A STRATEGY TO STRENGTHEN MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AT A PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

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Abstract: This study aimed to develop a strategy for strengthening multicultural education at a private higher education institution. The study was designed as a mixed-methods exploratory design. The qualitative portion of the research was conducted using content analysis to generate content for the survey which was utilized for the quantitative portion of the study. The research objectives for the survey were: 1) To explore instructors' practices that strengthen multicultural education in higher education institutions, 2) To explore the practices that strengthen multicultural education in higher education institutions, 3) To determine the current level of intercultural sensitivity of instructors at a private higher education institution, 4) To determine the significant instructors' practices that strengthen multicultural education at a private higher education institution, 5) To determine significant institutional practices that promote multicultural education at a private higher institution, and 6) To develop a strategy to strengthen multicultural education at a private higher education institution. Data were collected from 95 administrators and 265 instructors at the Assumption University of Thailand. A multiple regression analysis found the variables of Classroom Environment (CE), Individual Beliefs (IB) Pedagogical Knowledge (PK), and Awareness of Multicultural Issues (IMA) to be significant at P<.001. A strategy to strengthen multicultural education at Assumption University was developed from the significant factors and validated by experts.

Keywords: Multicultural Education; Private Higher Education

Introduction
Globalization has led to a world with no boundaries. Countries have become more interdependent, and movement among people has increased, leading to an increasingly diverse global society. Multiculturalism is a global

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phenomenon affected by the growth and movement of people from diverse backgrounds. This change has taken place over the past decades and has been spurred on by technological development. As people can travel more easily, a globalized world has emerged where national boundaries have become irrelevant (Hinshaw & Stearns, 2014). Changes arising from the shift from a mono-cultural society to a multicultural society can be seen in various areas, including the education field. Changes influence education systems all over the world in society. Hence, diversity has inevitably played a part in shaping the education systems. Schools and higher education institutions have incorporated multicultural education techniques and methods in response to the change in demands of an increasingly diverse society (Suleiman, 2013). Nonetheless, not all educational institution members share the same sentiment towards multiculturalism. Some members prefer a mono-cultural education approach over a multicultural education approach, as many instructors have yet to be trained or have had the experience in handling a group of learners from diverse cultural backgrounds (Plessis & Marais, 2015).

The challenges found in multicultural teaching and learning are complex. The challenges demand instructors to develop communication skills, acquire respect for others, have deep knowledge, and be accepting of diversity (Pont, 2014). It is, therefore, useful from an educational standpoint to provide instructors and staff with additional tools, approaches, and skills necessary for them to develop instructions embodying a better understanding of the learners' different needs, cultural origins, and backgrounds (Grogan, 2013). Assumption University has been selected for this study as it is an international university comprising both instructors and students from diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences. Thus, the development and strengthening of multicultural education in this context would benefit the university.

Research Objectives
The following research objectives formed the basis of this study:

Research Objective 1
Explore the instructors' practices that strengthen multicultural education in higher education institutions.

Research Objective 2
To explore the practices that strengthen multicultural education in higher education institutions.

Research Objective 3
To determine instructors' current level of intercultural sensitivity at a private higher education institution.

Research Objective 4
To determine the significant instructors' practices that strengthen multicultural education at a private higher education institution.

Research Objective 5
To determine the significant institutional practices that strengthen multicultural education at a private higher education institution.

Research Objective 6
To develop a strategy for strengthening multicultural education at a private higher education institution.

Literature Review
Multiculturalism Theory
The concept of multiculturalism was introduced by Banks in 1995. He believed it is the fundamental focus on diversity and multicultural education which pays primary attention on the issues of curriculum and pedagogy and is a significant part for the areas of reform in the multicultural education discourse, so that students from diverse racial, ethnic and social class groups experience education equality (Banks, 2014). Multiculturalism Theory (Banks, 2013) refers to cultural diversity relating to ethnic groups within communities. It discusses how people work together with others from different backgrounds. Five dimensions of multicultural education have been identified: content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, an equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure. Content involves the extent to which teachers use examples and content from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, generalizations, and issues within their subject areas or disciplines. Knowledge construction has to do with how teachers help students to understand and determine how the biases, frames of reference, and perspectives within a discipline influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed within it. Prejudice reduction involves how lessons and activities are used to help students to develop positive attitudes toward different cultural groups. Equity pedagogy is when teachers modify their teaching to enable students from different cultures to maximize their learning. An empowering school culture is created when the culture and organization of the whole school is transformed to enable students from diverse racial, ethnic, and gender groups to experience equality and equal status. For this to occur, the whole environment of the school needs to be

reformed. This included the attitudes, beliefs and actions of the instructors and administrators (Banks, 1995).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy
The concept of culturally relevant pedagogy was developed by Ladson-Billings (2014) as the fundamental element for culturally relevant teachers to help their students to be academically successful, culturally competent and socio politically critical. Culturally relevant pedagogy is progressive teaching strategies that support culturally relevant teaching practices. There are three broad propositions related to culturally relevant pedagogy which are the conceptions of self and others held by culturally relevant teachers, the manner in which social relations are structured by culturally relevant teachers, and the conceptions of knowledge held by culturally relevant teachers.

Authentic Leadership in Higher Education
Authentic Leadership Theory by Walumbwa et al. (2008) is the one of the newest areas of leadership. It was first identified in the transformational leadership research, but was never fully articulated. The theory involves a complex process that is difficult to characterize, as there are multiple points of views on the matter (Chan, 2005). One of the viewpoints described the intrapersonal perspective, which focused on the leader's experiences in life, as being critical to the development of the authentic leadership. It incorporates the leader's self-knowledge, self-regulation, and self-concept (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Another viewpoint is that authentic leadership is an interpersonal process, where leaders affect followers and followers affect leaders (Early, 2005). Greenier and Whitehead (2016) stated that authentic leadership has been increasingly applied to the field of higher education to promote more ethical and democratic leadership. Instructors who are authentic leaders are aware of their own limitations, and tolerate imperfection in others by helping others to learn, grow, mature and succeed in their life. These instructors have a good understanding of human nature, individual motivations and high ethical standards. The development of these qualities takes time, efforts and commitment towards lifelong learning experiences. Soares and Lopes (2017) suggested that authentic leaders are aware of their feelings, thoughts, emotions, needs, preferences, beliefs and act according to those. In the field of higher education, instructors with authentic leadership are those who have high awareness of students' reactions towards their behaviors. They are also those who actively engage with students and find appropriate strategies that could clearly communicate their thoughts.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is depicted as a process showing the variables and their sub-dimensions (individual knowledge and institutional strategies; and intercultural sensitivity) and the sequential steps utilized in this research. A visual representation of the research is detailed below:
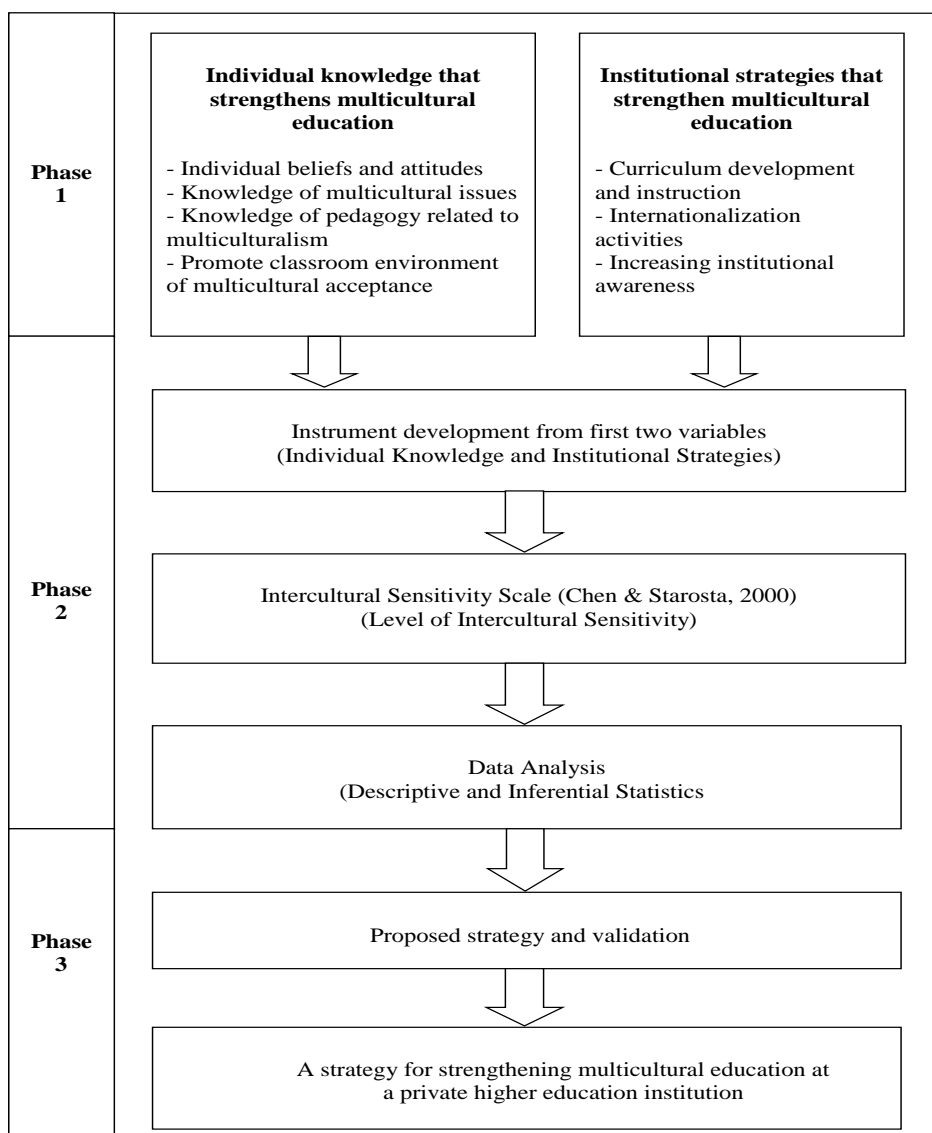
Phase 1	**Individual knowledge that strengthens multicultural education** - Individual beliefs and attitudes - Knowledge of multicultural issues - Knowledge of pedagogy related to multiculturalism - Promote classroom environment of multicultural acceptance	**Institutional strategies that strengthen multicultural education** - Curriculum development and instruction - Internationalization activities - Increasing institutional awareness
Phase 2	Instrument development from first two variables (Individual Knowledge and Institutional Strategies)	
	Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (Chen & Starosta, 2000) (Level of Intercultural Sensitivity)	
	Data Analysis (Descriptive and Inferential Statistics	
Phase 3	Proposed strategy and validation	
	A strategy for strengthening multicultural education at a private higher education institution	

Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework of the Study*

Research Methods

This research utilized a mixed-methods design. The Instrument Development Model (Creswell, 2013) was selected to explain this study. The first phase was

qualitative, and an analysis was done that produced codes and conceptual themes. The data sources included books, previous studies, articles, academic journals, library textbooks, theses, dissertations, reports, online sources from library databases and other electronic media related to the instructors' practices that strengthen multicultural education in higher education institution. The results of this analysis were used to direct the next, quantitative phase, which was the development of a survey instrument. Subsequent objectives were addressed by conducting statistical analysis (Multiple Regression Analysis) to find the significant constructs that led to the development of the strategy.

Participants
This research collected data from two groups. The first group were the administrators including the full-time management staff members at Assumption University. The second group of respondents were the full-time faculty members. The sampling method used was convenience sampling whereby faculty members of all schools and departments where included.

Research Instruments
Two instruments were used to collect data from the respondents. The first instrument was developed by the researcher. The instrument was separated in two parts. The first part of the instrument obtained the demographic information of the respondents. The second part of the instrument contained questions related to Objectives Four and Five. The questionnaire utilized a 5-Point Likert-type scale. The second questionnaire was the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale, which was utilized to obtain data for Objective Three. Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) is anassessment tool for measuring intercultural sensitivity as an affective component of intercultural communication competence. It was developed by Chen and Starosta in 2000. Permission to use the scale was obtained from the developers.

Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire
To determine the validity of the question items, the items were evaluated and approved by 24 experts and a pilot study was conducted to confirm reliability. Upon analysis as it was concluded that all the items obtained an Alpha coefficient of more than .80. According to DeVellis (2012) the range of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is as follows: more than 0.90 (excellent), more than 0.80 (good), more than 0.70 (acceptable), more than 0.5 (poor) and less than 0.50 (unacceptable). Thus, the questionnaire was deemed reliable.

Collection of Data
The researcher distributed a total of 390 questionnaires to the target population

and the respondents' valid return rate was 100% with 150 (38.5%) male and 240 (61.5%) female administrators and instructors.

Findings
Research Objective One and Research Objective Two
For the findings, four major themes from the content analysis were determined. The four major themes were: Individual beliefs and attitudes (IB-*Individual Beliefs*); knowledge of multicultural issues as related to education (MK-*Multicultural Knowledge*); demonstration of pedagogy, instructional practices related to multiculturalism and diversity (PK-*Pedagogical Knowledge*); and classroom environment promoting awareness, acceptance of multiculturalism and diversity (CE-*Classroom Environment*). For institutional practices, three major themes were found: *Strategies Related to Curriculum Development and Instruction* (CI); *Strategies Related to Internationalization Activities* (IA); and *Strategies Related to Increasing Institutional Awareness of Multicultural Issue*s (IMA). The themes gathered from the content analysis of research objectives one and two, were verified by twenty-four experts.

Research Objective Three
From the findings of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale, the overall mean score was 3.88 with a SD of 0.52, which translated to administrators and instructors having high levels of intercultural sensitivity especially in the dimensions of *Interaction Attentiveness*, *Interaction Engagement*, *Respect for Cultural Differences*, *Interaction Confidence* and *Interaction Enjoymen*t.

Research Objective Four
For research Objective Four, the results are shown in table 1 and 2, and interpreted as follows:

Table 1: *Interpretation of Mean Score and Standard Deviation for Research Objective Four*

No	Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	Individual Beliefs (IB)	4.25	0.68	High
2	Multicultural Knowledge (MK)	4.05	0.69	High
3	Pedagogical Knowledge (PK)	3.84	0.69	High
4	Classroom Environment (CE)	3.95	0.67	High
	Overall Research Objective Four	4.02	0.56	High

The mean and the standard deviation of four major themes related to Research Objective Four are shown in Table 1. As per the results, administrators and instructors had high levels   towards the significant instructors' practices that strengthen multicultural education at a private higher education institution

with an overall mean score of 4.02, which is above the mean score of 3.50, and a SD of 0.56.

Table 2: *Summary of Multiple Regression Tables Results of Research Objective Four*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the estimate
1	.640a	.409	.403	.40452

a. Predictors: (Constant), PK, IB, CE, MK

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	43.603	4	10.901	66.615	.000a
	Residual	63.001	385	.164		
	Total	106.605	389			

a. Predictors: (Constant), PK, IB, CE, MK
b. Dependent Variable: Instructional Practices (IP)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
1 (Constant)	1.441	.151		9.534	.000
Multicultural Knowledge (MK)	.048	.045	.063	1.066	.287
Classroom Environment (CE)	.191	.041	.245	4.628	.000
Individual Beliefs (IB)	.271	.040	.351	6.840	.000
Pedagogical Knowledge (PK)	.089	.043	.116	2.076	.039

a. Dependent Variable: Instructional Practices (IP)

As per the results of Table 2, the value of R^2 of .409 indicates moderate level of significance. Two independent variables, Classroom Environment (CE) and Individual Beliefs (IB) had a significance level of *P*<.000, this implied that both were significant at the .01 level of significance and one independent variable, *Classroom Environment* (CE) had a significance level of .039, *P*<.05 level of significance. However, one independent variable, Multicultural Knowledge (MK) obtained the value of .287, was not significant. For the Beta measurement of the standardized coefficients of the dependent variables, *Individual Beliefs* (IB) had the highest level of Beta at .351, followed by the *Classroom Environment* (CE) at .245, and *Pedagogical Knowledge* (PK) at .116.

Research Objective Five
For research Objective Five, the results are shown in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3: *Interpretation of Mean Score and Standard Deviation for Research Objective Five*

No	Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	Strategies Related to Curriculum Development and Instruction (CI)	3.52	0.78	High
2	Strategies Related to Internationalization Activities (IA)	3.68	0.80	High
3	Strategies Related to Increasing Institutional Awareness of Multicultural Issues (IMA)	3.77	0.68	High
	Overall Research Objective Five	3.66	0.65	High

The mean and the standard deviation of four major themes related to Research Objective Five are shown in Table 3. Administrators and instructors scored high in significant institutional practices that strengthen multicultural education with an overall mean score of 3.66. All the major themes which determined the significant institutional practices that strengthen multicultural education also had mean scores of above 3.50.

Table 4: *Summary of Multiple Regression Tables Results of Research Objective Five*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error of the Estimate
1	.343a	.118	.111	.49358

a. Predictors: (Constant), IMA, CI, IA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12.566	3	4.189	17.194	.000a
	Residual	94.038	386	.244		
	Total	106.605	389			

a. Predictors: (Constant), IMA, CI, IA
b. Dependent Variable: Institutional Strategies (IS)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
1 (Constant)	2.969	.148		20.037	.000
Strategies Related to Curriculum Development and Instruction (CI)	-.081	.045	-.122	-1.792	.074
Strategies Related to Internationalization Activities (IA)	.028	.047	.042	.590	.556
Strategies Related to Increasing Institutional Awareness of Multicultural Issues(IMA)	.290	.049	.375	5.920	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Institutional Strategies (IS)

The Multiple Regression analysis used the dependent variable to compare with each of the three independent variables: *Strategies Related to Curriculum Development and Instruction* (CI), *the Strategies Related to Internationalization Activities* (IA) and the *Strategies Related to Increasing Institutional Awareness of Multicultural Issues* (IMA). The R^2 measurement of the quality of the prediction of the dependent variables indicated a moderate level of prediction at $R^2 =.343$. Results were significant at P<.000 for one independent variable, *Strategies Related to Increasing Institutional Awareness of Multicultural Issues* (IMA). Two independent variables, S*trategies Related to Curriculum Development and Instruction* (CI) and *Strategies Related to Internationalization Activities* (IA), were not significant at values of .074 and .556 respectively.

Research Objective Six
The development of the proposed strategy was done by combining findings from all previous key findings. The proposed strategy was evaluated by seven experts. The strategy outlines the various areas and that should be focused on by the university in order to create a multicultural education environment in the university. It includes institutional level strategies or activities that should be either implemented or improved on and individual practices of instructors that should be encouraged.
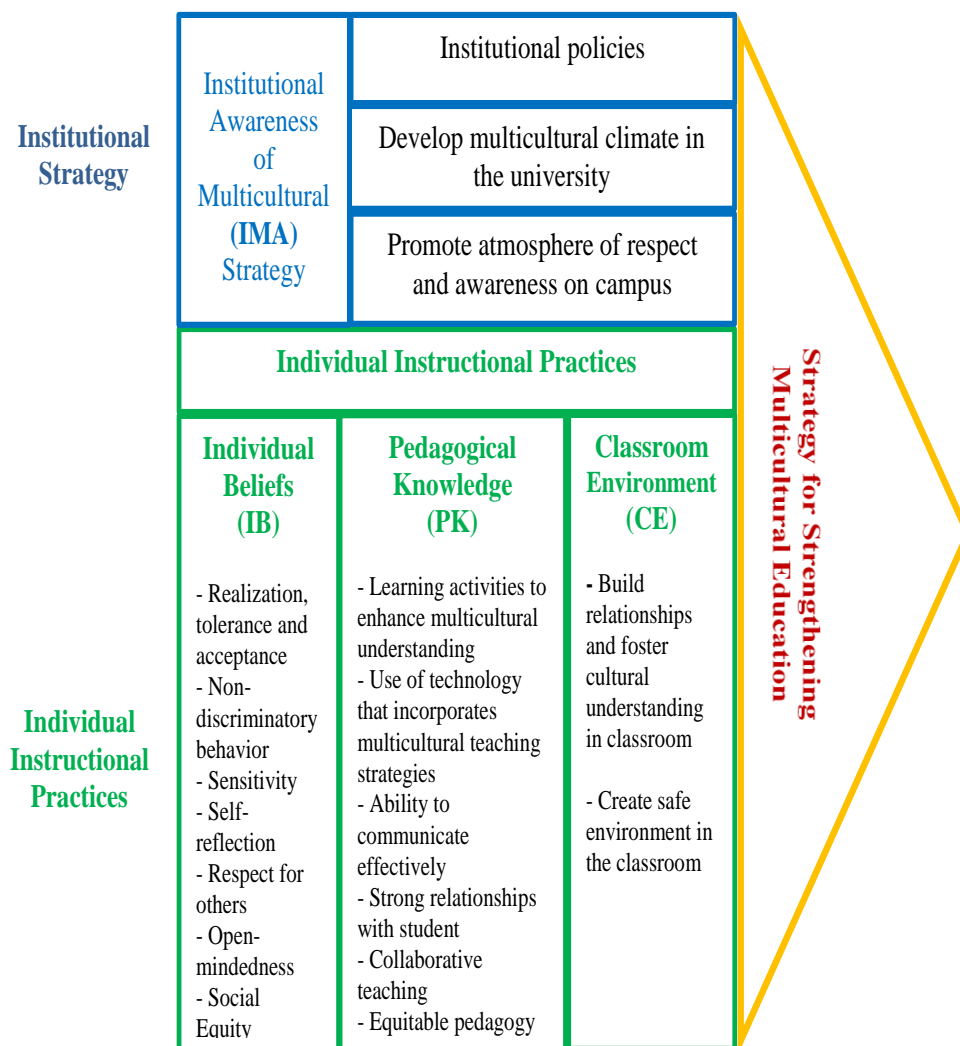
Figure 2. *Strategy for Strengthening Multicultural at a Private Higher Education Institution*

Discussion

This study's findings have concluded that individual beliefs in terms of realization and of and tolerance for diversity; practice of non-discriminatory behavior; non-prejudicial behavior, the ability to understand people that are different in beliefs; awareness and acceptance of diversity; being sensitive to other feelings; ability for self-reflection; respects for other; tolerance; open-mindedness and social equity all have a significant influence on individual instructors' practices. This conforms to the findings of Bunge (2012), Kauffman and Badar (2014), and Du Plessis and Marais (2017), where the

researchers found that individual beliefs in terms of complex nature of cultural differences and diversity can be seen as a unique opportunity to learn from one another; tolerance and acceptance, cultural understanding and sensitivity and being sensitive to other beliefs and values.

Pedagogical knowledge in terms of learning activities to enhance multicultural understanding; imply teaching and learning strategies to suit different cultures; use of technological that incorporate multiculturalism; ability to communicate effectively; strong relationships with student; collaborative teaching with others (sharing knowledge); equitable pedagogy and ability to adjust to different students learning styles (oral, writing and etc.) also have a significant influence on the individual instructors and can help to strengthen the environment of multiculturalism in the classroom. This finding agrees with the findings of Martinez (2012) and Northouse (2015), where it was found that use of culturally relevant pedagogy can enhance multicultural understanding and better learning experiences for students. A multicultural classroom environment enhances relationships and builds attitudes that create safe environments where students can express themselves without fear being judged or punished. This conforms to the findings of Allen *et al.* (2011), Sleeter (2011) and Cherng and Davis (2017), where the researchers found that classroom environment in terms of strong relationships between teachers and students create a safe classroom environment that helps to promote acceptance and awareness of multiculturalism and diversity.

Additionally, institutional implementation of multicultural strategies in terms of institutional policies to develop a multicultural climate in the university and promotion of an atmosphere of respect and awareness on the campus have a significant influence on institutional practices that strengthen multicultural education at a private higher education institution. This conforms to the findings of Rego *et al.*, (2012), Greenier and Whitehead (2016), where the researchers found that institutional awareness of multicultural strategy in terms of institutions need to have a positive attitude towards diversity and multiculturalism. Overall, the results of this study are corroborated by findings from other studies that stress that both individual perspectives and institutional perspectives must be combined to build a multicultural environment in the university where all students and instructors of diverse backgrounds and cultures can learn and work together effectively.

Conclusion
Regarding this study's context, the most significant factor at the institutional level is the implementation of a multicultural strategy that includes institutional policies to develop a multicultural climate at the university and to

promoting an atmosphere of respect and awareness on campus. By doing so, both students and faculty will benefit from an environment that truly accepts the perspectives and differences of all members of the university. At the individual level, instructors need to be aware of their own perceptions, biases and other personal beliefs and attitudes that may consciously or unconsciously affect their teaching, attitudes, and behaviors with students. They should also be proactive in determining and using pedagogical practices that can benefit all types of students. The proposed strategy hopes to act as a guide for administrators of the university in identifying the key areas and concerns that can be focused on for improvement and to ultimately strengthen multicultural education in this university's context. For future research, it is recommended that similar studies may be carried out in other international university contexts. It is hopeful that studies of this type will be given more attention in the context of not only Thailand, but other contexts where we are seeing an increase in the mobility of students and instructors from around the world. This globalization trend seems to only be on the increase, thus the ability to work, learn and come together in a community of diverse peoples can be beneficial to all involved.

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