

Intercultural Awareness of Chinese Teachers in National Type Schools (Chinese), Malaysia

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The enrollment of non-Chinese students in National Type Schools (Chinese), Malaysia has increased considerably, and as a consequence, National Type Schools (Chinese) have now developed into a multicultural field with the changes of student ethnic structure and campus culture. Therefore the purpose of this study was to explore on the intercultural awareness of Chinese teachers. This study was targeted at Chinese teachers in National Type Schools (Chinese), Malaysia which were selected using random sampling and snowball sampling through a survey to conduct an in-depth interview. Qualitative research method was adopted via semi-structural interview, supplemented by quantitative method survey to gain a better result.

A total of 185 surveys were distributed and 14 interviews were constructed for data collection and analysis. The major findings are as follows:

1. Malaysia is known as a diverse country with a rich environment and social conditions to foster intercultural awareness. As a result, the overall initiative of intercultural awareness of Chinese teachers was relatively strong, as well as a positive acceptance of diversification. However, a general lack of participation in the real intercultural communicative activities was found. With the enrollment of more non-Chinese students, it is more challenging for Chinese teachers to accomplish effective teaching.
2. The personal and environment issue are the key factors of intercultural awareness of the Chinese teachers accepting non-Chinese students. This discrepancy can be attributed to the variations of family background, academic training, career, non-Chinese's peer interaction and multicultural environment. The values of non-Chinese parents, student academic achievements, curriculum progress and political factors had definitive effect in teaching the non-Chinese students. On average, most teachers were in agreement that the non-Chinese students study in the National Primary School would be a better solution.
3. There was a strong relationship between the teachers' teaching approaches on non-Chinese students and their intercultural awareness. The intensity level of intercultural awareness was associated with the performance in teaching methods, teaching content, teaching evaluation and other extents. In general, Chinese teachers' intercultural awareness and teaching behavior were more towards positive. However, this study also reported lack of attention to non-Chinese students and the teaching methods used were less effective. Moreover, the teachers demonstrated divergence response in the intercultural awareness among educational objectives, strategies and contents. The fact that non-Chinese students enrolled to the Chinese Primary School has increased these teachers' burden and affected their teaching methods
4. Being the influence by the environmental, political and social conditions, the development of intercultural awareness of Chinese teachers in National Type Schools (Chinese), Malaysia is slow and inattentive. The cultivation of intercultural awareness is necessary and in urgent, especially for the more passive teachers. Therefore, some strategies are proposed in order to improve the intercultural awareness and professional development of the teachers–

According to the findings and results, some reliable suggestions for future training and policy development in Malaysian Chinese educational institutions are proposed. Moreover, recommendations for further researches are offered in this dissertation. The importance of intercultural awareness is highlighted as not only improves the overall cultural quality of the teachers' group, but also lays a solid foundation for the non-Chinese students to study in National Type Schools (Chinese), Malaysia. Given that the researcher strongly believe that the Malaysian government should implement a relatively tolerant educational policy and respect the multi-ethnic cultural background, and so are the teachers, for contribution to a harmonious political situation nationwide.

Keywords: National Type Schools (Chinese), Chinese Teacher, Intercultural Awareness, Non-Chinese Students