
THE IMPACT OF MULTICULTURAL KNOWLEDGE ASPECTS ON THE EXECUTION OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF MALAYSIA

Dr. Mahalaxmi Nair

Professor, Department of English, Kota (Rajasthan).

Abstract

In this survey, national school teachers in Negeri Sembilan are asked to rate their degree of understanding on multicultural education. 927 instructors in Negeri Sembilan's national-style schools participated in this survey. In order to better understand how to implement multicultural education in primary schools, this study will look at knowledge related to content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction, school cultural empowerment, and social structure. This research is a quantitative survey. Nine hundred and twenty-seven teachers working in national-style schools in Negeri Sembilan completed the questionnaire. Version 26.0 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyse the study's data. There are two kinds of statistics that are employed: inferential statistics and descriptive statistics. In order to characterise the respondent profile and address the study issues, descriptive statistics including the variables frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation are employed. Version 26.0 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyse the study's data. In order to determine the impact of multicultural education knowledge on the implementation of multicultural education in primary schools, multiple regression statistics are utilised. This includes knowledge of content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction, and school cultural empowerment and social structure.

Keywords: Multicultural knowledge, education, Malaysia.

► *Corresponding Author: Dr. Mahalaxmi Nair*

Introduction

Malaysia is a country with diverse races and religions. The three largest races are the Malays, Chinese and Indians, followed by ethnic minorities, including the Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia and the Orang Asal in East Malaysia, namely Iban, Melanau, Kadazan and others (JZ Nun Ramlan & Maarof, 2014). The diversity of cultures and ethnic groups and the application of appreciation for diversity is a critical value to create unity, and it is a challenge in the world of education (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). Education is the best way to achieve understanding and mutual respect (Zirkel, 2008; Wahab, 2014; Villegas, 2019; UNESCO, 2016; Suri & Chandra, 2021;). Thus, the role of teachers becomes very large because they are important agents in interacting with students, and students have backgrounds from various cultures (Akar & Ulu, 2016; Auzina, 2018; Barajas, 2015; Barry, 2013; Beteille & Evans, 2019). The changing landscape in the educational environment also indirectly causes teachers to face more complex teaching to prepare students to face the globalized world today (Tore, 2020; Tarman & Tarman, 2011; Suri & Chandra, 2021; Sulistyono & Indartono, 2019; Su, 2007). The Malaysian government also considers the unity agenda that needs further strengthening among students. It is expressed through the 5 System Aspirations in the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013). According to the statement, students are seen to spend part of their time in school starting from the age of 7 to 17

years old. School is a very suitable place to foster unity. Through interaction with individuals with gaps in socioeconomics, religion and ethnic background, students will learn to understand and accept all differences openly (Malaysian Education Ministry, 2013).

The diversity of cultures and ethnic groups and the application of appreciation for diversity is a critical value to create unity, and it is a challenge in the world of education (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). Racial attitudes are the main challenge to forming harmonious ethnic relations in this country, through a Berita Harian newspaper report (January 14, 2016) where a Malay teacher who teaches at Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina in Mersing, Johor, filed a police report claiming that the school did not protect him in several incidents of commotion and was insulted by his students and the student's parents. In another case, mStar Online (July 24, 2013) reported that the Headmaster of Seri Pristana National School (SK) in Sungai Buloh, who was hit by controversy regarding the spread of pictures of non-Muslim students eating in the locker room, filed a police report today claiming he had been defamed.

Apart from racism, the low achievement factor among minority students in a classroom is due to the lack of cultural continuity resulting from very low knowledge of the student's cultural background among the teachers who teach them (Butler, 2004; Byram, 1997; Cardenas, 2019; Carroll, 2009; D'hondt et al., 2021). Sleeter & Bernal (2004) also saw districts, schools and teachers focusing more on spreading the curriculum to students without looking at their background. Therefore, he thinks that if you want to give equal education to every student, implementing multicultural education must be done consistently along with theory and be seen from various dimensions. Teachers must also be able to identify, differentiate and understand each complex dimension. In addition, teachers also need to understand that proper and effective multicultural education is not just about changing the curriculum but as a mechanism to unite the multiculturalism found among students (Omar et al., 2015).

The Malaysian Ministry of Education considers the unity agenda that needs further strengthening among students. It is expressed through the 5 System Aspirations in the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013). According to the statement, students are seen to spend part of their time in school starting from the age of 7 to 17 years old. School is a very suitable place to foster unity. Through interaction with individuals with gaps in socioeconomics, religion and ethnic background, students will learn to understand and accept all differences openly (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). Therefore, the role of teachers is very important to realize the wishes of the National Education Philosophy. Teachers must prepare themselves with an open mind and have knowledge, awareness, and skills, which will alert them in adapting methods to cater to these student differences (Ahmad, 2016).

Various actions must be taken to maintain harmony by accommodating the students' multiculturalism. Since primary school students are the best medium to cultivate that awareness, several actions, such as methods or programs, do not require too much expenditure but are effective in dealing with this issue. Therefore, this study needs to be carried out to identify the level of knowledge of multicultural education, the implementation of multicultural education and the importance of multicultural education from the perspective of primary school teachers. Next, the findings of this study are expected to help the Curriculum Development Division formulate the curriculum by thinking about the methods that need to be taken to overcome this issue later.

Literature review

There are many differences in the meaning of the concept of belief in multiculturalism, and some of the terms that have been adopted are used to describe the demographics of a society, ideology

by an individual or government that states that ethnicity, race, culture and religious diversity should be celebrated; research on policies taken by governments or institutions; and a specific political normative theory to lay down principles in governing a diverse society.

De Melendez and Beck (2018) define multiculturalism as a movement and a cultural group pattern. He stated that minority groups must also be emphasized because they contribute to the economy and society. Yusuf (2008) states that multiculturalism is a new orientation toward the future. According to him, multiculturalism is a belief and behavior system that recognizes and respects the presence of various groups in an organization or society, appreciates and evaluates socio-cultural differences and encourages and enables continuous contributions in an inclusive cultural context, thereby empowering all in an organization. Or society.

Sabira and Pandin (2021) detail multiculturalism into several meanings and how it varies according to demographics, ideology and policy. In their study, several examples of countries have been given. For example, Africa is home to various races, while Japan and Korea are considered more homogeneous. Some parts of North and South America also have very high multiculturalism due to continuous population immigration. So, this is where demographics are said to have an impact on multiculturalism.

The second detail of multiculturalism as a policy presented by Dursunoglu and Segun (2020) involves management and placement. According to their study, in line with this policy are programs that support multiculturalism and provide equal facilities for multicultural and ethnic groups to get involved. It also needs to be implemented systematically and recognized. Diversity policies positively impact minority groups by narrowing the racial gap.

Methods

Research Design

The design of this study uses a quantitative research approach using the survey method (Cresswell, 2022). This survey study uses a questionnaire as the main instrument to collect data or information related to the knowledge of multicultural education, the implementation of multicultural education and the importance of multicultural education from the perspective of primary school teachers. This study is limited to teachers who teach at National Schools that have students from the three main races (Malay, Chinese and Indian) in Negeri Sembilan only. The teachers involved teach Level 2 (Year 4 to Year 6). They were selected as study participants because they could achieve the study's objectives and answer the research questions. This study used a stratified random sampling method. The study sample was taken from several ordinary-day national schools in Negeri Sembilan that have different backgrounds and are regulated by the State Education Department under the Ministry of Education Malaysia. Since the number of samples varies according to the district within the state, the stratified sampling method is very suitable. (Chua, 2006; Baba, 1997; Babbie, 2014; Cohen et al., 2017; Mitchell & Jolley, 2004).

Sample Study

The respondents of this study consisted of 927 national school teachers from 103 schools throughout the districts in Negeri Sembilan, where a total of 9 respondents represented each school, namely three teachers who taught Year 4, 3 who taught Year 5 and 3 who taught in Year 6.

Study Instruments

This study uses a questionnaire as the main instrument for data collection to answer the research questions. The questionnaire of this study is an adaptation of the instrument developed by Neuman (2021). The constructed questionnaire was tested for validity through face validity and content

validity. A pilot study was conducted on 59 teachers to test the administration of the questionnaire and to obtain the validity and reliability index of the questionnaire. Cronbach's Alpha reliability index for the questionnaire to measure all aspects of this study is between 0.742 and 0.934. Cronbach's Alpha reliability index is high. Based on the views of Wiersma & Jurs (2008) and Sekaran (1992), the item reliability index for this questionnaire is acceptable and high. Due to the problem of the Covid 19 pandemic that hit the country, the data collection for this study was done using the Google Form application.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data of this study was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 26.0. Two types of statistics are used, namely descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics using frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation are used to describe the profile of the respondents and answer the research questions. Inferential statistics, i.e., One-Way MANOVA, is used to identify whether there is a difference in the level of multicultural education knowledge from content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction and empowerment of school culture and social structure based on gender and school location.

Respondent Profile

Of the 927 respondents to this study, 350 people (37.8%) were male teachers, and 577 (62.2%) were female teachers. In terms of race, the majority of respondents, 866 (93.4%), were Malay teachers, 42 (4.5%) Chinese teachers, seven (0.8%) Indian teachers, four (0.4%) Sabah Bumiputra teachers and eight (0.9%) Sarawak Bumiputra teachers. In terms of experience, a total of 205 people (22.1%) have teaching experience of 10 years and less, a total of 362 people (39.1%) have a teaching experience of 11 to 20 years and a total of 360 people (38.8%) have a teaching experience of 21 years and more. In terms of school location, there are 291 (31.4%) teachers from urban schools, 584 (63.0%) from rural schools, 50 (5.4%) from suburban schools, and 2 (0.2%) teachers from remote schools.

Results

Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the significance of the relationship and variance contribution of the independent variables: knowledge of multicultural education, perception of the importance of multicultural education and teaching experience towards implementing multicultural education. This multiple regression analysis involves three independent variables that are relevant to the dependent variable, which is the implementation of multicultural education as stated in the form of the null hypothesis (H_0) as follows:

H_0 : There is no significant contribution or influence of the independent variables, which are knowledge of multicultural education, perception of the importance of multicultural education and teaching experience on implementing multicultural education in national schools in Negeri Sembilan.

Before multiple regression analysis is conducted, the researcher first ascertains and verifies whether there are multivariate outliers in the study data. It is carried out by checking the Mahalanobis Distance value. The maximum Mahalanobis Distance value obtained is 31.981. According to Pallant (2020), the maximum value of Critical Chi-Squared (Mahalanobis Distance) for the three independent variables is 16.27. Thus, there are multivariate outliers in the study data. The research results found that 26 samples had Mahalanobis Distance values exceeding 16.27. Therefore, these 26 respondents were dropped in this multiple regression analysis. Thus, 901 respondents were involved in this multiple-regression analysis.

The researcher also first ascertains and confirms whether the distribution of questionnaire scores is normal and linear or vice versa. It is done by obtaining a scatter plot graph (residual scatter plot) and a normal regression plot (regression normal plot) from the 'Linear Regression: Plots' subprogram in the SPSS program. The results of the analysis are as in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

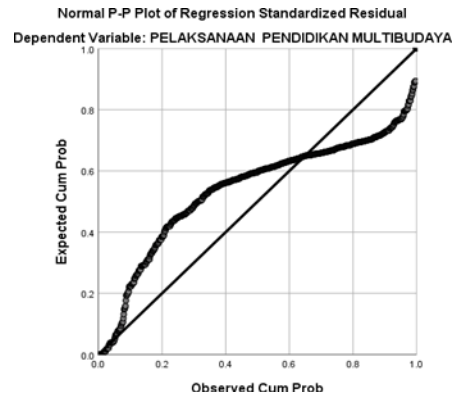


Figure 1. Regression Normal Plot

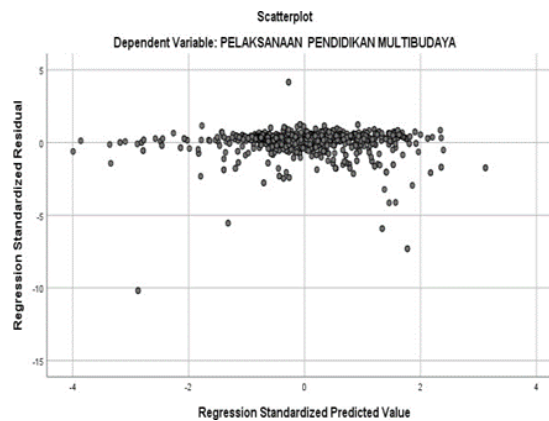


Figure 2. Residual Scatter Plot

Tables 1 and 2 show the results of a stepwise regression analysis involving three independent variables: knowledge of multicultural education, perception of the importance of multicultural education, and teaching experience towards implementing multicultural education.

Table 1. Multiple Regression Analysis (Stepwise) of Variables Affecting the Implementation of Multicultural Education

Variable(X)	B	Beta (β)	Value-t	Sig. -t	R ²	Contribution (%)
Knowledge of Multicultural Education	.887	.833	33.494	.000	.801	80.1
Teaching Experience	.003	.054	3.675	.000	.804	0.3
Perception of the Importance of Multicultural Education	.071	.078	3.125	.002	.806	0.2
Constant	.043		0.619	.536		

Standard Error = 0.069

Table 2. Analysis of Variance

Source	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Min Square	F-Value	Significance Level (p)
Regression Residual	146.895	3	48.965		
Total	35.431	897	0.039	1239.64	0.000**
	182.326	900			

The multiple regression analysis (stepwise) in Tables 1 and 2 show that the independent variables, which are knowledge of multicultural education, perception of the importance of multicultural education and teaching experience, are predictors that have correlation and influence, contribute significantly as much as 80.6 percent to the implementation of multicultural education in national schools in Negeri Sembilan.

Conclusion

The study results have revealed that teachers still need more knowledge about multicultural education. It is based on research findings showing that the level of knowledge of teachers related to multicultural education is at a moderate level. It is also the main and highest factor that affects the implementation of multicultural education in schools, and its contribution is very large at 80.1 percent. Therefore, providing teachers with in-service training on multicultural education is useful. This way, the teacher will have full knowledge of multicultural education and arrange the teaching-learning environment depending on multicultural education. This study of the knowledge, implementation and importance of Multicultural Education was conducted in a school environment consisting of Malay, Chinese and Indian students in Negeri Sembilan. A multiracial school environment provides a multicultural experience for teachers to learn, experience, and celebrate multiculturalism among students. This multiracial school environment also provides teachers with space and opportunities to practice multiculturalism. This study has also clearly described the level of knowledge, implementation, and importance of Multicultural Education among teachers based on gender, teaching experience and school location. Based on the questionnaire, teachers should have a high level of knowledge, implementation, and importance of Multicultural Education to ensure that the teaching and learning process runs smoothly in line with the reality of the diverse backgrounds of students of various races and cultures. Therefore, all parties involved in Multicultural Education need to plan strategies and improvement measures in an integrated manner to achieve the desired goal of unity among ethnic groups in Malaysia.

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