrast, Han Academy Teachers (e.g., Chen Zhicheng) tend to be moral guides or behavioral exemplars, emphasizing etiquette, respect for teachers, and role modeling during interactions, demonstrating that actions speak louder than words.

3.2.2 Cultural Ritualization in Curriculum and Festivals

Tzu Chi’s curriculum focuses on mindfulness rituals and emotional education, such as “One-minute Mindfulness” and “Gratitude Day,” while Han Academy’s curriculum centers around traditional seasonal customs and etiquette practices, such as “Seasonal Rhymes Class” and “Tea Appreciation Day.” Children’s engagement in these activities involves not only acquiring knowledge but also physically participating in cultural practices, experiencing emotional resonance, and developing a structured sense of cultural self.

3.2.3 Cultural Co-Education Mechanisms in Home-School Collaboration

Tzu Chi emphasizes emotional co-cultivation, organizing parent-child environmental workshops and family mindfulness days, extending family communication language through *Jing Si Aphorisms*, whereas Han Academy emphasizes cognitive collaboration, providing *Di Zi Gui* family recitation programs and parent lectures to strengthen consistency in family ethics.

3.3 Multicultural Governance and Dynamic Adjustment of Cultural Embedding

In multicultural societies, cultural embedding in education is not a static model but a dynamic process of governance and adjustment (Arphattananon, 2021). Tzu Chi Kindergarten and Han Academy demonstrate the following strategies for multicultural governance practices. First, De-religionization involves Tzu Chi renaming “Buddha Bathing Day” to “Gratitude Day” and using “Mindfulness Time” instead of “Meditation Time,” reducing explicit religious symbols and minimizing cultural exclusion risks (Bročić & Miles, 2021; Saada & Magadlah, 2021). Second, Symbolic Cultural Participation encourages participation of non-Buddhist and non-Chinese children in tea ceremonies and seasonal activities, emphasizing universal values such as gratitude, respect, and harmony to foster cross-cultural identity (Bročić & Miles, 2021; Chan & Benner, 2025). Third, Institutionalized Cultural Inclusion Policies are reflected in schools developing “Guidelines for Multicultural Festival Participation” and “Codes of Conduct for Multicultural Family Collaboration,” safeguarding respect and integration of various cultural customs and reflecting advanced concepts in inclusive educational governance (Ngadni & Shuang, 2024). Fourth, Continuous Feedback and Adjustment Mechanisms utilize parent meetings, teacher seminars, and cross-cultural training platforms to dynamically adjust educational content and forms, ensuring that educational practices meet the needs of diverse groups. Multicultural governance emphasizes both institutional guarantees and flexible adjustments, making educational cultural embedding an essential pathway for promoting social harmony and holistic child development. The practices of Tzu Chi and Han Academy exemplify how cultural education

can achieve a balance between cultural identity and inclusion through dynamic management in multicultural environments.

3.4 Management Practices in Cultural Embedding in Education

This study finds that cultural embedding cannot be realized solely through teachers' willingness or classroom unit settings but relies on systematic and organized educational management strategies (Ngadni & Shuang, 2024). Tzu Chi Kindergarten and Han Academy demonstrate organized deployment capabilities in curriculum design, teacher development, home-school coordination, and multicultural governance, forming an operational model that integrates culture, education, and management (Widyawati & Pariboko, 2025).

3.4.1 Curriculum Management: Institutionalized Daily Practice of Cultural Education

Both schools adopt a combination of structured and contextual approaches to effectively embed cultural resources into daily curriculum arrangements, normalizing humanizing education (Riley & Crawford-Garrett, 2022). Tzu Chi Kindergarten features "Jing Si Moments" and "Mindfulness Sessions," allocating 5 to 10 minutes daily for breathing, reflection, and emotional organization. Cultural festival courses are included in monthly plans, such as "Gratitude Day," "Tea Appreciation for Parents," and "Environmental Month," all planned one semester in advance by the curriculum team. Monthly themes are designed around Jing Si Aphorisms, with cross-class activities creating a unified rhythm of value-based practices (Riley & Crawford-Garrett, 2022).

Han Academy integrates seasonal culture with moral education by establishing "Twenty-Four Solar Terms Classes," such as making spring pancakes and reciting seasonal poems during the Beginning of Spring (Junmei, 2025). The school implements a "Three-Stage Curriculum Plan" (Classic Recitation—Behavioral Practice—Life Internalization) centered on Di Zi Gui, transforming cultural goals into measurable curriculum indicators (Junmei, 2025). Daily activities like morning reading, bowing ceremonies, and pre-meal gratitude phrases are institutionalized through unified schedule forms. Curriculum coordinators from both schools lead the planning, forming a four-layered framework of "Theme—Ritual—Activity—Reflection," deeply embedding cultural education into curricula and children's daily lives.

3.4.2 Teacher Management: Mechanisms for Developing Teachers' Cultural Literacy

Effective humanizing education depends on teachers' cultural understanding and emotional competence (Legette et al., 2022). Both schools have established culturally characteristic teacher training and support systems to unify concepts and practices. Tzu Chi implements "Jing Si Aphorism Teacher Guidance Workshops," where experienced instructors guide teachers in translating aphorisms into child-friendly language. Teachers participate monthly in mindfulness practice courses led by Tzu Chi volunteers, enhancing emotional regulation and mindful companionship skills. New teachers must complete a "Tzu Chi Cultural Adaptation Course" to deeply understand the non-religious framework of "Compassion—Gratitude—Altruism" education (Ciampa & Reisboard, 2024).

Han Academy conducts weekly "Role Modeling Workshops," where teaching teams observe exemplary teachers practicing "benevolence and propriety" in daily life. Teachers are required to join "Confucian Moral Education Reading Groups" to deepen their understanding of Confucian classics such as The Analects and The Doctrine of the Mean, enhancing cultural discernment. The school implements a "Mentorship System," where senior moral education teachers guide newcomers in acquiring cultural education strategies through practice. Both schools clearly position teachers as cultural transmitters and role models of human values,

building a system where cultural literacy and teaching skills grow in parallel through ongoing training, team learning, and practical guidance.

3.4.3 Home-School Relationship Coordination: Co-Education Mechanism for Cultural Identity

Without parental support, cultural embedding cannot be sustained. The management of both schools promotes home-school co-education and shared values through a series of activities and communication mechanisms. Tzu Chi regularly organizes “Parent-Child Gratitude Ceremonies,” such as Buddha Bathing Day tea appreciation and family environmental days, to enhance emotional resonance through family participation. The school introduced the Jing Si Parenting Handbook, translating Tzu Chi culture into accessible parenting suggestions, such as “Replace commands with loving words.” Each semester features “Spiritual Seminars,” where teachers share children’s mindfulness growth stories to enhance parental recognition of cultural education’s impact (Bierman & Sheridan, 2022; Goodall & Montgomery, 2023).

Han Academy requires parents to sign a “Home-School Cultural Consensus Letter,” pledging to continue etiquette and classic reading training at home. The school implements a “Parent-Child Reading Challenge Program,” encouraging families to read *Di Zi Gui* and seasonal stories together, supplemented by online feedback forms. A “Family Etiquette Consultation Hotline” is available to provide parents with cultural behavioral guidance, promoting consistent parenting. Through institutionalized home-school cooperation and emotional engagement, both schools extend cultural education beyond the campus, turning it into a family co-educational language and enhancing the continuity and influence of humanizing education (Goodall & Montgomery, 2023).

3.4.4 Multicultural Governance: Sensitive Management and Institutional Adjustment of Cultural Embedding

In Malaysia’s multi-ethnic, multi-religious context, cultural education without governance mechanisms can easily trigger identity conflicts (Bin Jamil et al., 2025). Both schools’ management adopts strategies such as inclusive language, symbolic adjustments, and activity restructuring to promote cultural integration in education. Tzu Chi implements de-religionization, renaming “Buddha’s Birthday” to “Gratitude Day” and “Meditation Time” to “Mindfulness Time,” maintaining educational neutrality. Through symbolic participation strategies, children from non-Buddhist families can participate in “Gratitude Tea Ceremonies” rather than “Buddha Bathing,” emphasizing humanistic spirit over religious rituals. The school developed “Guidelines for Multicultural Festival Participation,” clearly defining which activities have cultural value and are widely recognized by various ethnic groups (Hannam et al., 2020).

Han Academy emphasizes that “Confucianism is culture, not religion,” repeatedly clarifying during enrollment and parent meetings that the curriculum focuses on character education, not religious proselytization. The school incorporates Malay and Indian festival elements into activity weeks, such as storytelling during Deepavali and handicrafts during Hari Raya, demonstrating respect and integration. The school formulated the “Code of Conduct for Multicultural Family Collaboration,” allowing students to recite classics in their mother tongue with Chinese translations, enhancing cultural inclusiveness. Both schools’ administrators employ a triadic strategy of “Extracting Cultural Spirit, Weakening Religious Forms, and Replacing with Inclusive Discourse” to ensure that educational content maintains universal acceptance in a multicultural society, demonstrating advanced cultural governance capacity (Müller et al., 2025).

Theoretical Advancement and Model Construction

1. Summary of Major Findings

Through an in-depth analysis of two early childhood education institutions in Malaysia—Tzu Chi Kindergarten and Han Academy—this study reveals how cultural resources are transformed into concrete pathways for humanizing education through educational practices and institutional management. The main findings include: (1) the educational translation of traditional cultural value systems (Buddhism and Confucianism) into a de-religiousized form in children’s education; (2) at the level of educational practices, culture is embedded in curriculum content, teacher-student interactions, and home-school collaboration, generating affective, normative, and cognitive educational experiences; (3) at the level of organizational management, both institutions have established systematic institutional support to sustain and expand cultural education, demonstrating a three-level integration mechanism of “culture—education—management”.

2. Construction of the “Culturally Embedded Humanizing Education Management Model”

Based on the research findings, this study proposes the Culturally Embedded Humanizing Education Management Model, which consists of three levels and reflects the full process of transforming cultural resources into educational practices, with organizational systems ensuring their sustainable operation.

Level One: Cultural Value System

Centered on the core values of Buddhism (compassion, gratitude, mindfulness) and Confucianism (benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, integrity), this forms the value foundation of education, endowing education with cultural meaning and direction.

Level Two: Educational Practices

Cultural values are concretely manifested through curriculum design (e.g., Jing Si Aphorisms, seasonal education), interactional practices (e.g., tea-offering rituals, greeting rituals), and home-school collaboration (e.g., Mindfulness Family Day, collective reading of Standards for Being a Good Student and Child).

Level Three: Organizational Management System

As illustrated in **Figure 2**, institutional support includes teacher cultural training, curriculum evaluation indicators, and cultural communication platforms (e.g., lectures, parent meetings), ensuring the continuity, systematic nature, and adaptability of cultural practices.



Figure 2. culture–practice–management” three-layer practical model

These three levels form a dynamic cycle of “from ideas to actions, and from actions to institutionalization.” Culture is not merely a background but serves as the driving force and sustaining structure of educational actions.

3. Comparative Analysis and Integration of the Two Cases

Tzu Chi Kindergarten is rooted in Buddhist culture, emphasizing an emotional developmental pathway that begins with emotional regulation, progresses toward mindfulness cultivation, and ultimately leads to the development of compassion and gratitude. Its management system focuses on emotional support and ritual guidance as key mechanisms for nurturing these values. Han Academy, on the other hand, is based on Confucian values and emphasizes a normative developmental pathway in which children first internalize behavioral norms, then extend these norms into family ethics, and eventually cultivate a sense of social responsibility. Correspondingly, its management system prioritizes teacher role modeling and institutional regulations to reinforce ethical discipline and moral order. Although their cultural foundations and developmental pathways differ, both institutions share a common goal: to use culture as a formative tool for building humanized educational relationships, thereby establishing a logic in which culture serves as the driving force of character formation.

4. Reflections and Challenges: Cultural Limitations and Multicultural Adaptation

While cultural embedding provides a feasible pathway for localizing humanizing education, it also faces several challenges. One limitation lies in cultural selection, which may lead to the dominance of specific cultures and potentially exclude the identities of other cultural groups. In addition, difficulties in multicultural adaptation arise, especially in ethnically and religiously diverse societies, where cultural education must continuously maintain openness and inclusivity. Furthermore, disparities in teachers’ cultural literacy may result in distorted or superficial cultural practices, thereby weakening the intended depth and authenticity of cultural education.

Theoretical Response:

Culture, by influencing teachers’ educational philosophies, curriculum concepts, and views on child development, deeply penetrates the educational system. Based on empirical analysis, this study constructs the Culturally Embedded Humanizing Education Management Model, providing a practical framework for understanding educational localization in multicultural contexts and responding to the concrete realization of humanistic educational ideals in local educational practices.

5. Cross-Cultural Applicability and the Extension of Humanized Educational Philosophy

Although the “Culturally Embedded Humanized Education Management Model” proposed in this study is rooted in Buddhist and Confucian traditions and displays distinct characteristics of local cultural heritage, its core structure—namely the embedding of cultural value systems, the generation of educational practices, and the support of organizational management mechanisms—essentially reflects a universal logic of humanized education. This logic emphasizes that education should be grounded in the respect for human dignity, the development of human potential, and attention to individual emotional experiences, and that these principles can be realized through the activation of cultural resources.

In this sense, the model’s emphasis on “culture-driven human development” is not only applicable within Malaysia’s Confucian-Buddhist educational context but can also be

extended to multicultural settings worldwide. Representative alternative education systems in the West illustrate this point:

- (1) Waldorf Education emphasizes the holistic growth of the child, valuing artistic expression, free will, and spiritual development. This reflects a profound respect for the individual's inner world and aligns closely with this model's humanized philosophy of guiding educational practice through cultural values.
- (2) Montessori Education, through its "prepared environment" and mechanisms for child-led learning, respects the individual rhythm, autonomy, and inner development of children, thereby enacting a humanistic, child-centered educational spirit.
- (3) The Reggio Emilia Approach, through its "hundred languages" philosophy, diverse modes of expression, and co-constructed learning relationships, positions the child as an expressive and constructive subject, highlighting the active, emotional, and social dimensions of humanized education.

While these educational systems originate from different cultural traditions, they all embody a shared orientation toward humanized education: education is not merely the transmission of knowledge, but a holistic engagement with the person made possible through cultural empowerment and sustained developmental care. Therefore, the model proposed in this study not only carries local significance but also offers an analytical framework and theoretical foundation for exploring humanized education in culturally diverse global contexts.

4. CONCLUSION

This study, from the perspective of cultural embedding, explores the practical paths of humanizing education under Malaysia's multicultural context, using Tzu Chi Kindergarten and Han Academy as case studies. Through qualitative research and comparative analysis, it was found that the cultural embedding in humanizing education presents two main paths: the inheritance of traditional culture and the integration of multiculturalism. These two paths respectively highlight emotional identification and cognitive recognition, forming complementary models of cultural embedding.

On this basis, the study proposes practical suggestions for constructing humanizing education in multicultural contexts, including clarifying cultural orientation and educational objectives, building multidimensional cultural embedding mechanisms, strengthening the cultural leadership of teachers, encouraging student participation and identity construction, and promoting cultural dialogue and mutual learning. These suggestions not only provide references for the localization development of educational institutions in Malaysia but also have certain enlightenment significance for humanizing education in other multicultural societies.

However, this study also has several limitations. First, the research is based on two specific cases, which may not fully represent the diversity of educational institutions within Malaysia's multicultural landscape. Second, as a qualitative study relying primarily on interviews, observations, and document analysis, the findings may be influenced by contextual factors and researcher interpretation. Third, the study focuses mainly on institutional practices and management strategies, without conducting longitudinal tracking of students' long-term developmental outcomes. In the future, research can further expand the sample scope, conduct in-depth investigations across more types of educational institutions, incorporate mixed-method approaches, and explore the long-term impact of cultural embedding on students' personality development and social adaptability in order to develop more systematic theoretical and practical frameworks.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings and the proposed model, the cultural transformation of humanizing education requires coordinated efforts across institutional, professional, familial, and policy levels. Educational institutions should systematically develop local cultural resources into contextually meaningful curricula, such as heritage-based storytelling, seasonal programs, and ritual-informed learning activities, supported by structured planning tools that translate cultural values into practical teaching units while safeguarding inclusivity. Strengthening teachers' cultural literacy is equally essential through sustained professional development, intercultural training, and reflective practices that enable educators to transform abstract cultural principles into developmentally appropriate pedagogy. At the same time, schools should institutionalize home–school collaboration mechanisms by promoting parent participation in cultural activities, extending cultural learning into the home, and building a shared educational language that ensures continuity between school and family environments.

At the systemic level, education administrators and policymakers should provide structural support through dedicated funding, accreditation mechanisms, and inclusive multicultural education frameworks that balance cultural identity with social integration. Standardized evaluation tools, such as cultural behavior indicators and parent–school alignment assessments, should be incorporated into quality assurance systems to monitor the effectiveness and long-term impact of cultural embedding practices. Through integrated governance, professional capacity building, and collaborative family engagement, culturally embedded humanizing education can achieve greater sustainability, inclusivity, and social relevance in multicultural societies.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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