

FOSTERING INTER GROUP CONTACTS AMONG MULTIRACIAL STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

Banks (1995) names prejudice reduction as one of five dimensions of multicultural education. Within this context, a study on the role of curriculum programmes in fostering intergroup contacts among the multiracial students of higher education was conducted in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Johor. The main purpose of this study was to determine the level of knowledge(K), attitude(A) and practice(P) of students from difference ethnic groups in fostering intergroup contacts. A total number of 130 undergraduate students participated in the study. The study revealed that the students fall into the medium level of knowledge (3.22), attitude (3.67) and practice (3.39) towards fostering intergroup contacts. Spearman correlation coefficient test results showed there is no significant relationship between the levels of KAP across gender and race. Conversely, analyses of ANOVA divulged a significant racial group difference in the levels of knowledge; meanwhile attitude and practice had no significance racial group difference in fostering intergroup contacts. It is hoped that the findings on the levels of KAP in fostering intergroup contacts among the multiracial students would provide significant information where the issues of multiculturalism is concern.

Keywords: Intergroup contacts, multiracial students, knowledge, attitude, and practice.

Introduction

Multicultural education is an approach to teaching and learning that is based on democratic values that affirm cultural pluralism within culturally diverse societies in an interdependent world. Therefore the understanding of other cultures is crucially important and it may help to maintain the stability in society. Living in multicultural society requires a high level of understanding and respectfulness to those from other cultures. In this context one of the best ways to inculcate this value is through education. Education is a vital device in Malaysia as the country needs a tool to integrate its multi-religious and multi-ethnic population. Nowadays, it is essential for the higher learning institutions' curriculum to incorporate elements that enhance the understanding of the multicultural nature of Malaysian society. In line with this, the National Education Philosophy (NEP) has provided a well-established framework regulating the education system, which provides a quality education for all.

“Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysians citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large.” (National Education Philosophy, 1996)

Despite the noble objectives of the National Education System as stated in NEP, how much of these have been translated into the actual education setting in institutions of higher education? How are the students being taught and its effectiveness in helping students to

understand the culturally diverse society in Malaysia? How much has the students gained? Therefore, this paper attempts to reveal the level of knowledge, attitude and practice among the multiracial students in campus. Only with such findings can the educators recognize the different needs and effective methods of teaching as different students bring different backgrounds to the same educational experience. Such proper implementation of multiculturalism is crucial for all students to receive the education that is necessary for their success (Simonson, 1995).

Literature Review

Multicultural education is an idea, an approach to school reform, and a movement for equity, social justice, and democracy. Specialists within multicultural education emphasize different components and cultural groups. However, a significant degree of consensus exists within the field regarding its major principles, concepts, and goals. A major goal of multicultural education is to restructure schools so that all students acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function in an ethnically and racially diverse nation and world. Multicultural education seeks to ensure educational equity for members of diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic groups, and to facilitate their participation as critical and reflective citizens in an inclusive national civic culture.

A key goal of multicultural education is to help individuals gain greater self-understanding by viewing themselves from the perspectives of other cultures. One of the major goals of multicultural education is to provide students with cultural and ethnic alternatives. In addition, Gardner & Whittaker (2006) asserts another goal of multicultural education is to afford all students with the skills, attitudes and knowledge needed to function within their ethnic culture, the mainstream culture, and within and across other ethnic cultures.

Besides, another significant goal of multicultural education is to reduce pain and discrimination that members of some ethnic and racial group experience because of their unique racial, physical and cultures characteristics. Finally, multicultural education aims to assist students to master essential reading, writing, and computational skills. According to Banks (1991), multicultural content in curriculum can facilitate students to master important skills in these areas not only in education but also in real life situation.

Along with showing racial differences in the perception of racial climate, research suggests that college students' perceptions of norms around race on campus have implications for important academic and social outcomes for ethnic minority students, such as performance and persistence enhanced interaction with teachers, and college involvement (Cabrera et al, 1999).

Multicultural education not only educates children about the experiences and histories of students of colour but it also encourages students to recognize the social injustices that racial and ethnic minorities faced (Simonson, 1995; Bigelow, 1999). Multicultural education empowers students to change the social inequalities that exists within society and at the same time promote close intergroup relation among them (Sleeter & Grant, 1987).

Slavin's 2001 research review on cooperative learning and interracial contact activities indicate that these interventions help students to develop more positive racial attitudes, to make more cross-racial friendships, and have positive effects on the academic achievement of Latino and African-American students. Lee's (1993) research on culturally responsive teaching indicates that when teachers use the cultural characteristics of students in their teaching the academic achievement of students from diverse groups can be enhanced.

These studies provide guidelines that can help teachers to improve intergroup relations in their classrooms and schools. One of the earliest curriculum studies was conducted by Trager and Yarrow (1952). They found that a democratic, multicultural

curriculum had positive effects on the racial attitudes of teachers and on those of first- and second-grade students. Litcher and Johnson (1969) found that white, second-grade children developed more positive racial attitudes after using multiethnic readers. Bogatz and Ball (1971) found that *Sesame Street*, PBS's multicultural television program, had a positive effect on the racial attitudes of children who watched it for long periods. In a study by Weiner and Wright (1973), children who themselves experienced discrimination in a simulation developed less prejudiced beliefs and attitudes toward others. Multicultural social studies materials and related experiences had a positive effect on the racial attitudes of African-American four-year-old children in a study conducted by Yawkey and Blackwell (1974).

Research indicates that curriculum interventions such as plays, folk dances, music, role playing, and simulations can have positive effects on the racial attitudes of students. A curriculum intervention that consisted of folk dances, music, crafts, and role playing positively influenced the racial attitudes of elementary students (Bigler, 1999).

Teaching effectively in a multicultural classroom requires culturally sensitive strategies and content to provide equal opportunities for academic success and individual growth of all students. The most effective teachers have learned to understand the cultures of students and their students trust them (Schlosser, 1992). McGregor (1993) used meta-analysis to integrate findings and to examine the effects of role playing and antiracist teaching on reducing prejudice in students. Twenty-six studies were located and examined. McGregor concluded that role playing and antiracist teaching "significantly reduce racial prejudice, and do not differ from each other in their effectiveness".

Institution of higher education is the major institution of socialization; it is a critical arena in which inequality is perpetuated. However, higher learning institutions have the ability to spread the ideology of multiculturalism and create an environment and students bodies that values acceptance or it can create an environment that breed's racism and

discrimination. Youngsters are aware of racial differences before entering schools, but these learning institutions can influence the learner's attitude towards these differences. Therefore, it is important for higher education to address racial differences effectively in the curriculum so youngsters can be exposed to positive attitudes towards racial differences.

Though at present, there isn't any specific subject on multiculturalism in the Malaysian education system, the importance of multiculturalism cannot be denied. Malaysia being a culturally diverse country is highly committed in providing education to all. As such, learners bring to class not only differing racial and ethnic heritages but also a wide range of histories perspectives, experiences, expectations and approaches to learning. All of these factors will influence learners' educational experience (Wlodkowski, 2003). Hence, educators must be knowledgeable about method and strategies that can be utilized to increase the level of multiculturalism within learning environment and society. Educators are encouraged to identify the value of ethnic and cultural diversity as a basis for societal enrichment, cohesiveness, and survival. They must also know in detail about experiences, viewpoints, and needs of the various cultural groups so that they are able to educate the students about living in multicultural society (Abdul Rahim, 2003).

Institutions of higher education have the power to enhance or discourage a person's education performance. Educators have the responsibility to use the learners' culture and experiences as vehicle for learning about academics as well as building respect for each other. Educators who value multiculturalism empower students to respect themselves, others and eventually will become motivated to change injustice.

Through multicultural education, students' readiness, understanding, response and acceptance of various ethnics and cultures in our country would be inculcated to ensure the country will be more harmonious in the future. In ensuring Malaysians who live in a multiracial country to be more tolerant, it is important to inculcate them with the sense of

equality and understanding. One of the effective instruments is through formal education which has appropriate materials and teaching methodology (Hall, 2000).

By looking from the perspective of creating nation's nation, re-evaluation of educational philosophy, system and practice should be done effectively. By taking such approach, the existed philosophy and system will be having added-values as well as fulfilling the current needs of pluralistic society in Malaysia. Therefore, continuous research and rearrangement of curriculum and co curriculum and the use of text books should be done in order to bring up to date the unification of cultural education in campus. Co-curriculum activities which can instil understanding among ethnicity, culture and national value should be given a priority. At the same time, cooperation among campuses, lecturers and students in the same faculties should be enhanced either by means of curriculum or co-curriculum activities (Rozita, 2007).

Robiah (1994) indicated that through multicultural education, students will be assisted to develop cooperation, understanding, and readiness to accept various ethnic cultures existing in Malaysia. This should be developed into an asset to build a harmonious society. The sense of togetherness and willingness to cooperate is of utmost importance. As such a suitable formal education system should be developed using suitable approaches and materials.

Studies to restructure the curriculum and co-curriculum in education system need to be undertaken from time to time to ensure that cultural education and social integration occur in schools. Stress should be placed upon understanding between ethnic groups and national values. Cooperation between schools, teachers and students in the same district need to be enhanced.

With this awareness, cultural education, in particular that of national culture and multiculturalism should be stressed upon at various levels of education. Under the influence

of globalization and the borderless world, the principle of togetherness, mutual respect and tolerance should be repackaged on a broader and general perspective.

The present study accordingly posed three research questions: (1) What is the level of knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) of students? (2) What is the relationship between levels of KAP to the selected factors such as gender and race? And (3) What is the difference on the levels of KAP between the Malays, Chinese and Indians? The findings will provide insight into understanding the levels of KAP of the students regarding multiculturalism. The implications and significance of the study will be used as a basis for the most effective methods of teaching in inculcating the issues of multiculturalism, which is becoming an important agenda in Malaysia's educational system.

Methodology

The study employed a survey design as it attempted to assess the levels of knowledge, attitude and practice in a multicultural society. Survey method is used in this descriptive research which is a specific method to collect data from a big population. Data will be analyzed in descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage and mean value will describe the perpetuate group of data.

Participants

Respondents in this study comprised of undergraduate students from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. They were from all the 13 faculties and their participation was voluntarily. The sampling method used is stratified random sampling, where samples are chosen based on faculties they represent. In a stratified random sample of a given size, all such subsets of the frame are given an equal probability. Each element of the frame thus has an equal probability of selection: the frame is not subdivided or partitioned. In this study, random sample will then again be chosen from each stratum which is Malays, Chinese and Indians. As for this study, the researcher has decided to select 10 respondents to represent

students from each faculty in UTM. Therefore, there are 130 respondents who participated in this study.

The rationale for selecting these students was due to their experience and exposure to the multicultural environment for a reasonable length of time in account of their schooling duration. One hundred and thirty sets of questionnaires were distributed among the students and were returned back after completion.

Instrument

A set of questionnaire was used as an instrument to gather data. The questionnaire consisted of 45 self-administered items which comprised of demographic variables in Section A and KAP variables in section B. The coefficient of items of KAP scale displayed a Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha of 0.795, that is bigger than 0.5

Findings

The analyses consists of Demographic data of students' gender, race, age and year(s) of study, Level of knowledge in fostering intergroup contacts dimension, Level of attitude in fostering intergroup contacts dimension and Level of practice in fostering intergroup contacts dimension.

Demographic

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents According to Gender

Gender	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Female	79	60.8
Male	51	39.3
Total	130	100

Table 1 indicates the total number of respondents from UTM according to gender. The respondents consisted of 79 (60.8%) female students and 51 (39.2%) male students. The distribution of the respondents according to gender was unequal. This is probably due to the fact that there are more female students in the university.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents According to Age Group

Age Group	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
18- 20	50	38.6
21- 23	46	35.4
24- 26	36	26.2
Total	130	100

Table 2 indicates the distribution of respondents according to age. 50 (38.5%) respondents were 18- 20 years old. This is followed by 46 (35.4%) respondents were 21-23 years old and 34 (26.2%) respondents were 24- 26 years old as all of sample coming from different year of study.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents According to Race

Race	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Malay	61	46.9
Chinese	38	29.2
Indian	31	23.8
Total	130	100

Table 3 shows the distribution of respondents according to race. 61 (46.9%) respondents are Malays. This is followed by 38 (29.2%) Chinese and 31 (23.8%) Indian students.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents According to Year(s) of Study

Year(s) of Study	Frequency (<i>f</i>)	Percentage (%)
Year 1	34	26.2
Year 2	38	29.2
Year 3	25	19.2
Year 4	33	25.4
Total	130	100

Table 4 indicates the total number of respondents according to year(s) of study. 34 (26.2%) respondents were in Year 1. This is followed by 38 (29.2%) respondents were in Year 2, 25 (19.2%) respondents were in Year 3 and 33 (25.4%) respondents were in final year (Year 4)

Levels of KAP in Fostering Intergroup Contacts

Table 5: Mean and Respondents' Assessment of Role of Knowledge, Attitude and Practice in Fostering Intergroup Contact

Description	Mean	Level
Role of knowledge in fostering inter group contacts among multiracial students.	3.22	Medium
Role of attitude in fostering inter group contacts among multiracial students.	3.67	Medium
Role of practice in fostering inter group contacts among multiracial students.	3.39	Medium
Average Mean Score	3.43	Medium

Results based on Table 5 reveal the mean score for respondents' assessment on the role of knowledge, attitude and practice in fostering intergroup contact among multiracial students. It is revealed that the mean score for the role of knowledge in fostering intergroup contact among multiracial students is 3.22, which indicate the mean value resulted at the medium level. The result pertaining to the role of attitude in fostering intergroup contact among multiracial students show a mean score of 3.67, which also signify the mean value

resulted at the medium level. Role of practice in fostering intergroup contacts among multiracial students illustrate a mean score of 3.39 and also place at the medium level. Specifically, the average mean score for the role of knowledge, attitude and practice in fostering intergroup contact among multiracial students is 3.43, which signify it at the medium level.

Table 6: Relationship between Levels of KAP towards Gender and Race

		Knowledge	Attitude	Practice	
Spearman's rho	Gender of Respondent	Correlation Coefficient	-.059	.096	.130
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.508	.278	.141
		N	130	130	130
	Race of Respondent	Correlation Coefficient	.025	-.167	.127
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.779	.057	.149
		N	130	130	130

One of the objectives of this study is to determine whether there is a significant relationship between knowledge, attitude and practice towards the students' gender and race, where the three variables (KAP) are presented in Likert scale. The correlation analysis using the Spearman correlation showed that there was a poor relationship between KAP and selected factors such as gender and race. It is revealed that the poor relationship between KAP and gender with a correlation coefficient of -0.059 (knowledge), 0.096 (attitude) and 0.130 (practice) and were not significant at the 0.05 level ($p= 0.508, 0.278, 0.141$) respectively. Results pertaining to the poor relationship between KAP and race with a correlation coefficient of 0.025 (knowledge), -0.167 (attitude) and 0.127 (practice) and were not significant at the 0.05 level ($p= 0.779, 0.057, 0.149$) respectively. Therefore, it can be concluded, in this study that the gender and race of respondents significantly no exerted

influence on their level of knowledge, attitude and practice towards intergroup contacts among multiracial students.

Table 7: Knowledge among Multiracial Students towards Intergroup Contacts

Ethnic Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Malay	52	44.77	9.88
Chinese	43	52.14	9.49
Indian	35	48.97	11.71
Total	130	48.34	10.68

F = 6.14 Significance = 0.03

Preliminary analysis of the data revealed that an average student had knowledge regarding multiculturalism totaling a mean score of 48.34 but the average knowledge for each of the three ethnic groups seemed to be different. Chinese students had the highest knowledge about multiculturalism with a score mean of 52.1 and the Malay students the lowest mean, 44.77 (see Table 7). Therefore, one of the appropriate hypotheses in this study is that there is no significance difference in the level of knowledge from different ethnic groups. To test this hypothesis, the one way ANOVA (analysis of variance) was used. The analysis yielded a significant result with F ratio of 6.14 which was significant at the 0.05 level ($p = 0.03$). Therefore it can be concluded that the students from different ethnic groups had different levels of knowledge, which proved that it is failed to accept null hypothesis.

Table 8: Attitude among Multiracial Students towards Intergroup Contacts

Ethnic Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Malay	52	56.13	5.15
Chinese	43	54.07	5.95
Indian	35	54.91	6.09
Total	130	55.12	5.71

F = 1.59 Significance = 0.21

Preliminary analysis of the data divulged that an average student had attitude towards fostering intergroup contacts totaling 55.12 but the average attitude for each of three ethnic groups appeared to be different. Malay students had the highest level of attitude with a mean value of 56.13 and the Chinese students the lowest (see Table 8). Therefore one of the appropriate hypotheses in this study is that there is no significant difference in the level of attitude of students from different ethnic groups. In order to test this hypothesis, the one way ANOVA (analysis of variance) was used. The analysis capitulated a significant result with F-ratio 1.59 which was not significant at the 0.05 level ($p = 0.21$). Therefore, it can be concluded that the students from different ethnic groups had no different level of attitude, which identified that is failed to reject null hypothesis.

Table 9: Practice among Multiracial Students towards Intergroup Contacts

Ethnic Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Malay	52	49.84	6.72
Chinese	43	50.98	8.66
Indian	35	52.03	7.79
Total	130	50.81	7.68

F = 0.86 Significance = 0.43

Pertaining to level of practice, results revealed that an average student had totaling mean score of 50.81 but the average practice for each of the three ethnic groups also seemed to be different. Indian students had the highest level of practice with a mean value of 52.03 and Malay students the lowest (see Table 9). Therefore, one of the appropriate hypotheses in this study is that there is no significance difference in the levels of knowledge, attitude and practice of students from different ethnic groups. To test this hypothesis, the one- way ANOVA (analysis of variance) was used. The analysis yielded a significant result with F-ratio of 0. 86 for level of practice which was not significant at the 0.05 level ($p= 0.43$). Therefore, it can be concluded that the students from different ethnic groups had no different

level of practice towards multiculturalism in relation to foster intergroup contacts, which notified that it is failed to reject null hypothesis.

Discussion and Conclusion

A closer examination on the level of knowledge, attitude and practice towards multiculturalism in order to inculcate positive inter group contact among multiracial students. From the observation, it is revealed that majority of students fall into the medium (3.22) level of knowledge towards multiculturalism. With such observation, it is expected that the level of attitude and the level of practice should follow suit. Without a doubt, the result show that the level of attitude among students towards multiculturalism is at the medium (3.67) level as well. Similarly, the level of practice towards multiculturalism is also at the medium (3.39) level. These show that the students are exposed to knowledge of multiculturalism in university through their program or even through their daily interactions with their surroundings but unfortunately, this knowledge has not been internalized and not translated into actions effectively. This could be due to the exam oriented education system in the country where students only memorize and concern more on their notes just for examination purposes only. The other reason could be due to the teaching methodology and teaching approach applied by educators. Some courses and programs do not reflect the needs of knowledge on multiculturalism. They assume that students learn it form reading or daily interactions. However, students may not get sufficient information on how to sustain good relationship between races. One way communication in teaching and learning may also become one of the factors of not achieving high levels of KAP. Information that is not been further elaboration by lecturers on how these knowledge could be applied or translated in their daily lives would lead to inert react towards the awareness on the importance on healthy relationship among races and education about multiculturalism.

This study has been unable to demonstrate that there is a strong relationship between levels of KAP to gender and race of students. Both male and female have a medium level of knowledge and similar result to the level of attitude and level of practice in multiculturalism. The results showed that there was a poor relationship between KAP and selected factors such as gender and race. It is revealed that the poor relationship between KAP and gender with a correlation coefficient of -0.059 (knowledge), 0.096 (attitude) and 0.130 (practice) and significant at the 0.05 level. This illustrates that the levels of knowledge, attitude and practice does not differ according to gender. In other words, gender does not associate with the level of knowledge, attitude or practice towards multiculturalism. This indicates that students irrespective to gender, have almost the same kind perception towards multiculturalism in general. They are not favorable and unfavorable in their knowledge, attitude or practice towards the issue of inter ethnic relations. The assumption that the high level of knowledge one has towards multiculturalism should correspond to favorable attitudes towards inter group contact. However, the result show that students have not internalized the knowledge they had into positive attitudes and good practice in their daily lives. The most important element in living together with different ethnics is the person's ability to perform various types of cognitive or behavioral activities in effective manner. In other words, the practice element is crucial in determining a harmonious coexistence among different ethnics. The result illustrates that the majority of both female and male students have a medium level of practice in multiculturalism. However, there is no significance relationship between them and thus the behaviour towards does not differ across gender and race.

The analysis comparing the level of knowledge, attitude, and practice across the ethnic groups (Malays, Chinese and Indians) revealed that there is significance difference between the levels of KAP across ethnic groups. The findings from this study suggest that Chinese students have higher knowledge about multiculturalism compare to Malays and

Indians. This may be due to the limited exposure they experienced during their whole life especially in primary and secondary school level. A number of students may come from mono ethnic and mono religious school. Thus they do not have the opportunity to interact with students of other ethnic groups and this has deprived them to learn about other cultures, beliefs and lifestyles of different ethnics. On the other hand, the rest of population in the university may come from multiethnic and multi religious schools. Students from these backgrounds have the opportunity to socialize with one another on a daily basis. Hence, they have the advantage of learning and understanding more about cultures, beliefs and lifestyle of different ethnics.

In contrast, Malay students seem to have higher attitude towards multiculturalism compared to Chinese and Indians students. As attitude can be defined as the evaluative reaction of favor or disfavor and can range from extremely negative to extremely positive, through the neutral point, on a dimension such as “good- bad”, “pleasant- unpleasant” or “favor- opposed”, hence the result of this study shows the attitude towards multiculturalism among the students in the medium level also falls according to the same evaluative pattern. Attitude towards the diverse cultures of different ethnic is also a contextual phenomenon. Therefore, the assumption that students from different ethnic groups have similar attitude towards multiculturalism is rejected.

Furthermore, the result indicating on the level of practice shows that Indian students have higher practice towards inter ethnic relations compared to Malay and Chinese students. One of the reasons could be due to the lack of hands on experience in interacting with students from different ethnic groups. The knowledge they obtain from lectures or surroundings have not been able to be applied in their real life setting, as they do not have many friends from other ethnics. The other reason could be due to the teaching method that educators and parents employed; insufficient of daily examples given to further elaborate the

knowledge given. Hence the result in this study showed a similar trend between level of attitude and level of practice among all students from different races. The level of attitude towards multiculturalism and the level of practice towards multiculturalism fall into the same category that is the medium level.

The ANOVA analysis yielded a significant result with F- ratio of 6.14 for level of knowledge which were significant at the 0.05 level (0.003), in contrast, a result of F- ratio, 1.56 for level of attitude and F- ratio, 0.86 for level of practice which were not significant at the 0.05 level ($p= 0.209, 0.426$). A multiple comparison between races had been conducted using the Post Hoc Test yielded only one significant result for the Malays and Chinese regarding knowledge about multiculturalism, which indicated the mean difference of level of knowledge between the Malays and the Chinese was 7.37 and this was significant at 0.05 with the probabilities of error (p) being 0.001 respectively.

Theoretically, given the observed relationship between the level of knowledge, attitude and practice across gender and different ethnic groups, it can be concluded that all students have a medium level of knowledge towards multiculturalism and the similar result goes to the level of attitude and practice towards inter ethnic relations. There is no significance relationship between the levels of KAP across gender and race. However, there is a significant difference on the level of knowledge, attitude, and practice between races which are Malay, Chinese and Indian students. Therefore, it is important to implement a multicultural education in university programs especially in science and technical fields. This is because the broad goals of multicultural education are to enhance understanding, build relationships and self- concepts improve multicultural climates in university and implement curricular that encourage multicultural awareness (Solomon, 1996). Multicultural education allow students to see different point of view, gives all students validation in the classroom, and decreases the amount of prejudice and misunderstanding that occurs between races.

It is necessary to stress values of ethnic diversity and national unity. Lastly, students from various ethnic backgrounds need to know and appreciate attitudes, institutions and tradition they share as Malaysian. Thus, information about other cultures is an important knowledge to students as it is indirectly would internalize positive attitudes, and hopefully it will correspond to favorable practice among multiracial students to build up a healthy relationship as one nation. Thus, knowledge, attitude and practice about multiculturalism are the core values that foster unity among Malaysian of various backgrounds and ethnic identities.

In a nutshell, fostering positive intergroup relations on college and university campuses is the key to enhancing students' democratic skills and preparing them to negotiate differences in a diverse society. The current study suggests that the presence of diverse peers, along with opportunities for facilitated interactions that create contact and expand student knowledge about diverse others, perspectives, and backgrounds, contributes to the development of important skills. First, it establishes that campus conditions as well as students' individual predispositions are essential in considering whether and how positive interactions will occur. An important finding is that opportunities for intensive dialogue in classes and faculty interest in student development both serve to increase student learning as well as foster positive intergroup relations on campus. Improving faculty skills in teaching multicultural classrooms is crucial as is providing sufficient opportunities for students to interact with diverse peer groups outside of the classroom. Students require this experiential learning to develop their intergroup relations skills and those students who lack this experience and the necessary social skills to function effectively in a diverse society should be of serious concern to educators. As a society, we have much to learn about crossing racial, social and political divides; this study suggests that the college environment can be a unique

opportunity for learning together how to best achieve the multicultural society we aspire to become.

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