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Multicultural education practice in Malaysia

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Abstract

The primary goal of multicultural education is towards offering fair opportunity to all children with different cultural background and simultaneously enable them to interact with the community of various background, hence, producing a quality and unwavering future generation integrating physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual element. Therefore, Islamic Education teachers must be committed to the realization of multi-cultural education and must understand the concept of cultural differences through distinction of ethnicity, language, and cultural practices. To promote cultural diversity, teachers should be using methods that are appropriate to the cultural diversity of the students so that they will not fall behind in their learning process. This study is aimed to explore the practice of Islamic education teachers in implementing multicultural education in the teaching of Islam. This is a qualitative study using case study design. Data were obtained through semi-structure interviews and analysed using Nvivo 8. Five Islamic Education participants have been chosen through a purposive sampling technique. The study found that teachers have been using various methods of strategies in implementing multicultural education. Such methods are the methods of advice, explanation, flashback, drilling, talk, storytelling, contextual, lectures, and discussions. It is hoped that this study can serve as a guide for the teaching of Islamic Education in a classroom with students from various backgrounds and stimulate peaceful interaction and integration.

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1. Introduction

The Quran specifically mentions that the concept of human diversity is a *sunnahtullah*. Differences of color, race, appearance, religion and belief are proofs of authority and wisdom of Allah as stated in chapter 30 verses 22. The Quran urges Muslims to help each other, greet and mingle regardless of skin color, culture and race to create interaction between humanity and justice between fellow human beings, as stated in in Quran chapter 4 verses 58. These differences are not causes of conflict among humans. However they are blessings for mankind.

In terms of Islamic education' role, intelligence, and appearance of Islamic Education teachers in teaching is necessary because their role is not only to be a teacher or instructor, but also as *da'i* (preacher) (Ab.Halim 2005). Implementation of cultural values could also be carried out by co-curricular activities (Syed Ismail et al. 2010). Cultural values diversity such as respect, cooperation, tolerance, unity of interest, can be implemented indirectly. Similarly, the importance of tolerance, solidarity, and cooperation regardless of ethnicity could be emphasized especially in maintaining the peace and prosperity of the nation (Najeemah 2005; Syed Ismail and Ahmad Subki 2010). The understanding of diversity is not solely for the purpose of academic achievement but also to promote unity among students from different races (Abdul Razaq et al., 2010). It is hoped that this understanding would prevent stuff that will cause conflict and misunderstanding among citizens, especially Malaysian citizens which comprise of different ethnicity.

The diverse backgrounds of students in Malaysia's education system requires citizens to understand others, ethnics and stay united in hope of creating a harmonious society (Shamsul Amri 2012). Therefore, the need to celebrate the diversity of students was enshrined as one of the five aspirations of the Malaysian education system, which is "an education system that offers a shared experience and values to children by appreciating diversity" (National Education Development Plan 2013-2025:p: 21). This is consistent with the composition of Malaysian population which was 28.3 million in 2010, comprising of 67.4% Malay, 24.6% Chinese, 7.3% Indians, and 0.7% other. Thus students' and young generations' understanding and awareness of cultural diversity since school help ensure the survival of the nation and country. For example, through implicit and explicit curriculum, the Ministry of Education sought to create a united and mutually accepted cultural differences between races (Ahmad Ali Seman, 2010).

1.1 Concept Of Cultural Diversity In Islamic Education

Islam provides for freedom of religion for mankind as stated in Quran verses 256 chapter 2. Cultural diversity of nations such as language, way of life, religion and dress habits and practical values are indicators of civilization for a human (Ibn Khaldun 2000). The existence of race or nationality, culture and the variety way of life have recognized in Islamic teaching. Whereas in language, it also has a relationship with the socio-culture. This means an ethnic language is influenced by cultural factors. The prophets for example, received a revelation in their own ethnic languages as stated in chapters 14 verses 4. The existence of multiple languages is also a sign of the greatness of Allah. Muslims have recognized any languages in the world. The essence of Islamic teachings are suitable to be incorporated into any language. More ever it is an advantage for teacher who serves as preachers if he or she skilled more than one language, as recounted in the Quran about the superiority and advantage of the prophet Sulaiman who is proficient the language of animals and spirits. The ability and skillfull of many languages would help preacher in culture of people and nation.

Cultural diversity in education is possible through a variety of dimensions including intellectual intelligence, gender, race, ethnicity, and family background. Thus, it has implications on student's learning style and culture. Dealing with diversity, teachers need to be wise in giving fair education (equity education) to students. Indeed, teachers' wisdom are to manage the learning situation and provide activities that foster an appreciation of the values of solidarity, create understanding, reduce polarization, and change students' perceptions about race relations, especially in this era of globalization Ali Seman (2011).

As stated above, therefore such question should be raise, are the Islamic Education teachers has the competence

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