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FROM SELF TO OTHERS: CONTEXTUAL LEARNING AND STUDENTS' MULTICULTURAL PERSPECTIVE DEVELOPMENT IN ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstrak

Pendidikan multikultural membutuhkan lebih dari sekadar pengenalan konsep keberagaman; diperlukan proses pembelajaran yang membantu mahasiswa menafsirkan pengalaman hidup mereka secara reflektif. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) memfasilitasi perkembangan perspektif multikultural dalam satu mata kuliah Pendidikan Multikultural di perguruan tinggi Islam Indonesia. Dengan desain studi kasus kualitatif, lima kasus kaya informasi ditelusuri melalui jawaban UTS dan UAS, angket sebagai data pendukung, serta wawancara semi-terstruktur setelah perkuliahan. Analisis tematik refleksif dilakukan melalui pembacaan dalam kasus dan perbandingan lintas kasus. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa telah mengalami keberagaman sebelum perkuliahan, tetapi tidak selalu memaknainya sebagai pengalaman multikultural. Tugas kontekstual, refleksi, dan dialog membantu mereka menafsirkan kembali pengalaman tersebut dalam empat bentuk perkembangan yang terdiferensiasi: recognition, reconstruction, reinforcement, dan perspective broadening. Dari analisis kasus ini, penelitian mengusulkan From Self to Others sebagai kerangka analitis untuk memahami alur dari pengalaman hidup menuju pemaknaan multikultural reflektif dan respons pendidikan inklusif. Kerangka ini merupakan proposisi analitis yang kontekstual, bukan model yang telah divalidasi secara luas; temuan dibatasi oleh satu mata kuliah dan lima kasus.

Kata Kunci: Pembelajaran Kontekstual; Pendidikan Multikultural; Perkembangan Perspektif; Pengalaman Hidup; Pendidikan Tinggi Islam

Abstract

Multicultural education requires more than introducing concepts of diversity; it requires learning processes that help students interpret lived experience reflectively. This study explores how Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) facilitates the development of multicultural perspectives in a Multicultural Education course at an Indonesian Islamic higher education institution. Using a qualitative case study design, five information-rich cases were traced across midterm and final examination responses, a supporting questionnaire, and semi-structured follow-up interviews. Reflexive thematic analysis combined within-case reading with cross-case comparison. The findings show that students had encountered diversity before the course but

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did not always interpret those encounters as multicultural experiences. Contextual tasks, reflection, and classroom dialogue helped students reinterpret prior experience through four differentiated forms of perspective development: recognition, reconstruction, reinforcement, and perspective broadening. Emerging from the qualitative case analysis, the study proposes From Self to Others as an analytical framework for understanding movement from lived diversity toward reflective multicultural meaning-making and inclusive educational responses. The framework is a context-bound analytical proposition rather than a broadly validated model, and the findings are limited to one course and five information-rich cases.

Keywords: Contextual Learning; Multicultural Education; Perspective Development; Lived Experience; Islamic Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's higher-education classrooms bring together students from different ethnic, linguistic, regional, cultural, religious, and educational backgrounds. This diversity creates substantial opportunities for learning, but physical proximity to difference does not automatically produce reflective multicultural understanding. Multicultural education therefore concerns not only knowledge of pluralism but also the dispositions and interpretive capacities required for equitable participation in plural societies (Banks, 2019; Jayadi et al., 2022). Recent higher-education research shows that culturally diverse environments may still involve cautious engagement, unconscious othering, and uneven participation when diversity is not deliberately mediated through pedagogy (Markey et al., 2023). In Indonesian Islamic higher education, the central educational challenge is thus not simply whether students encounter diversity, but how a course enables them to recognize, interpret, and respond to diversity already embedded in their biographies and everyday social worlds.

The specific problem is that lived exposure may remain educationally inert. Students can inhabit multiethnic families, interreligious neighborhoods, multilingual communities, schools, or pesantren without identifying those experiences as multicultural learning or examining the assumptions attached to them. Conversely, a course may report positive attitudes after instruction without showing how earlier experiences were recalled, interpreted, questioned, reinforced, or revised. This distinction matters because multicultural perspective development cannot be inferred from exposure alone, and participation in a course does not by itself demonstrate a uniform transformation. What requires explanation is the meaning-making process through which ordinary experience becomes recognized as diversity, opened to reflection and dialogue, and connected to prospective educational action.

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Previous studies provide three important strands of knowledge. First, research on Indonesian multicultural education has identified values such as equality, cultural identity, social justice, tolerance, and religious moderation (Abidin & Murtadlo, 2020; Jayadi et al., 2022; Pardede, 2022; Priatna et al., 2019). Second, studies in Islamic higher education have documented course content, lecturers' strategies, students' perceptions, institutional implementation, identity negotiation, and cognitive-affective outcomes (Abduh et al., 2020; Arifin, 2025; Mashudi & Saleh, 2025; Nawangsih et al., 2022; Rohidin & Masitoh, 2025; Rokhmah et al., 2020; Shafa, 2022; Sibawaihi et al., 2025; Subandi & Sa'idy, 2025; Wahdaniya et al., 2026). Third, international scholarship on contextual, authentic, culturally responsive, and inclusive pedagogy demonstrates the value of connecting learning with students' identities and experiences, while transformative-learning research emphasizes critical reflection and discourse in possible changes of meaning (Aderibigbe et al., 2023; Bilic et al., 2025; Grund et al., 2024; Kumi-Yeboah & Amponsah, 2023; Mezirow, 2000; Pang et al., 2023; Xie & Ferguson, 2024). Taken together, these studies explain what multicultural education values, how it may be implemented, and which outcomes may be reported.

Nevertheless, three connected gaps remain. Empirically, previous scholarship more often identifies multicultural attitudes, values, strategies, or outcomes than traces how the same students reinterpret lived experiences of difference across a learning sequence. Theoretically, contextual learning and transformative learning are commonly invoked separately: the former explains connections between academic concepts and life contexts, whereas the latter explains reflection, dialogue, and possible revision of frames of reference; their relationship within multicultural learning remains insufficiently integrated. Methodologically, few qualitative studies follow individual meaning-making trajectories across multiple learning documents and interviews, including cases in which prior inclusive orientations are recognized, reinforced, or gradually broadened rather than dramatically changed. Consequently, existing scholarship explains multicultural content, pedagogical strategies, institutional practices, and reported outcomes more clearly than the micro-process through which students' lived diversity becomes recognized, reflectively examined, dialogically reconsidered, and connected to prospective educational action (Pevec-Zimmer et al., 2024; Türken et al., 2024; Ulbricht et al., 2024).

This study addresses those gaps through four linked contributions. It traces the same five information-rich cases across midterm and final examination responses, a post-course questionnaire, and follow-up interviews; integrates Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) with transformative learning as complementary explanations of

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contextual activation, reflection, and dialogue; compares development against each participant's prior position rather than assuming a single deficient starting point; and derives four empirically differentiated forms of perspective development—recognition, reconstruction, reinforcement, and perspective broadening. These forms are integrated in the From Self to Others framework, which is offered as a provisional, process-oriented analytical proposition rather than a validated causal model. The novelty therefore lies not in claiming that one course transformed every student, but in explaining how contextual multicultural learning may produce different forms of development through identifiable meaning-making processes.

Accordingly, this exploratory qualitative case study examines one semester of the Multicultural Education course in the Islamic Education Management Study Program, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, UIN Imam Bonjol Padang. It pursues three objectives: (1) to explain how students' prior experiences of diversity were activated through contextual assignments, reflection, and classroom dialogue; (2) to identify the differentiated forms of multicultural perspective development visible across five information-rich cases; and (3) to formulate a process-oriented analytical framework connecting lived diversity with prospective inclusive educational responses. The study asks: How did contextual learning make prior lived diversity available for reinterpretation? What forms of perspective development appeared across the cases? How were those forms connected to students' imagined responses as prospective educational managers?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Multicultural Education and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

In this study, multicultural education is understood to treat diversity as a pedagogical and equity concern rather than merely a demographic fact. Banks (2019) frames multicultural education around dimensions such as content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equitable pedagogy, and an empowering school culture. Indonesian scholarship similarly highlights unity in diversity, equality, cultural identity, social justice, and interaction (Jayadi et al., 2022). In Islamic education, these concerns are connected to curriculum, character formation, moderation, and the ethical responsibility to engage difference without reducing multiculturalism to celebratory slogans (Abidin & Murtadlo, 2020; Pardede, 2022; Priatna et al., 2019). Banks thus provides the substantive horizon of this study: the learning process should help students name difference, question assumptions, and imagine more equitable educational responses.

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Contextual and Transformative Learning

CTL explains how students' existing contexts can become active learning material. Johnson (2002) emphasizes meaningful connections between academic knowledge and prior experience, while contemporary higher-education studies show that contextual, authentic, and inclusive designs can connect learning with students' lives, identities, and future roles (Aderibigbe et al., 2023; Budiarto et al., 2025; Soicher et al., 2024). Culturally responsive pedagogy sharpens this point by insisting that experience is not neutral: cultural background, identity, and prior knowledge affect participation and meaning-making (Gay, 2018; Kumi-Yeboah & Amponsah, 2023; Xie & Ferguson, 2024). Simulated and structured field experiences have also been shown to support culturally responsive orientations among teacher candidates when experience is accompanied by deliberate pedagogical framing (Ghazarian et al., 2023). In this study, CTL therefore refers not simply to the use of familiar examples but to the deliberate conversion of students' biographies, local communities, schools, pesantren, and intergroup encounters into objects of academic interpretation.

Transformative learning clarifies what may happen after experience becomes an object of reflection. Mezirow (2000) places critical reflection and discourse at the center of changes in frames of reference. Pang et al. (2023) call for attention to evidence, process, and context when claims of transformation are made, while Grund et al. (2024) identify experience, reflection, social exchange, shifts in meaning, and shifts in action as interconnected phases across transformative-learning studies. Research with pre-service teachers similarly reports that guided engagement with cultural identity can produce different combinations of critical reflection, awareness, confidence, and uncertainty (Pevec-Zimmer et al., 2024; Ulbricht et al., 2024). The present study therefore uses transformative learning as a sensitizing perspective on meaning revision, not as a predetermined claim that all students must undergo the same transformation.

Conceptual Framework: From Self to Others

The three theoretical strands occupy different but complementary positions. Multicultural education specifies the substantive questions of difference, equity, prejudice, and participation; CTL explains how lived contexts are activated as learning resources; and transformative learning draws attention to reflection, dialogue, and possible revision of meaning. Their synthesis produces the conceptual pathway used to orient, but not predetermine, the analysis: lived experience becomes available through contextual learning; reflection makes prior interpretations examinable; dialogue places those interpretations in relation to other perspectives; and perspective development may then take different forms depending on each student's starting point. This pathway is

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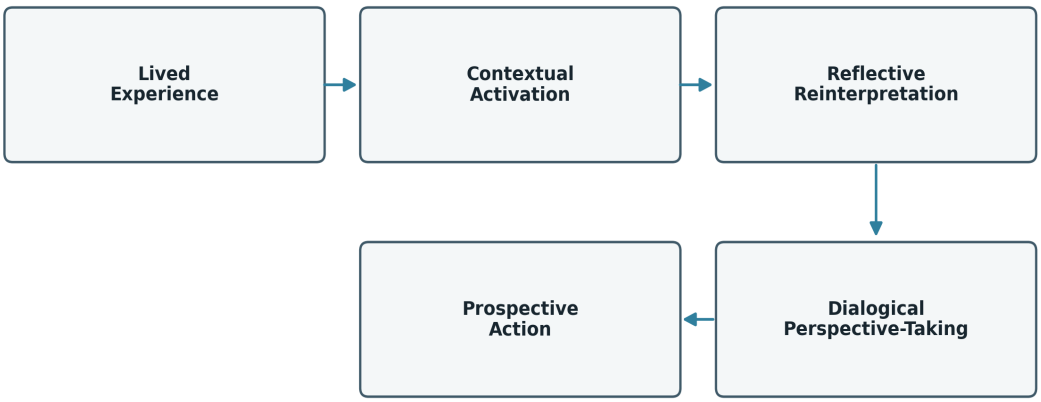
deliberately process-oriented. It does not presume that perspective development will always mean replacement of prior beliefs. Recognition, reinforcement, reconstruction, or broadening may all represent meaningful outcomes when interpreted against prior experience. Recent work showing movement from avoidance toward competence in discussing ethnicity, as well as research demonstrating that students may notice different forms of inclusive pedagogy unevenly, reinforces the need to examine developmental variation rather than assume a single outcome (Türken et al., 2024; Valdez & Kelp, 2023).

The synthesis also clarifies an important theoretical tension. CTL can explain why learning becomes meaningful when knowledge is connected with context, but it does not by itself specify whether a familiar context is interpreted critically. Transformative learning foregrounds reflection and discourse, but its vocabulary can overstate the evidence if every new insight is labeled transformation. Multicultural education provides a normative orientation toward equity and prejudice reduction, but normative goals should not be confused with empirically demonstrated change. Combining the three perspectives therefore requires restraint: context supplies material, reflection interrogates meaning, dialogue introduces alternative frames, and multicultural principles provide a substantive horizon, while the actual developmental form must remain open to empirical analysis. This distinction is reinforced by inclusive-pedagogy research showing that instructors may adopt inclusive practices unevenly and that students do not necessarily perceive those practices in the same way (Soicher et al., 2024; Valdez & Kelp, 2023). It is also consistent with teacher-education studies in which structured identity work raises awareness and confidence for some participants while leaving others uncertain about how to address complex diversity issues (Pevec-Zimmer et al., 2024). Figure 1 summarizes this conceptual pathway.

Figure 1. Conceptual Pathway Linking Lived Experience and Perspective Development



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Everyday Experience and Perspective Development

Empirical studies in Indonesian Islamic higher education demonstrate multiple routes for multicultural learning. Abduh et al. (2020) foreground students' voices on multicultural values; Nawangsih et al. (2022) examine course content, implementation, and internalization strategies; Rokhmah et al. (2020) document discussion, modeling, habituation, and context-sensitive materials; and Ihsan (2017) and Shafa (2022) examine tolerance and student perceptions. Recent institutional and classroom research further identifies equity pedagogy, lecturers' roles, identity negotiation, cognitive-affective enactment, and internalization of multicultural values (Arifin, 2025; Deiniatur & Hasanah, 2024; Mashudi & Saleh, 2025; Rohidin & Masitoh, 2025; Sibawaihi et al., 2025; Subandi & Sa'idy, 2025). These studies are empirically important, but their dominant units of analysis are programs, strategies, perceptions, or outcomes. They rarely trace how the same students' earlier experiences acquire new meanings through a sequence of contextual tasks, dialogue, and reflection.

International studies reinforce the need for this micro-process perspective. Markey et al. (2023) found that culturally diverse higher-education environments can involve apprehension, cautious engagement, and eventual shared acceptance rather than immediate intercultural integration. Bilic et al. (2025) show that culturally responsive and enabling pedagogies can create safety and belonging for refugee-background students when their experiences are actively recognized. In teacher education, Abdullahi et al. (2024) found that ethnicity can be framed as belonging mainly to 'others,' illustrating how difference may remain externalized even in professional preparation. Pevec-Zimmer et al. (2024), Ulbricht et al. (2024), and Türken et al. (2024) further show that structured engagement with ethnic-cultural identity can influence critical reflection, confidence, diversity beliefs, and teachers' willingness to address previously avoided topics. These findings support the present study's focus on how prior experience becomes consciously named, reinterpreted, or reinforced.

Accordingly, the analytical expectation is not a linear model of transformation but a sequence of opportunities for meaning-making. Students enter with different histories of intergroup contact, family identity, language, religion, schooling, and local community life. Contextual assignments make these histories available for recognition; conceptual reflection opens prior interpretations to examination; dialogue introduces alternative viewpoints; and subsequent reflection can connect new meanings with prospective educational action. The empirical analysis then asks what actually occurs within each case. The categories recognition, reconstruction, reinforcement, and perspective broadening were therefore not imposed as a priori stages; they were developed after

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cross-case comparison and are treated as differentiated forms of perspective development within this particular qualitative case.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used an exploratory qualitative case study design focused on one bounded educational setting: one semester of the Multicultural Education course in the Islamic Education Management Study Program, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, UIN Imam Bonjol Padang, West Sumatra, Indonesia (Creswell & Poth, 2024; Yin, 2018). The case boundary comprised the course, its contextual learning sequence, and the period covered by the four data sources. The course connected concepts of identity, stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, tolerance, dialogue, cooperation, and religious moderation with experiences in families, home regions, schools, pesantren, neighborhoods, and campus life. The design was exploratory because it sought to reconstruct meaning-making processes within a particular course context rather than test a causal intervention or estimate an effect.

The unit of analysis was the individual student trajectory within the bounded course case. Five students were purposively selected because complete evidence for each could be traced across midterm examination (UTS) responses, final examination (UAS) responses, a post-course questionnaire, and a semi-structured follow-up interview. The five cases were chosen for information-rich variation rather than statistical representation or demographic generalization (Malterud et al., 2016). Their contrasting starting positions included earlier limiting interreligious assumptions, extensive prior inclusive experience, familiar diversity that had not been consciously interpreted, and modest self-reported change. These contrasts allowed the analysis to examine evidence that did not fit a simple before-deficient/after-improved narrative.

Table 1. Profile of the Five Information-Rich Cases

Case	Prior multicultural exposure relevant to sampling	Analytical contrast	Data available
S1	Neighborhood and pesantren diversity commonly treated as ordinary	Recognition / broadening	UTS, UAS, questionnaire, interview
S2	Interreligious coexistence alongside childhood conflict and social distance	Reconstruction	UTS, UAS, questionnaire, interview

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S3	Multiethnic, multilingual family and diverse pesantren experience	Reinforcement	UTS, UAS, questionnaire, interview
S4	Long-term multiethnic and multireligious environment with occasional friction	Recognition / openness	UTS, UAS, questionnaire, interview
S5	Comparatively limited direct participation in diverse social relations	Gradual broadening	UTS, UAS, questionnaire, interview

Data were collected from four connected sources and examined chronologically where possible. UTS responses provided earlier contextual narratives of diversity; UAS responses documented later applications of multicultural concepts to educational and social issues; the post-course questionnaire supplied supporting descriptive information; and follow-up interviews clarified how participants retrospectively related earlier experience to later understanding. The interviews were conducted after the course and used five prompts concerning awareness of multicultural experience, influential materials or activities, change or reinforcement of prior views, reinterpretation of UTS experiences, and prospective responses to stereotypes, discrimination, or conflict. The questionnaire was not a pretest-posttest instrument and was used only to triangulate qualitative patterns, not to estimate effectiveness. All interview extracts were translated from Indonesian by the author with minimal grammatical smoothing, and direct identifiers were replaced by the codes S1-S5.

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis through six linked procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2021). First, all materials for each participant were read repeatedly and summarized in a within-case memo. Second, initial codes were generated for lived diversity, recognition, assumptions, reflection, dialogue, change, reinforcement, perspective-taking, and orientations toward educational action. Third, the codes were organized within each case to trace a meaning-making trajectory rather than isolated statements. Fourth, the five case summaries were compared in a cross-case matrix to identify convergent and divergent patterns. Fifth, candidate themes and developmental forms were reviewed against the original UTS, UAS, questionnaire, and interview materials, with special attention to disconfirming evidence. Sixth, the analysis integrated recurring processes across cases into the provisional From Self to Others framework. The categories were therefore developed after within-case and cross-case analysis rather than imposed as predetermined stages.

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Trustworthiness was addressed through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was strengthened through source triangulation and repeated comparison of interpretations with the original materials. Transferability was supported by specifying the institutional setting, course boundary, participant-selection logic, and case contrasts. Dependability was strengthened through a decision trail consisting of within-case memos, a cross-case matrix, code definitions, and theme-revision notes. Confirmability was addressed through attention to divergent evidence, including one participant who reported limited personal change and another whose inclusive orientation predated the course. Because the researcher was also the course lecturer, reflexive checks distinguished course expectations from empirically supported interpretations and avoided treating favorable questionnaire responses as proof of causal change.

Ethical considerations were addressed separately from analytic trustworthiness. The researcher had legitimate professional access to the course documents as the lecturer responsible for the course. After the course was completed, students received written information through the class WhatsApp group explaining that UTS, UAS, and questionnaire responses would be processed as research data, that identities would be anonymized, and that consent was unrelated to grades. Only data from students who provided explicit written consent were included. Separate consent was obtained from the five participants before the follow-up interviews. Participation or refusal had no academic consequences; direct identifiers were removed; the codes S1-S5 were used in analysis and reporting; and consent records were retained securely. No formal institutional ethics approval was obtained before the study, and no retrospective approval is claimed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The empirical dataset comprised four linked sources for each of the five participants: UTS and UAS responses, a post-course questionnaire, and a follow-up interview. Cross-source comparison showed that all five participants had experienced social, cultural, linguistic, ethnic, or religious diversity before taking the course, but differed in how consciously they interpreted those experiences and in the kind of development they later reported. The evidence yielded four case-linked patterns: recognition in S1 and S4, reconstruction in S2, reinforcement in S3, and perspective broadening in S5. Table 1 presents the participants' prior exposure and complete data availability, while Table 2 maps the main empirical contrasts across sources.

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Recognition and Reconstruction of Prior Assumptions

The clearest form of recognition appeared in S1 and S4. S1 made the shift explicit: "I used to think it was just an ordinary experience. After taking this course, I realized that living with people of different ethnicities, cultures, habits, or ways of thinking is also a multicultural experience" (S1, follow-up interview; translated by the author). S4 described a parallel realization, explaining that before the course the participant "didn't know that experiences at school or in the surrounding environment were multicultural experiences" (S4, follow-up interview; translated by the author). Classroom discussion further strengthened this recognition; S4 said that hearing classmates' different views helped the participant become "more open and not quick to judge people" (S4, follow-up interview; translated by the author). The UTS was important because it required students to identify concrete diversity in hometowns, schools, families, or pesantren and to describe harmony, friction, traditions, and interaction. In these cases, contextual learning first worked by making the familiar visible and analytically meaningful.

S2 displayed the strongest evidence of reconstruction. Before the course, the participant's experience of interreligious relations included childhood quarrels in which children attacked one another's beliefs, even though adults and religious teachers generally maintained harmonious relations. Looking back, S2 stated, "I used to think that people of a different religion could not really get along because we were different" (S2, follow-up interview; translated by the author). The participant then contrasted that earlier assumption with a later relationship: "After studying multiculturalism, my friendship with my non-Muslim friend became much closer and stronger even though we were different" (S2, follow-up interview; translated by the author). The empirical basis for reconstruction was therefore not merely the addition of tolerance vocabulary, but an explicit comparison between an earlier limiting interpretation and a later, more open account of interreligious closeness.

Reinforcement and Perspective Broadening

S3 and S5 illustrate two trajectories that caution against treating development as dramatic change. S3 had already developed an inclusive orientation through extensive multiethnic, multilingual, family, migration, and pesantren experiences. The participant explained, "It actually strengthened my view. Before, I did not pay much attention to the differences, but now I understand them and respect them more" (S3, follow-up interview; translated by the author). This was categorized as reinforcement because an inclusive orientation already existed and was given clearer conceptual structure. S5, by contrast, resisted a dramatic change narrative: "Maybe it did not feel very noticeable for me personally because I was not very socially involved, but multicultural education

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influenced me and opened up many of my views about differences in my environment" (S5, follow-up interview; translated by the author). This gradual expansion, rather than a reversal of prior beliefs, was categorized as perspective broadening.

Table 2. Cross-Case Map of Prior Experience and Perspective Development

Case	Prior Multicultural Experience	Main Contextual Mechanism	Observed Development
S1	Diversity in neighborhood and pesantren was experienced but treated as ordinary.	Class discussion and reinterpretation of everyday experience.	Recognition and broadening: difference extends beyond ethnicity/religion to habits and ways of thinking.
S2	Cross-religious relations coexisted with childhood religious insults and social distance.	Re-reading conflict and interreligious relations through multicultural concepts.	Reconstruction: greater openness and closer friendship with a non-Muslim peer.
S3	Strong multiethnic, multilingual family and pesantren experience; generally positive orientation.	Conceptual clarification of already-rich lived experience.	Reinforcement: an existing inclusive orientation becomes more conscious and respectful.
S4	Long-term life in a multiethnic and multireligious environment, with occasional friction.	Class dialogue and hearing different peer perspectives.	Recognition and openness: greater awareness and less rapid judgment.
S5	Direct participation in diverse social interaction was relatively limited.	Interreligious material and exposure to alternative viewpoints.	Gradual broadening: wider perspectives without dramatic self-reported change.

Contextual Tasks, Dialogue, and Prospective Action

Contextual assignments were the first major pedagogical mechanism connecting these trajectories. The UTS did not ask students merely to reproduce definitions; it asked them to turn family histories, school experiences, local community relations, pesantren life, and regional traditions into objects of analysis. S2 revisited an interreligious conflict

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from childhood, S3 reconsidered a cross-ethnic family history and multilingual life, and S1, S4, and S5 examined diversity in neighborhoods and educational settings. By the UAS, the participants connected those experiences with tolerance, equality, dialogue, cooperation, moderation, gender equality, and non-discrimination. The same personal history could therefore be narrated with a more explicit multicultural vocabulary later in the learning sequence.

Classroom dialogue constituted a second mechanism. S1 and S4 identified discussion as influential because it brought personal experience into contact with peers' experiences and viewpoints. S1 explained, "What influenced me most was the class discussion. I learned that everyone has a different background, so their ways of thinking are not the same. I became more open and not quick to judge people" (S1, follow-up interview; translated by the author). S4 similarly emphasized that discussion mattered "because we could hear classmates' different opinions" and learn to be more open (S4, follow-up interview; translated by the author). S3 also noted that differences previously regarded with relative indifference, including language practices in pesantren, became more visible when compared with other students' stories. The evidence suggests that dialogue did not simply add more examples of diversity; it introduced interpretive alternatives through which students could reconsider what their own experiences meant.

The questionnaire provided descriptive support but was not used as quantitative evidence of effectiveness. All five cases rated the course's influence on their views of diversity as very substantial. Four reported wanting to learn more about multicultural issues after the course, and one emphasized interest in the realities of diversity. Responses were also broadly consistent with cultural respect, cross-background friendship, avoidance of stereotypes, and ethnic-racial equality. These patterns triangulate the qualitative interpretation, but they do not establish a pretest-posttest effect and are not used to claim causal transformation.

The UAS and interviews connected perspective development with imagined professional action. S1 made this orientation concrete: "I would try to be a mediator, listen to all sides first, and then invite them to talk calmly so the problem could be resolved without blaming one another" (S1, follow-up interview; translated by the author). S2 emphasized creating a safe and fair educational setting and listening impartially before deciding. S3 framed professional responsibility as beginning with the self before moving to practice. S4 preferred collective dialogue so that no party would feel excluded. S5 added a distinctive concern with participation, proposing that educational managers should give opportunities to people who usually remain silent: "Give a chance to people who feel like mere supporting figures, who usually just follow what others say, to

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contribute their own thinking" (S5, follow-up interview; translated by the author). The cases therefore moved from talking about difference toward imagining how prospective educational managers might respond to stereotypes, discrimination, or conflict.

Cross-Case Synthesis and Empirical Derivation of the Framework

Across the five cases, four differentiated forms of perspective development were identified. Recognition referred to explicitly naming the multicultural significance of familiar experience that had previously been taken for granted (S1 and S4). Reconstruction referred to reconsidering an earlier limiting interpretation (S2). Reinforcement referred to greater conceptual clarity within an inclusive orientation that predated the course (S3). Perspective broadening referred to considering a wider range of viewpoints without reporting a dramatic personal change (S5). These categories summarize patterns repeatedly observed in the cross-source matrix; they are not proposed as universal stages or as a scale of better and worse outcomes.

The From Self to Others framework was derived through a second empirical integration. After the four developmental forms had been identified, the cross-case matrix was re-examined for recurring processes that preceded or accompanied them. Five processes appeared across the cases in different combinations: prior lived diversity, activation of experience through contextual tasks, reflection on earlier meanings, encounter with alternative perspectives through dialogue, and orientation toward an inclusive educational response. The framework organizes these observed relations within this course case. It is therefore a provisional analytical proposition generated from the data, not an experimentally tested sequence or a causal model. Table 3 summarizes the four differentiated forms.

Table 3. Four Differentiated Forms of Contextual Learning Outcomes

Outcome form	Typical prior condition	Meaning-making process	Empirical indication
Recognition	Diversity experienced but taken for granted.	Naming and conceptualizing everyday difference.	S1 and S4 newly recognize ordinary experiences as multicultural.
Reconstruction	Prior experience includes distance, conflict, or limiting assumptions.	Re-examining earlier judgments through concepts and alternative perspectives.	S2 revises assumptions about closeness across religious difference.

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Reinforcement	Inclusive orientation and rich multicultural experience already exist.	Giving conceptual structure and stronger attention to existing attitudes.	S3 reports that the course mainly strengthens prior understanding.
Broadening	Direct experience is relatively limited or change is not dramatic.	Expanding the range of viewpoints considered.	S5 reports wider perspectives despite limited perceived personal change.

Discussion

Contextual Learning and Perspective Transformation

The study produced three main findings. First, prior exposure to diversity became educationally consequential only when students recognized and interpreted it through contextual tasks. Second, reflection and dialogue supported different trajectories rather than a uniform transformation: recognition, reconstruction, reinforcement, and perspective broadening. Third, students connected these developments with prospective educational responses such as mediation, fair listening, inclusive participation, and non-discrimination. Together, these findings explain multicultural perspective development as a differentiated meaning-making process shaped by students' starting positions and by how lived experience is pedagogically activated.

The first contribution concerns the relationship between lived diversity and contextual learning. CTL is commonly described as connecting academic content with real-life contexts (Johnson, 2002). The present cases refine this formulation by showing a reverse movement as well: real life was brought into the classroom so that its meanings could be examined. S1 and S4 had substantial exposure to diversity, yet exposure became pedagogically consequential only when ordinary experience was named and analyzed. This distinction between lived diversity and recognized diversity resonates with culturally responsive pedagogy, which treats students' cultural knowledge and identities as resources for learning (Gay, 2018), and with recent higher-education studies showing that culturally responsive practice requires deliberate recognition of different cultural experiences rather than simply placing diverse students in the same setting (Bilic et al., 2025; Markey et al., 2023; Xie & Ferguson, 2024). The study therefore extends CTL by specifying recognition as a possible outcome when familiar experience has previously remained underinterpreted.

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The second contribution is to conceptualize contextual assessment as a meaning-making mechanism. The UTS functioned not only as evaluation but as a structured invitation to reorganize everyday experience as analyzable material. This interpretation aligns with work showing that authentic and simulated experiences can support culturally responsive development when learners are required to connect situations with concepts and self-reflection (Ghazarian et al., 2023; Pevec-Zimmer et al., 2024). It also helps explain why contextuality should not be reduced to adding local examples. In this study, the task asked students to identify actors, places, tensions, forms of mediation, and local traditions in their own histories. The pedagogical move was from experience-as-background to experience-as-object-of-inquiry. That move supplies a more precise mechanism for the broad CTL claim that meaningful connections support learning.

The third contribution concerns dialogue as the bridge from self-experience to perspective-taking. Transformative learning emphasizes reflection and discourse in reconsidering frames of reference (Mezirow, 2000), but the cases suggest that dialogue can have a more modest and differentiated function before any major revision occurs. For S1 and S4, hearing peers did not overturn prior beliefs; it widened the categories through which difference was understood and reduced rapid judgment. For S2, alternative perspectives were more closely connected with reconstruction of a prior assumption about interreligious closeness. These patterns are consistent with research in which guided engagement with ethnicity and culture moves educators from avoidance toward greater willingness and competence without implying identical change for everyone (Türken et al., 2024; Ulbricht et al., 2024). Thus, dialogue is better understood here as an opportunity structure for perspective development than as proof that transformation has occurred.

From Self to Others as an Empirically Grounded Framework

The fourth contribution is the differentiation of perspective development. A dramatic transformation narrative would have misrepresented S3, whose inclusive orientation predated the course, and S5, who explicitly described only limited personal change. Recent transformative-learning scholarship similarly cautions that change must be evaluated relative to context, evidence, and starting position (Grund et al., 2024; Pang et al., 2023). The four forms identified here therefore refine rather than reject transformative-learning theory. Reconstruction most closely resembles revision of a limiting frame of reference; recognition describes newly naming the multicultural significance of familiar experience; reinforcement captures increased conceptual clarity in a prior inclusive orientation; and broadening captures an expanded range of

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perspectives without a clear reversal. This differentiated reading prevents the common methodological error of equating successful learning with uniform attitudinal change.

This differentiation also changes how the From Self to Others metaphor should be interpreted. 'Self' does not denote a deficient or ethnocentric beginning, and 'others' does not imply an endpoint in which difference disappears. Rather, the phrase names a movement in the object of attention: experience initially narrated from one's own location becomes available for comparison with the meanings, histories, and positions of other people. For S3, this movement mainly strengthened attentiveness within an already inclusive orientation; for S2, it challenged a prior assumption; for S1 and S4, it provided conceptual recognition; and for S5, it widened the range of perspectives considered. This is closer to a differentiated account of perspective development than to a universal sequence of transformative stages. It also responds to Abdullahi et al. (2024), whose study of teacher education shows the risk of framing ethnicity as something that belongs mainly to 'others.' In the present cases, contextualization began by locating diversity within students' own biographies, thereby making reflection on otherness inseparable from reflection on the self.

Pedagogical Implications for Multicultural Education

Within Indonesian Islamic higher education, the study complements literature that already documents course strategies, student perceptions, religious moderation, identity negotiation, and institutional implementation (Abduh et al., 2020; Arifin, 2025; Mashudi & Saleh, 2025; Nawangsih et al., 2022; Sibawaihi et al., 2025; Subandi & Sa'idy, 2025). Its additional contribution is methodological and processual: it follows the same students across several sources to ask how prior experience changes meaning. This micro-level approach also connects Indonesian scholarship with international work on inclusive higher education, which increasingly emphasizes student experience, belonging, and the need to make inclusion visible in course design and teaching practice (Soicher et al., 2024; Valdez & Kelp, 2023). In an Islamic Education Management program, the movement toward educational agency is especially relevant because future managers will make decisions about participation, communication, conflict, and fairness in heterogeneous educational communities.

The movement toward professional response should nevertheless be interpreted as prospective agency rather than observed professional behavior. Students imagined mediation, fair listening, inclusive participation, and non-discrimination, but they had not yet been observed making such decisions in professional settings. This distinction matters because inclusive pedagogy involves not only endorsing values but enacting them through concrete course, classroom, and institutional practices (Soicher et al., 2024;

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Valdez & Kelp, 2023). Research with refugee-background university students similarly illustrates that safety, belonging, and recognition arise from sustained pedagogical enactment rather than abstract declarations of inclusion (Bilic et al., 2025). The present study therefore extends the analysis only to educational agency as articulated intention. A next research step would be to examine whether these intentions persist during internships, school leadership experiences, or later professional practice, and whether contextual reflection equips graduates to navigate actual conflicts involving competing rights, institutional rules, and unequal power relations.

The resulting From Self to Others analytical framework can therefore be represented as: lived diversity -> contextual activation -> reflective reinterpretation -> dialogical perspective-taking -> differentiated perspective development -> inclusive educational response. This formulation differs from a causal model in two respects. First, it describes relations reconstructed from five qualitative cases rather than effects validated through experimental comparison. Second, it allows the differentiated stage to contain recognition, reconstruction, reinforcement, or broadening, separately or in combination. The framework's theoretical value is therefore heuristic: it links CTL's activation of context with transformative learning's concern for reflection and dialogue while preserving the empirical possibility that students begin from different positions and develop in different ways. The framework should be tested, challenged, and refined through future studies in other courses and institutions.

Seen in this way, the framework contributes less by proposing a new universal stage theory than by offering a set of process questions for multicultural pedagogy: What lived diversity does a learner bring? How is that experience activated in a task? Which assumptions become objects of reflection? What alternative perspectives enter through dialogue? What form of development is visible relative to the learner's starting point? And how is the resulting understanding connected to an educational response? These questions can travel more readily than the four forms identified across five cases because they invite researchers and lecturers to examine variability rather than prescribe it. They also create a bridge between culturally responsive pedagogy, which emphasizes the legitimacy of learners' cultural knowledge (Kumi-Yeboah & Amponsah, 2023; Xie & Ferguson, 2024), and transformative learning, which emphasizes reflective examination of meaning. The distinctive proposition is that contextualization can make experience available for perspective development, but it cannot determine in advance what kind of perspective development will follow. Table 4 summarizes the pedagogical mechanisms and differentiated forms of development.

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Table 4. From Self to Others: Pedagogical Mechanism and Differentiated Perspective Development

Pedagogical Stage	Learning Activity/ Source	Student Meaning-Making	Expected Development
Lived Diversity	Family, school, pesantren, neighborhood, prior relationships.	Experience exists before the course.	Starting condition, not necessarily reflective.
Contextual Recognition	Experience-based prompts and UTS.	Students identify everyday difference as multicultural experience.	Recognition.
Reflective Reinterpretation	Concepts, cases, and revisiting prior events.	Earlier experiences and assumptions are re-read.	Reconstruction or reinforcement.
Dialogical Perspective-Taking	Class discussion and peer perspectives.	Students compare frames of reference and suspend quick judgment.	Broadening and openness.
Differentiated Perspective Development	Cross-source reflection across the course.	Change follows different trajectories according to prior experience.	Recognition, reconstruction, reinforcement, or broadening.
Inclusive Educational Response	UAS and professional reflection.	Understanding is translated into imagined educational action.	Dialogue, mediation, fairness, inclusion, non-discrimination.

This interpretation is bounded by several limitations. The study concerns one course, one institution, and five purposively selected cases with complete data; it therefore supports analytical insight rather than statistical generalization. The questionnaire was administered after the course and cannot establish change from a measured baseline. Interview accounts were retrospective, and the prospective educational responses were stated intentions rather than observed professional practices. The lecturer-researcher role may also have influenced participation or favorable reporting despite post-course consent, source triangulation, divergent-case analysis, and reflexive checks. These constraints limit causal claims and require the From Self to Others

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framework to be tested, challenged, and refined across institutions, disciplines, cohorts, and longitudinal settings.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that contextual multicultural learning became meaningful when students' existing experiences of ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious, and educational diversity were made available for systematic interpretation. Across the five cases, contextual assignments activated lived experience, reflection made prior meanings examinable, and dialogue introduced alternative viewpoints. The resulting developments were not uniform: S1 and S4 displayed recognition, S2 reconstruction, S3 reinforcement, and S5 perspective broadening. These findings support a differentiated account of perspective development rather than a claim that one course causally transformed every participant.

The study's principal contribution is the proposed From Self to Others analytical framework, which links lived diversity, contextual activation, reflective reinterpretation, dialogical perspective-taking, differentiated perspective development, and prospective inclusive educational response. The framework extends CTL by identifying recognition and reinterpretation as processes through which context becomes pedagogically consequential, and it qualifies strong readings of transformative learning by interpreting change relative to each learner's starting position. As a provisional proposition derived from one qualitative case, its value lies in organizing process questions for multicultural education rather than establishing a universal developmental model.

Future research should examine the framework across institutions, disciplines, and more diverse cohorts; use prospective and longitudinal designs; and observe whether students' stated commitments to mediation, fairness, participation, and non-discrimination are enacted in internships or professional practice. Within the limits of the present case, the take-home message is clear: multicultural education does not begin by replacing students' experiences, but by helping them recognize, critically interpret, and place those experiences in dialogue with the perspectives of others.

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