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Level of Implementation of Multicultural Education Among Primary School Teachers in Negeri Sembilan

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the level of implementation of Multicultural Education among primary school teachers in Negeri Sembilan. This study was conducted on 927 teachers who teach in national schools in Negeri Sembilan. The objective is to identify the level of implementation of teachers related to multiculturalism from the aspects of content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction and empowerment of school culture and social structure among national schoolteachers in Negeri Sembilan. In this study, the approach chosen is quantitative and the research design used is survey research. The questionnaire was distributed to 927 respondents consisting of teachers who teach in national schools in Negeri Sembilan. 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. The findings of the study show that teachers' implementation of Multicultural Education related to content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy and prejudice reduction is at a moderate level. However, the teachers' implementation of Multicultural Education related to empowerment of school culture and social structure is high.

Keywords: Multicultural Education, Teachers, Primary Schools

1. 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 (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 (Malaysia Ministry of Education, 2013). Education is the best way to achieve understanding and mutual respect (Ramli, 2009). Thus, the role of teachers becomes very large because they are important agents to interact with students and students have backgrounds from various cultures (Gates, 2006). With the changing landscape in the educational environment, this also indirectly causes teachers to face more complex teaching to prepare students to face the globalized world today (Auziņa, 2013). The Malaysian government also considers the unity agenda that needs to be further strengthened among students. This is expressed through the 5 System Aspirations in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013 (Shan et al., 2016). 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 who have gaps in terms of socioeconomics, religion and ethnic background, students will learn to understand, and accept all differences openly (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2013).

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1.1 Problem Statement

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 (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2013). Racial attitudes are the main challenge to form 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 students' 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 students' cultural background among the teachers who teach them (Collins, 2009). Delpit's study (2006) 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, the implementation of multicultural education must be done consistently along with theory and must be seen from various dimensions. Teachers must also be able to identify, differentiate and understand each complex dimension (Dita et al., 2021). 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 (Abdullah & Abdullah, 2018).

The Malaysian Ministry of Education also considers the unity agenda that needs to be further strengthened among students. This is expressed through the 5 System Aspirations in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013 (Shan et al., 2016). 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 who have gaps in terms of 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 not only need to prepare themselves with an open mind but also have knowledge, awareness, and skills which in turn will make them alert in adapting methods to be used in catering these towards the differences among students (Abdullah & Abdullah, 2018).

Various actions need to be taken to maintain the harmony by accommodating the students' multiculturalism. Since primary school students are the best medium to cultivate that awareness, several actions, for instance methods or programs that do not require too much expenditure but are effective to deal 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 to formulate the curriculum by thinking about the methods that need to be taken to overcome this issue later.

1.2 Research Objective

The objective of this study is to identify the level of implementation of multicultural education from the aspects of content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction and empowerment of school culture and social structure among national schoolteachers in Negeri Sembilan.

2. Methodology

The design of this study is a quantitative research approach by using the survey method. This survey uses a questionnaire as the main instrument to collect data or information related to the implementation of multicultural education from the perspective of primary school teachers. Since the number of samples varies according to the district, the stratified sampling method is the most suitable one (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The respondents of this study consisted of 927 national schoolteachers from 103 schools throughout the districts in Negeri Sembilan where a total of 9 respondents represented each school, namely 3 teachers who taught Year 4, 3 who taught Year 5 and 3 who taught Year 6.

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 Gates (2006). 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 in this study is between 0.742 to 0.934. Cronbach's Alpha reliability index is high. Based on the views of Stone (1993) and Ueno & 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. 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.

3. Findings

3.1 Level of Teacher Implementation Related to Multicultural Education

This section reports the findings of a study on the level of teacher implementation related to multicultural education which covers five aspects, namely the aspect of content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction and empowerment of school culture and social structure. The results of the descriptive analysis of the level of knowledge of teachers related to multicultural education are as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean Score, Standard Deviation and Level of Teacher Implementation Related to Multicultural Education

No	Aspects of Teacher Knowledge Related to Multicultural Education	Mean	S. D	Level
1.	Implementation Related to Content Integration	3.955	0.545	Moderate
2.	Implementation Related to Knowledge Construction	4.063	0.609	Moderate
3.	Implementation Related to Equity Pedagogy	4.101	0.621	Moderate
4.	Implementation Related to Prejudice Reduction.	4.236	0.635	Moderate
5.	Implementation Related to Empowering school Culture and Social Structure	4.385	0.604	High
Teacher's Implementation of Multicultural Education As A Whole		**4.148**	**0.520**	**Moderate**

Based on Table 1, it was found that the level of implementation of teachers related to multicultural education is at a moderate level (mean=4.148; s.d.=0.520). A detailed analysis of each aspect of teachers' implementation related to multicultural education shows that teachers' implementation related to content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy and prejudice reduction are also at a moderate level. However, implementation related to the empowerment of school culture and social structure is at a high level. Each aspect of teachers' implementation related to multicultural education contains four items. A detailed analysis of each item in each aspect of teachers' knowledge related to multicultural education is as in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean Score, Standard Deviation for Each Item in Each Aspect of Teacher Implementation Related to Multicultural Education

Aspect	No	Statement	Mean	S. D	Level
1. Content Integration Implementation	1.	Incorporation of ethnic content into the curriculum	4.11	0.695	Moderate
	2.	Searching for the materials that contain various cultures and ethnicities.	4.08	0.641	Moderate
	3.	Identifying and using teaching materials that depict ethnic differences in a realistic way.	4.07	0.652	Moderate
	4.	The usage of school libraries in finding multiethnic materials for students and classroom teaching.	3.55	0.676	Moderate
	1.	**Content Integration Implementation**	**3.955**	**0.545**	**Moderate**
2. Implementation of Construction Knowledge towards Multicultural	1.	Teaching students to interpret events from a diverse cultural point of view. For example, teaching students why different ethnic and cultural groups have conflicting views on the same historical event or contemporary situation.	4.06	0.663	Moderate
	2.	Teaching students how the construction of knowledge is influenced by racial perspectives.	4.10	0.730	Moderate
	3.	Teach students to analyze the truth in all areas	4.18	0.700	Moderate
	4.	Teaching students to understand written history in a society that only sees 'victory versus defeat'.	3.91	0.817	Moderate
	2.	**Implementation of Construction Knowledge towards Multicultural**	**4.063**	**0.609**	**Moderate**

3. Implementation of Equity Pedagogy in the Context of Multicultural Education	1.	Using instructional strategies that can give the closest picture of the learning patterns of students of various ethnicities in school.	3.99	0.742	Moderate
	2.	Modifying learning objectives that can give the closest picture of the learning patterns of students of various ethnicities in school.	4.01	0.738	Moderate
	3.	Using an assessment procedure that can give the closest impression of the cultural diversity of students.	4.00	0.744	Moderate
	4.	Making modifications to teaching patterns when students see no progress in learning.	4.41	0.717	High
	3.	**Implementation of Equity Pedagogy in the Context of Multicultural Education**	**4.101**	**0.621**	**Moderate**
4. Prejudice Reduction Implementation	1.	Creating and using a curriculum that can encourage students to have an attitude of supporting cultural diversity.	4.28	0.716	Moderate
	2.	Creating and using a curriculum that can help students to identify differences between cultural groups.	4.26	0.716	Moderate
	3.	Creating and using a curriculum that helps students develop the skills they need for cross-cultural student interaction and helps students learn how to function effectively in a multicultural environment.	4.17	0.698	Moderate
	4.	Creating curriculum and opportunities according to the pattern of public schools to help all students explore and explain the noble values that are practiced in their ethnic circles.	4.23	0.706	Moderate
	4.	**Prejudice Reduction Implementation**	**4.236**	**0.635**	**Moderate**
5. Implementation of School Cultural Empowerment and Social Structure	1.	A reflective school administration is not too judgmental towards the behavior patterns of all cultures in the school community.	4.27	0.716	Moderate
	2.	School administration that fosters positive interactions among diverse cultural groups.	4.49	0.688	High
	3.	A curriculum that provides ongoing opportunities for all students to develop a better sense of self	4.45	0.687	High
	4.	Teaches students how to act on social problems that affect cultural and ethnic groups.	4.34	0.730	High
	5.	**Implementation of School Cultural Empowerment and Social Structure**	**4.385**	**0.604**	**High**

4. Discussion and Implications

Many educators believe that the integration of content itself is multicultural education, therefore Banks and Banks (2019) in their study found that mathematics and science teachers think that they are not involved in multicultural teaching. They assume this approach is only designed for teachers who teach language and social arts only. However, some subjects are seen to have a greater opportunity to apply this method than others, but each subject and discipline has a certain part to incorporate cultural and ethnic content into it. This is based on a study conducted by Barry (2013) on trained teachers of science subjects, and they stated that it is very easy to combine the content of teaching the structure of the human body with telling stories about Greek and Italian art. Indeed, the existence of opportunities for the content of ethnic and cultural integration varies according to each subject. According to Omar et al. (2015), the effectiveness of teaching and learning a subject includes several things such as motivation, needs and interests of students, learning objectives, knowing the level of students' maturity, understanding individual differences, observing understanding, integration between existing knowledge and originality and making the educational process an experience which makes students happy. The opportunity is always there for teachers to use content to illustrate concepts, themes and principles in social studies, language arts and music arts.

Although the content is often misunderstood by school practitioners as not suitable for Mathematics and Science subjects, it covers Multicultural Education (Banks & Banks, 2019). The way teachers and students give views and

interact helps them not only use the knowledge produced by others but is able to produce their own knowledge (Maulod et al., 2017). According to Gates (2006), the implementation of the construction of multicultural knowledge and the concepts found in this dimension is challenging because people assume that whatever is written in textbooks, among academics and journals is true. Knowledge construction is the method, activities and questions used by teachers to help their students understand, investigate, and determine the implicit meaning that the teacher is trying to convey. When the construction of this knowledge is implemented in the classroom, teachers need to help them understand how that knowledge is created and how it is influenced by the race, ethnicity, and social class position of an individual or group (Nigutova, 2018).

According to Code (1991), personal, cultural, and social factors influence the formulation of knowledge though the objective of science is ideal. Banks and Banks (2019) stated that there are researchers themselves who do not realize their personal experience and position in society affects the knowledge they produce. He gave an example of how American historians are biased towards the interpretations they make by using their culture and region as a guide. Therefore, it is appropriate for teachers to help students understand whatever form of knowledge they find and then analyse it critically and question it first.

Gates (2006) explains that in implementing this equity pedagogy, teachers practice culturally responsive teaching by using materials and instructional exercises and incorporating important aspects found in the family and culture of their students' communities. Culturally responsive teachers also use "cultural knowledge, existing experiences, frames of reference and presentation styles of students of various ethnicities to make learning relevant and effective (Gay, 2018). This is where the teacher's wisdom lies in helping students use their existing knowledge, experience, and new ideas to learn. This multicultural pedagogy also needs to be inclusive so that it can be used by various nations.

One of the goals of multicultural education is to reduce prejudice and improve relationships between races, ethnicities, religions, cultures, and groups (Banks & Banks, 2019). Stephan and Stephan (2004) asserted that improving this relationship is a daunting task because negative elements have taken root in the history of every society and if left to continue without any intervention, it will continue from generation to generation. These prejudicial characteristics can be found based on group, race, ethnicity, origin, gender, age, social class, caste, disability status, sexual orientation, religion, language and region and even social power. History or physical differences also sometimes have the potential for prejudice to exist (Nelson, 2016). Thus, Gates (2006) asserted that reducing prejudice can be done by identifying and correcting educational practices, policies and procedures that can create a sense of difference between students of different racial and ethnic identities.

In terms of empowerment, the school should be seen as a social system, even bigger than what we can see which will eventually become an institution with an interconnected social structure in terms of status, role, and interaction patterns (Banks & Banks, 2019). School culture is one of the important factors which has an impact on students. In the 21st century, teachers focus too much on collaborative learning. Therefore, schools need to educate their teachers to have the knowledge to incorporate multiethnicity into social practices to achieve a balance in diversity as well as subtle unity. According to Zirkel (2008), the climate of racism and prejudice needs to be changed to something positive because it is an important aspect in the practice of multicultural education.

There are several things that help improve school achievement in empowering school culture. According to Haycock (2001), adherence to state standards, a challenging curriculum, extra help for students, excellent teachers, and a constant focus on the academic core is a recipe for success. As for students, they need to be provided with opportunities through additional help from the school in achieving high standards and all teachers must be excellent and give full commitment to producing excellent academics for students.

The implementation of Multicultural Education in schools can build an attitude of tolerance and solidarity among students who have various beliefs, social status, ethnic groups, and intelligence levels (Barsihanor et al., 2021). Apart from that, this Multicultural Education is a systematic effort to build students' understanding of the reality of a pluralistic society (Sulistyo & Indarto, 2022). The implementation of Multicultural Education also needs to be implemented in the early stages of children because they need to be equipped with an attitude of tolerance as early as possible (Suri & Chandra, 2021).

5. Conclusion

The level of implementation related to content integration, multicultural knowledge building, equity pedagogy, implementation related to reducing prejudice in the context of multicultural education is at a moderate level. However, the implementation related to the empowerment of school culture and social structure in Multicultural Education is at a high level. Therefore, it is suggested that those involved in in-service training, for instance the Ministry of Education or the State Education Department can plan and implement training related to multicultural education for teachers who are currently serving. The Teacher’s Training Institute (IPG), and the Faculty of Education in Public Universities are also suggested to include elements or subjects of multicultural education in the teacher training curriculum for primary school teachers.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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