

**Maltese Educators' Perceptions of Democracy, Equality and Justice in
Multicultural Education**

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Abstract

The perceptions and attitudes of educators towards multicultural education are strongly correlated to the manner in which multicultural education is applied. Previous research indicates that culture undeniably has an effect on education, nonetheless, education administrators may not have enough knowledge about multicultural education practices. The aim of the study was to identify the perceptions and interpretations of multicultural teaching from seventeen respondents employed as educators. These educators were all Maltese, teaching Maltese as a second language to adult learners who originated from diverse cultural backgrounds and were living in Malta. The researcher used a qualitative case study design of online interviews to identify the practices that educators perceive to be the best in promoting effective multicultural education. Based on content analysis, the key concepts and activities defined as effective in maintaining multicultural education performance include equality, democracy and justice. Multi-ethnic teaching offers the opportunity to equitably consider and accept divergent viewpoints, which in turn allows proper cohesion not only among students but also educators. Indeed, multi-ethnic education is essential; individuals with varying backgrounds and experiences deserve equality, and community groups need proper representation. This research thus concludes that the majority of teachers agree that practices such as ensuring equality, democracy and justice for all learners regardless of their ethnic, gender, or religious context are of high significance in encouraging inclusion, multicultural education, and student success.

Keywords: democracy, equality, good practice, justice, multicultural teaching, teachers' perspectives

Introduction

With the disappearance of boundaries due to globalization and migration, the concept of homogeneity amongst nations has been extremely fragmented, resulting in most of the countries becoming multicultural. For generations, Malta has used its strategic location in the centre of the Mediterranean between the European continent and Africa to support the Maltese people as a remote small island on the outskirts of Europe, with basically minimal natural resources. Owing to abundant collaborations with Europe at all levels, Maltese students, teachers, and administrators, among others, have been introduced to new concepts, current thoughts, and novel methodologies (Tabone & Nardelli, 2014).

In the last decade, Malta has seen a rise in the number of immigrants arriving by sea, with 2019 being quite a milestone year in relation to the number of people who disembarked in Malta upon being rescued in the Central Mediterranean. Most of the refugees, fleeing from North African countries such as Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt, sailed over on smugglers' boats. Crammed into overcrowded, dangerous boats, thousands drowned, causing the Mediterranean Sea to become a mass graveyard. As a result, Mediterranean countries such as Malta, Italy, and Spain were required to enhance their rescue operations. Sudan, Bangladesh, Eritrea, Libya, Nigeria and Somalia are among the main nationalities of individuals disembarked in Malta (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2020). Over 25,000 refugees have arrived on the shores of Malta since the beginning of the twenty-first century (Schumacher, 2020). This figure equates to 5% of the population of Malta, which is currently close to 500,000. Given the small size of the country, this influx can be understood geographically as 250 refugees per square mile (Schumacher, 2020). To put this in perspective, this nominal figure would be equal to 18 million refugees landing in the US. The foreign population in Malta was 98,918 in 2019, which is more than eight times its foreign population in 2005 of 12,112, or 3% of the total population (UNHCR, 2020).

Both the significant migration of people from all over Europe and beyond and the global economic recession have been viewed as significant threats to the well-being of the Maltese population (Baldacchino, 2009). As Mitchell (2002) argues, developing their own national identity required the Maltese to rise from the darkness of centuries of colonial rule, and many worry that they could once again lose their hard-earned identity. While humane understanding and respect for one another is one of the greatest ethical principles, literature suggests that, “the persistent barriers of racism, fear, ignorance and imaginative stereotypes remain constant obstacles to fruitful human relations” (Cuccioletta, 2001, p. 1). These barriers, which could arise in Malta, often lead to cultural inequity, xenophobia, and economic instabilities within and across social classes (Lee, 2007).

Owing to this influx of immigrants to Malta, the racial and cultural make-up of schools, workplaces and communities has risen. Social shifts in the school system have also been reported, calling for changes in educational methods and approaches (J. Banks & C. Banks, 2019). Only in recent years have many expatriates felt the need to learn Maltese as a second language (ML2). Although foreign adults have demonstrated an interest in ML2 classes and thus increased their demand, there is a notable lack of linguistic and multicultural research and no previous large-scale examinations on ML2 teaching and learning (Żammit, 2019). Moreover, before the influx of expatriates in Malta, Maltese teachers were trained to teach Maltese as a first language to Maltese mono-cultural native speakers. It was only in 2014 that many teachers began extending it to students from diverse cultural backgrounds. A

postgraduate training programme in Teaching Maltese as a Foreign Language started recently in 2018.

Multi-ethnic teaching aims to prepare learners for a constantly diversifying society and to elevate their ability to communicate with other people by engaging them fully in the learning process and supporting their encounters in a safe classroom environment. Successful teaching in multicultural class settings calls for culturally sensitive approaches and the creation of an equal chance for academic accomplishment and victory and individual development for each learner (Kahraman, 2017). According to Polat and Kiliç (2013), multicultural teaching incorporates tasks purposed to move away from a culturally dependent mentality, generate sensitivity for different approaches to life, create respect for other people, and the potential of forming neutral opinions by assessing evidence and arguments, self-criticism and intellectual curiosity. According to Kahraman (2017), teachers have a primary role in implementing multicultural teaching that involves opinions like peace, respect, equality and equal chances of success. The teachers' attitudes and perceptions concerning multi-ethnic teaching are openly linked to how they enact multi-ethnic teaching; that is, how they incorporate the variations in the class into the teaching procedures on mutual principles (Kahraman, 2017). Depending on this information, it is right to deduce that educators' awareness and desirable outlooks on multi-ethnic teaching will permit them to attain a higher success level for each learner.

Problem and Purpose Statement

The overall problem and purpose of this research is to ensure multicultural education and teaching effectiveness. Teachers need to assess and constantly change their approaches (Acar-Ciftci, 2019). Sharma (2005) stated that the most efficient educators are the ones that can learn the learners' cultures and beliefs. Teachers have the task of assessing their attitudes, views and partiality that can influence the learners' educational encounter. In the ML2 setting, the purpose of this research is to assess the views and attitudes of the educators' multicultural teaching. Research demonstrates the great impact of culture on education; however, several Maltese teachers do not have enough awareness of multicultural teaching since this immigration issue is current (Triandafyllidou, 2016). The information collected from this research is expected to contribute to the existing studies on the implementation of multi-ethnic teaching methods through the study of ML2 teaching and learning programme.

Literature Review

By reviewing the literature, the current research reflects on the philosophy and experience of defining multicultural education practices among educators. The literature review section assesses the advantages and disadvantages of the approach and the practices of multicultural teaching programmes.

Multiculturalism

A diverse community should be represented in each institutionalised learning system, including students, curricula, values, norms, and staff (Aydin & Tonbuloglu, 2014). This concept was the foundation of multicultural teaching, with the objective that each learner should have similar opportunities for learning regardless of language, gender, race, or social class. By providing comprehensive models focused on the goal of fair opportunity for education and social progress, researchers developed teaching hypotheses based on a bed of critical thought, social justice and equal opportunities (Tarman & Tarman, 2011). Currently, inclusive teachers affirm the objectives of inclusive education to improve curricula, encourage multicultural awareness, create multicultural cultures in learning institutions, cultivate self-concepts,

enhance understanding and establish relationships (Ruggs & Hebl, 2012). These objectives can be accomplished as cultural diversity is perceived to be a resource in the teaching industry and can also enable educators to recognise and embrace differences while building a unified and secure learning organization.

The multiculturalism notion involves cultural aspects like awareness of religious dimension, education, social class, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, language, ethnic background and race. According to Aydin and Tonbuloglu (2014), while there are several types of multiculturalism, there is usually a possibility of integrated thinking as it identifies the availability of ethnic groups in a state and that such situations imply a community that encourages different ethnic groups to develop on their own. Recognising and accepting diversity, instead of just denying it, and not dragging all populations to one level is a better approach compared to the former. There are several examples of multicultural teaching from various academics working in this field (Aydin & Tonbuloglu, 2014; J. Banks & C. Banks, 2019; Basbay & Kagnici, 2011).

Banks and Banks (2019) defined inclusive teaching as teaching purposed to acknowledging and introducing tolerance and respect for variations in cultural aspects, language, religion, colour, ethnicity, social class, disability, sexual orientation and age. Depending on the description, it is justified to describe inclusive teaching as a procedure for developing equivalent teaching chances which enable ethnic diversities to set democratic aspects through opposing other forms of assimilation and racism and valuing all variations (Basbay & Kagnici, 2011). Ultimately, multicultural teaching means being sensitive to multiculturalism in teaching and considering diversities by allowing multiculturalism in teaching approaches and not specialising in formal teaching for every cultural population (Basbay & Kagnici, 2011). Malta is a nation with a cogent educational structure that is beginning to incorporate more inclusive approaches.

The research was conducted in Malta. The age group for compulsory education in Malta is between 5 and 16 years old. This is described in Chapter 327 of the Laws of Malta (The Education Act, 1988) and subsequent reforms. Mandatory education includes six years of primary education followed by five years of secondary education. At the completion of compulsory schooling, students can continue their education in post-secondary and tertiary schools. This study focuses on ML2 in tertiary or post-secondary education. Research on ML2 within the post-secondary/tertiary education sector in Malta is sorely lacking, with minimal evidence of notable data within the field (Camilleri Grima, 2015; Camilleri Grima & Żammit, 2020; Żammit, 2019a; Żammit, 2019b). This study is therefore imperative in providing and discussing educators' perspectives and attitudes towards adults' multicultural education.

The Benefits and Limitations of Multiculturalism in Teaching

According to Ameny-Dixon (2004), the strengths of multicultural teaching include emphasising concepts such as justice, equality and democracy; preventing intercultural disagreements by enabling and promoting the existence of varying populations of the community and creating a societal system where individuals live in harmony; increasing productivity and ensuring the ethical and intellectual growth of each person; increasing the productive problem-solving competencies by adopting several varying views to address the issue; increasing the desirable associations between individuals by attaining common values and goals; decreasing prejudice by bringing together various people and allowing them to interact; and revitalising communities with the richness of varying cultures and assisting in the creation of a refined world view.

The most disapproving view of multicultural teaching in previous research is its incomplete definition. The most solid definition by the advocates of the term is Banks' (2015) description which asserts a concept, a change drive and a procedure. Since the definition is so universal, it develops a fault permitting the experts to translate it when and however they want. Several researchers who have studied multicultural teaching have stressed ethnicity and race and neglected other variations like social class, language, religion and gender (Furman, 2008).

Additionally, several types of research conducted with educators who are implementing multicultural teaching have demonstrated that they do not believe in multicultural teaching practices, they are not given substantial aid from the learning settings in which they work, and they do not have enough awareness of how to practise multicultural teaching (Banks, 2015). However, placing an overemphasis on defining multiculturalism might have unintended and inequitable outcomes. Although people have several identities, overstressing racial and ethnic individualities makes the characters primary and separates the minority groups from the majority ethnic group, which results in threats against the integrity of the social and state order. Multiculturalism is a concept dependant on ethnic beliefs and states that no ethnic group is better. However, each culture sees its own beliefs, perspectives, norms and values to be better than the others. In spite of these contradictory perspectives, establishing a multicultural attitude among people is significant in keeping the social order and safeguarding state unity and honesty (Banks, 2015).

The Role of Teachers in Multi-ethnic Education

According to Basbay and Kagnici (2011), along with individuals who view multiculturalism as a desirable and reactive procedure, individuals are criticising the approach by stating that it could result in worsening the social system. Just as all procedures are linked to education, educators have a vital task in comprehending and enacting multicultural teaching. Sharma (2005) asserted that educators might intentionally or unintentionally participate in traditional educational activities and procedures as they do not comprehend the linguistic, social and racial diversities of the learners.

Mansikka and Holm (2011) in their assessment of educators' perceptions asserted that educators invest too little time in knowing more about their adult learners; therefore, they have extremely limited knowledge about them. They also asserted that teachers make assumptions about learners' encounters from cultural minority populations because of other educators' opinions and the fact that they might not have educated such learners in their past lessons. Aydin and Tonbuloglu (2014) stressed the significance of training teachers that can create educational schemes beginning from preschool to identify an educational infrastructure that will enact a multicultural educational structure. According to Washington (2003), educators require three vital fundamental competencies, including personal comprehension, comprehension of other people's cultures and multicultural academic requirements. According to Basbay and Kagnici (2011), out of the qualifications identified by the National Education Ministry, the ones linked to valuing, respecting and comprehending learners, getting to know more about the learners, educational diversification by considering people's variations and connecting significance to international and state values require that educators are at a particular level regarding multiculturalism. Sharma (2005) pointed out the importance of teacher candidates' potential to improve class environments by recognising and unifying diversity, and that educators should be required to have these attributes.

According to Mansikka and Holm (2011), education aims to concentrate on rather than regulate the learners, accepting them as they develop their skills, and that, as a result, learners require

teachers to naturally consider multiculturalism and provide multicultural teaching. The primary teaching and learning principles necessitate defending learners against any form of discrimination, including sexism, prejudice and racism. Therefore, educators constantly examine their perceptions, partiality and prejudices which can impact learners' encounters. To become a successful teacher, one has to examine and continuously transform him/herself.

Bigatti et al. (2012) stated that for teachers to practice multiculturalism, they have to present more than just course content about diversities. It calls for enabling a progressive and inclusive class environment, feeling the interaction between the learners, and promoting the learners' potential of learning by assisting varying educational approaches and analysis. Aydin and Tonbuloglu (2014) posited that teachers can develop the learners' ethnic, linguistic and cultural knowledge, substantiate their confidence and growth, educate them on the significance of tolerance and inclusiveness, inspire them to interact and work with individuals who differ from them and offer them more efficient teaching by the stated methods. Depending on these statements, it can be deduced that educators have an important task in the initiation and enactment of multicultural teaching, depending on the environment and schedules.

Educators' Perceptions of Multicultural Teaching

Educators' opinions and their trends concerning culturally different learners in the classroom are vital elements in education, inspiration and making differences in teaching among learners irrespective of their beliefs, language, ethnicity, gender and age. The attitudes and opinions impact the educators' expectations and treatment of the students.

Nadelson et al. (2012) identified that the majority of their study participants comprehended and were knowledgeable of the varying concerns in multicultural teaching, and that they anticipated having culturally different learners in their classes. Despite being knowledgeable of the importance of the competencies in working with diverse student groups, new educators were indecisive of how well their teaching programmes had prepared them to teach learners with varying spiritual upbringings and cultures or to interact with the learners' families. According to Sharma (2005), educators who bring powerful biases and undesirable stereotypes concerning different populations have limited possibilities of developing the forms of professional behaviour and belief most related to multicultural responsiveness and sensitivity.

A different pertinent result from the research is that professional and personal opinions and views are notably linked to learners' cross-ethnic encounters. Potential educators with more cross-ethnic encounters have higher possibilities of developing positive professional and individual beliefs concerning different students (Sipra, 2013). Sipra (2013) asserted that educators who have an undesirable view of cultural subgroups have also demonstrated biased and differential treatment of learners depending on labels of gender variations and learners' last names. Educators should know the ethnic sensitivities by participating in the continued and critical procedure of assessing their perceptions, prejudices and biases that impact learners' learning encounters (Sipra, 2013). Since there is a lack of research in multicultural teaching and learning among multicultural adults learning ML2, this study aims to illustrate some teachers' perspectives on multicultural education.

Research Question

The aim of this study is to address the following question: What are the attitudes and perceptions of Maltese educators towards multicultural teaching?

Method

Study Design

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative case study design. The case study methodology is especially helpful when it is necessary to acquire an in-depth comprehension of a problem, occurrence, or phenomenon of concern in its natural actual setting (Yin, 2009). The primary challenge of using case studies is coming up with a comprehensive, complete and rich research that involves all study variances (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In this research, the conceptually-related case study approach was used to describe in detail the participants' perspectives of multicultural education, and to explore the educators' attitudes and experiences of a multicultural initiative in their class, including their awareness of how their pedagogy developed in regards to multicultural education within the real-life context of the ML2 class.

The researcher selected the qualitative interview method as it provides a unique, comprehensive understanding that is hard to obtain from closed survey research (Stoyanova, 2012). Participants were able to freely disclose their encounters and feelings without restrictions. While the figures and facts produced by quantitative studies are undoubtedly important, one can often be left searching for the "why" behind the statistics. This is the reason qualitative studies are important, as participants have the chance to freely elaborate on their responses.

Study Sample

The purposeful sample was used to select the participants for the online interviews. The research respondents comprised 17 educators teaching ML2 to adult learners from diverse cultural backgrounds in the beginning of the 2020–2021 scholastic year. The researcher knew these teachers would provide her with the most accurate and useful information concerning multiculturalism in ML2 adults' classes because most of them were her ex-colleagues and have been teaching ML2 to adults from diverse cultural backgrounds for more than eight years. Once the researcher obtained ethical permission from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee of the University of Malta, she approached these 17 teachers via email, where she provided an explanation of the study. Each participant was able to understand the nature of the study and subsequently approved their participation.

Each respondent willingly provided written consent, allowing the researcher to collect data from them and use it for academic purposes. The information was gathered based on the volunteering rule. The researcher selected teachers above 30 years old because they are more experienced and usually take on leadership roles in addition to their classroom duties (McHugh, 2019), and thus are more familiar with the bureaucratic, logistic, economic, and social structures of the school. Younger teachers, on the other hand, are usually incapable of providing adequate information, pertaining particularly to the issue in question as well as to teaching expertise (McHugh, 2019).

Study Tool and Process

In this research, the participants were asked both structured and unstructured inquiries during the interview. The inquiries were mainly purposed to identify the points of attitudes, views and opinions concerning multicultural education and multiculturalism. The interviews were conducted online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Each interview lasted roughly one hour, totalling seventeen hours of interviews.

The following were the interview questions:

1. How long have you been teaching Maltese as a second language to adults?
2. What do you understand by multicultural teaching?
3. How do you teach Maltese as a second language to different cultural groups?
4. Do you use multicultural teaching when teaching Maltese as a second language?
5. Do you enjoy teaching multicultural students? Why do you enjoy/not enjoy?
6. What do you think are the benefits of multicultural teaching and learning?
7. Which challenges do you experience when teaching multicultural learners?
8. Does the Maltese as a second language curriculum contents cater for multiculturalism?
9. Should teachers vary their teaching approaches when teaching multicultural adult learners?
10. How do you deal with culturally-sensitive topics in class?
11. Do you try to understand the different background of the learners you teach?
12. What can be included in Maltese as a second language teaching to reach multicultural adult learners?

Validity and Reliability

The researcher used the member-checking tool after interviewing the respondents to determine construct validity by distributing the transcripts to the participants to check them out. In this way, the researcher tried to minimise any case of personal bias. According to Thomas (2017), member checks are vital in obtaining respondents' approval to use quotations especially where the anonymity of the respondents cannot be guaranteed.

The researcher also used purposeful sampling of the population to obtain a reliable sample size. The participants were teaching ML2 to adult learners who achieved different levels of learning, and were either teaching in schools or in private lesson formats (Patton, 2002). The researcher also ensured procedural precision and applied self-correcting techniques when using the member-checking tool. Verification strategies and systematic procedural precision are vital reliability tests in both qualitative and quantitative research (Morse et al., 2002).

Data Analysis

The interviews were recorded between the 19th and 22nd October 2020 and were later transcribed. The gathered information was analysed using the content evaluation approach and the findings were combined into reports. Identified themes have been proved by the Nvivo 10 software, which enables the researcher to explore more of the qualitative results, uncover deeper observations and create explicitly expressed, plausible conclusions supported by empirical evidence, while saving time and operating more effectively (Zamawe, 2015).

Findings

The interview evaluations indicated that the respondents agreed on the need for multicultural teaching and have a desirable outlook towards it. The most stressed concepts included democracy, justice and equality, and each respondent settled that individual variations have to be considered and are the richness of diversity and ethnicity. Among the most repeated practices were peace, respect and tolerance.

Equality as a Good Practice in Multicultural Teaching

The interview assessments identified that the word "equality" was reiterated thirty-eight times by the respondents, and it is the most utilised definition. Almost all of the seventeen

respondents stressed the concept of equality and addressed that multi-ethnic teaching promotes equality. Six respondents described multi-ethnic education while stressing equality. When I asked the participants what they understand by the term “multicultural teaching” during language lessons, a participant (P1) described multicultural teaching as follows:

By “multicultural teaching”, I understand that during language lessons, teachers embrace all types of learners’ distinction. This implies equitable teaching for all learners, regardless of their emotional, cognitive, physical, ethnicity, race, gender, language and religion variations (Participant 1, Interview: 19/10/2020).

Another respondent’s (P4) description of multicultural teaching once again stresses the concept of equality by stating:

Multicultural teaching in Maltese as a foreign language course provides, in the most general sense, the same opportunities for Maltese language learning to learners of diverse cultures, languages, religions and nationalities (Participant 4, Interview: 19/10/2020).

All of the seventeen respondents asserted that the main strength and advantage of multicultural teaching is “making sure there is equality” (participant 5, Interview: 19/10/2020) and that it also results in peace. For instance, one respondent (P2) who views equality as a great benefit of multi-ethnic teaching claimed:

The main advantage of multi-ethnic education is to include every member of society in the educational system and to apply the inclusive approach to every learner (Participant 2, Interview: 19/10/2020).

Likewise, another respondent (P3) explained the idea that the main benefit of multicultural teaching is ensuring equality with the statement:

I believe that the greatest benefit is not to abandon the learners of minority groups in our society to their fates but rather to support them and therefore to enable them to enjoy equivalent educational rights (Participant 3, Interview 19/10/2020).

Various respondents argued that by creating a multicultural calendar for comprehending and celebrating diversity, they would encourage each group to voice their views equally and highlight the importance of major events in their country. One respondent (P5) indicated that the language course could contain topics such as equal rights of expression for each group/race and avoidance of prejudice and the traditional teaching method of using only the target language. At the same time, P7 asserted:

During my lessons, I try to reach varying societal groups/races equally. In fact, in my classroom, I encourage my students to translate Maltese words into their native language. I also allow them to show the way they write in their native language on online chats when the lessons are delivered online or on a whiteboard when the lessons are delivered in the classroom. Many students tell me that they see associations between Maltese and their native language but they cannot find any associations with regards to grammar as

Maltese grammar is too Semitic whereas their native language grammar is not Semitic (Participant 7, Interview 20/10/2020).

P7 used a translanguaging process whereby P7's multilingual learners used some of the vocabulary of their first language as an integrated communication mechanism (Canagarajah, 2011). Multilingualism is no longer seen as a limitation to acquiring a second language but as an opportunity (Hult, 2012). P7 is right in stating that since Maltese grammar is of a different language family and, according to Mifsud (1995), 95 percent of Maltese grammar is Semitic, it follows that learners cannot use the translanguaging process concerning Maltese grammar and their first language grammar.

A different respondent (P6) demonstrated his views concerning curriculum content as follows:

The language learning curriculum should respect differences, should give equal opportunity to all learners, and the substance of aspects such as social justice and democracy should be substantially addressed in the language curriculum. As a result, I do my utmost to be objective, unbiased and fair to my students (Participant 6, Interview: 20/10/2020).

The respondents also mentioned the equality aspect of their training which can be encouraged to facilitate and spread multicultural teaching. One respondent (P11) asserted:

Teachers should be trained on the significance and advantages of multiculturalism in learning institutions, including concepts such as universal values, equality, culture and diversity. In addition to treating all students fairly, teachers should also treat all their native languages equally and encourage students to use and see connections between their native language and Maltese (Participant 11, Interview: 21/10/2020).

Another respondent (P9) stressed, “*Systematised, structured and equitable multicultural teaching must first be implemented at school and then we teachers must adopt the same system in our language class*” (Participant 9, Interview: 20/10/2020).

Every respondent argued that different methods and activities should be extended to different social groups and stressed their significance. The respondents found that cases should still include the definition of equality and include comparisons. Respondent 14 gave her notion by stating:

There are many things that may be included in the language teaching environment for various students. Customs and public holidays in various religions (including Christmas Day, Vasanta Panchami, Eid Al-Fitr, Makar Sankrat, the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, the Ramadan Feast) for different ethnic classes (Syrians, Serbian, whites, blacks, Asians, Indian, Kurds, etc.). All types of tasks opposed to prejudice; and reinforcing cultural equity should take their place in the classroom (Participant 14, Interview: 22/10/2020).

A different respondent (P13) stated what can be done for varying groups as follows:

In project-dependent learning surroundings, all students can create homework and projects expressing their mother tongues and cultures. The United Kingdom is conducting this perfectly, so can we. Besides, teachers could stop utilising social studies classes as an instrument for assimilation and transforming them into higher-value classes where universal principles, including equality, social justice, pluralism and democracy, are promoted (Participant 13, Interview: 21/10/2020).

An overall evaluation of the respondents' responses indicates that the concept of equality is emphasised and that there is an agreement on multi-ethnic teaching's significance in promoting equality.

Democracy as a Good Practice in Multicultural Teaching

The interview assessments indicated that all respondents stressed the idea of democracy and addressed the significance of multi-ethnic teaching in creating a democratic community. Two respondents stressed the concept of democracy while describing multicultural teaching. Respondent 8 described multicultural teaching as follows:

Multicultural teaching is a democratic reform initiative in which learners with various differences, including gender, language, religion and race, have equal rights to education (Participant 8, Interview: 20/10/2020).

At the same time, P1 stated that it is the potential of people from varying cultures irrespective of their genders, races, religions and languages to carry on with their learning in the same educational institutions in the setting of social justice and democracy.

Five of the seventeen respondents said they were worried that multicultural teaching could lead to societal division and deteriorate solidarity. However, twelve teachers remarked that multi-ethnic teaching could, on the contrary, contribute to the development of democratic environments. One respondent (P1) demonstrated his perception by stating:

Multi-ethnic teaching does not separate a society or a community. Instead, in communities with variations, it assists them in surviving in more democratic models and settings (Participant 1, Interview: 19/10/2020).

One of the most stated strengths and benefits of multicultural teaching is the potential of forming democratic environments. One respondent (P6) stated “*to be capable of applying concepts like democracy and equality in a healthier manner*” as a benefit of multicultural teaching, while respondent 12 stated “*to assist in developing notions like democracy, rights, brotherhood and tolerance*” and respondent 15 stated that “*it enables a democratic social order*”. Again, respondent 16 stated that “*Attempting to utilise it in communities where democracy is not properly used might result in social conflicts*”, stating the significance in democratic societies of the availability for multi-ethnic teaching to be implemented. The idea that integrating multi-ethnic teaching in the teaching curriculum can result in the creation of democratic consciousness was proposed by respondent 17 stating the benefits as follows:

There can be a chance of benefitting from varying ethnic groups, a democratic mindfulness for everyone will improve, a setting of peace and trust will be created away from issues and fear, it will result in ethnic

interactions and result in social changes and advancements (Participant 17, Interview: 22/10/2020).

A different respondent (Participant 10, Interview: 21/10/2020) demonstrated his/her perceptions on the issues by stating, “*I believe that a change to a more egalitarian teaching structure considering personal needs and variations can be the greatest benefit*”. In stating what is suitable for a multi-ethnic teaching training curriculum for learning a second language, the concept of egalitarianism was stressed again. Egalitarianism is the doctrine that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities (Dworkin, 2000). Respondent 16 claimed the following:

Our language academicians who train the educators need to share that teaching should be done in democratic, social justice, respect and love settings, and these should be practised accordingly (Participant 16, Interview: 22/10/2020).

An assessment of the respondents’ remarks identifies that the concept of democracy is very often emphasised and that multicultural teaching’s impacts on creating democratic societies and settings are frequently repeated.

Justice as a Good Practice in Multicultural Teaching

All ML2 teachers who participated in this study stressed the concept of justice and stated the significance of multi-ethnic teaching in enabling justice. Two respondents stated the notion while describing multi-ethnic teaching, and two others posited that multi-ethnic teaching is connected to the concept of social justice. Respondent 5 stated:

Multi-ethnic teaching involves accepting every student in our language class, irrespective of their race, gender, cultural backgrounds, languages and religions with their principles. It is the potential of approaching everyone with neutrality, tolerance and justice (Participant 5, Interview: 19/10/2020).

Concerning the concepts that multi-ethnic teaching is connected to and its connection in establishing justice, two respondents expressed the following perceptions. Respondent 3 said:

Multi-ethnic teaching is linked to concepts like social justice, equality and differences, and it is asserted that multi-cultural teaching should be practised for communities and societies staying in peace (Participant 3, Interview: 19/10/2020).

Respondent 9 stated that it is a model that initially appeared in the United States after the Civil War, yet it is also a hunt for solutions to eradicate social injustices in countries like the UK, Canada and the US, where the demographics shift with the growth in minority groups. Respondent 4 stated that teaching is linked to concepts like integration, minority rights, social injustices, differences, immigration, citizenship and democracy in this setting. The fact that multi-ethnic teaching emphasises the concept of justice and that it has a value that can identify justice in the community was identified as a strength of multi-ethnic teaching by four respondents. Respondent 13 stressed multi-ethnic teaching’s significance for social justice and human rights; respondent 14 asserted that multi-ethnic teaching instils the statement of justice and equality to a participatory community; respondent 16 claimed that multi-ethnic teaching is the introduction of social justice in society; and respondent 17 defined the contribution to the

attitudes of self-esteem and justice. Social justice was defined as one of the appropriate aspects of enacting multi-ethnic educator training schedules. Respondent 6 stated as follows:

Respect to variations, equality of opportunities to learning and contents of aspects like social justice and democracy should be addressed abundantly in the language curriculum (Participant 6, Interview: 20/10/2020).

An overall assessment of the responses indicates that the significance of multi-ethnic learning of a second language in creating social justice is frequently emphasised and considered to be vital. All respondents had favourable thoughts on multi-ethnic teaching. The majority of the respondents stressed that multi-ethnic learning contributes to creating communities with democratic values, equality and justice for everyone. Therefore, language educators should undergo training on multi-ethnic teaching for democratic communities.

Discussion

Multi-ethnic teaching is a research sector that helps learners acquire the awareness and competencies suitable for engaging in the democratic world and helps people of different ethnic groups to have equal chances for learning (Halvorsen & Wilson, 2010). This study aims to fill a gap in research by assessing teachers' perceptions of multi-ethnic teaching and practices and translating the findings in order to devise a training plan that will contribute to the development of just, democratic, and equal educational systems. Particularly, the evaluation of the research findings notes that each respondent asserted that multi-ethnic teaching is vital and suitable, and the seventeen educators stressed justice, democracy and equality on the issue of multi-ethnic teaching of a second language. The study results indicate that in addition to several other benefits, multi-ethnic learning promotes equality. This equality not only cuts across pedagogical areas, but also within social strata, ultimately helping to build cohesive relations among various nationalities.

The results concur with Sharma (2005), who identified that multicultural education considers each culture as equal and that no culture is superior to the others. Kahraman (2017) linked successful teaching in multi-ethnic classes to offering equal chances for academic successes and individual growth. Multi-ethnic teaching can be considered the first point in eliminating inequality in society because of the certainties in handling the existing educational curriculum's challenges and errors. In concurrence with the literature, the current research identifies the most stated practice in multicultural education as equality, and it was identified that multi-ethnic teaching would promote equal chances and the right to education for every learner.

The research also identifies democracy as one of the most repeated practices by the respondents. Likewise, Aydın and Tonbuloglu (2014) defined multi-ethnic teaching as a teaching and learning strategy founded on democratic elements and notions and identified the ethnic diversities in an interlinked society with ethnic pluralism. According to Mansikka and Holm (2011), the value of multi-ethnic teaching is usually proportionate with the democratic practices of the country. Banks (2015) asserted that among the multicultural teaching's strengths is its stress on practices like justice, equality and democracy. Multiculturalism in the education curriculum aims to democratise the curriculum and teacher's training to give everyone a more neutral and free perspective (Banks, 2015). Likewise, in the current research, the respondents claimed that multi-ethnic teaching would promote a democratic society and result in a democratic educational setting.

Justice is a different practice that most participants stressed in the current research. Sharma (2005) stated that multi-ethnic teaching helps the community become more just and tolerant and identified that it is richer than any of the constituents. According to Banks (2015), among the primary aims of educational systems that encourage multi-ethnic literacies is to assist students to develop democratic societies; develop knowledge and sensitivity and allow response. In the current research, the respondents, as in the literature findings, stated the significance of multicultural teaching in promoting justice, included the concept of justice in their descriptions of multi-ethnic teaching and connected multicultural teaching to the social justice concept.

Limitations

The study's limitation is that the researcher only used the approach of qualitative design to gather information, therefore limiting the validity and reliability levels. However, future studies should consider using a triangulation of different qualitative methods, including a combination of interviews, focus groups and discussions, thus reducing the limitations of using one approach.

Recommendations

The teachers in this study claimed that they were not given training in handling learners of different nationalities, given that this situation of immigration happened after the participants graduated. Properly created multi-ethnic training is important for pre-service educators' knowledge and outlook concerning multi-ethnic teaching and to successfully educate the learners. Thus, appropriate research should observe a plan that aids in the procedure so that educators are prepared both professionally and personally to work with learners from different cultural settings. Such training will offer frameworks to educators to think and talk about cultural diversities. Through awareness and the development of competences in multi-ethnic teaching, new educators will be empowered to strive to create systems and social arrangements in learning settings that encourage the practice of equality in and out of schools (Gorski, 2009).

The findings of the research are new, interesting and important, considering the lack of research in multicultural education for adult ML2 learners with different nationalities. This study raises some inquiries that should be addressed in future studies. Another limitation in this study is that language teachers talked about the importance of multicultural education that could happen in any subject, not just in ML2. Future researchers should interview educators concerning their ML2 teaching approaches, methods and learning surroundings before and after finishing their training programmes. This information will assist in establishing the impact of multicultural teaching specifically in ML2. Educational researchers should also assess learning institutions that have enacted strong multi-ethnic programmes and quality multi-ethnic professional educator development. Such research would offer samples of how multi-ethnic teaching is enacted in practice, both at the personal and school levels. It is vital to comprehend how learners and parents perceive the ML2 teaching programmes.

Conclusion

The desire for individuals of varying cultures and aspects to live with the same entitlements and each societal group to have similar and democratic structures make multicultural ML2 teaching necessary. Multi-ethnic teaching develops the possibilities of accepting that there are varying perspectives that are equal and helps people comprehend how each side feels.

Moreover, due to pressing circumstances such as the sporadic and growing pace of migration as experienced in recent years, the need for inclusive spaces has become more apparent. Changing demographics heighten the need for a multicultural shift in people's way of thinking among nations that embrace multiculturalism, especially as it relates to pedagogy. The current study identifies that most teachers acknowledge that practices like ensuring equality, democracy and justice among all learners irrespective of their cultural, racial or religious backgrounds is of great importance in promoting multicultural education and student success.

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