

Promoting Pre-Service Teachers' Multicultural Competence through Culturally Responsive Pedagogy-Based Art Education Courses

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Abstract

This study aims to enhance the multicultural competence of preservice teachers by integrating culturally responsive teaching into teacher preparation courses. The study was designed as participatory action research, and 36 pre-service teachers, one instructor, and two in-service teachers were involved. The study collected qualitative data through semi-structured interviews and observations and quantitative data through a multicultural competency self-assessment scale. Quantitative data were analyzed with descriptive statistics, whereas qualitative data were analyzed with content analysis. The study's findings indicate that culturally responsive teaching-based courses in teacher education encompass six fundamental areas: attitude, culture, consideration, ethics, and pedagogy (or ACCEPT). In addition, enrollment in pedagogy-based teacher preparation courses led to an increase in pre-service students' multicultural competence. Among the three components of multicultural competency, statistics indicate that knowledge changes the most, followed by skills and attitudes. The study argues that incorporating multicultural education concepts into teacher education courses fosters multicultural competency in future teachers, albeit to varying degrees.

Keywords: Multicultural competence, Pre-service teachers, Culturally responsive teaching

Introduction

In the twenty-first century, it is vital to prepare teachers with multicultural knowledge, attitudes, and skills (Barnes, 2016; Gay & Howard, 2000; Gay, 2015). Migration within and between nations is growing, increasing racial, ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity in schools and communities. Several studies indicate that, in this context, preparing teachers to serve traditional or dominant student groups or to adopt narrow perspectives and pedagogical approaches when working with children from various backgrounds is questionable. Recent research suggests that teacher preparation programs should prepare future teachers with multicultural competence. Teachers with multicultural competency are believed to work efficiently and respectfully with kids from diverse backgrounds (Barnes, 2016; Gay, 2015). In addition, they serve vital roles in instilling in children the multicultural values essential in a globalized society, including tolerance, respect, appreciation for plurality, and a commitment to social justice. Extensive research has been conducted on methods for preparing teachers with multicultural competence. Having field-based experiences (Knight, 2006) such as service-learning (Barnes, 2016; Krummel, 2013), studying abroad (Byker & Putman, 2019), taking a course on multicultural education (Banks, 2014), enrolling in a short or extended training program, and integrating multicultural education concepts and issues into existing curricula (Gay, 2002, 2015) are examples. This study investigated the last approach to preparing future educators. It particularly proposed to employ the multicultural concept of what Gay (2002) and Gloria Ladson-Billings (2014) refer to as culturally responsive teaching and culturally relevant pedagogy, respectively, to cultivate multicultural competence in pre-service teachers. This study uses the terms "culturally responsive teaching" and "culturally relevant pedagogy" interchangeably. Widespread support for culturally responsive pedagogy and its integration into teacher education programs has existed since the 1990s (Richly & Graves, 2012). Gay is a leading scholar in the field, as evidenced by her previous research, and has proposed strategies for implementing it in teacher education (see Fox & Gay (1995) and Gay, 1997)).

Gay (2002, 2010) describes culturally responsive teaching as employing the cultures, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students to promote learning. It assumes that contextualizing academic knowledge and skills in students' lives makes them more meaningful, engaging, and easier to understand. Gay (2002, 2010) outlines five features of culturally responsive teaching. The first part involves understanding the diverse cultures present, which requires educators to comprehend the historical and contemporary cultural distinctions among various ethnic and cultural groups, as well as an appreciation for the cultural values and contributions of these communities. The second component is the development of a culturally relevant curriculum. Teachers must learn how to translate their knowledge of racial and cultural diversity into curriculum designs and culturally sensitive instructional strategies. The third focuses on developing conducive learning environments for students from varied cultural backgrounds. This can be achieved, for instance, by exhibiting high expectations for students, adopting innovative techniques to ensure students' academic achievement from diverse ethnic backgrounds, and establishing learning communities in which students support one another. The fourth involves effective communication across cultural

borders. It stresses learning about the communication patterns of various ethnic groups, how communication styles reflect cultural values and affect learning, and how to use students' communication methods to facilitate their learning or when dealing with them. The final part is tailoring instructional strategies to students' varied learning styles. It assumes that pupils have diverse learning styles affected partly by their cultural backgrounds. Therefore, culturally responsive teaching should tailor instruction to the unique learning styles of each student for better learning outcomes.

This study proposed integrating culturally responsive teaching principles into existing art education courses at a public university in Thailand to enhance pre-service teachers' multicultural competence. There are approximately 113 teacher institutions in Thailand, and 17 offer art education programs at the undergraduate level. These 17 institutions prepare roughly 4,000 art teachers for the nation's educational system. Moreover, Thailand is one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse nations in the region. Over the past decade, it has accepted a substantial number of migrant students from Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia into its public education system (Nawarat, 2018). Knight (2006) speaks to the rarity of programs that aim to equip art teachers by infusing multicultural goals into standard art education curricula. This is true in a Thai context as well. Despite the large number of teacher education programs and the increasing ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity in schools, few studies have examined the preparation of future art teachers for multicultural competence. Training future teachers in multicultural competency adds to the purpose of multicultural education, which is to restructure schools so that students from diverse backgrounds have equitable access to and success in school (Banks, 2014). Teachers without an orientation toward diversity may not be able to provide pupils from diverse cultural backgrounds with the greatest possible art education (Dana, 2022; Knight, 2015). This study aims to contribute to the literature on approaches for preparing future educators to work in culturally diverse schools.

Objectives

1. To identify essential guidelines for integrating culturally responsive pedagogy into art education courses.
2. To examine the effects of participation in culturally responsive pedagogy-based art education courses on the multicultural competence of pre-service teachers.

Methodology

Researchers employed participatory action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) in this study to develop culturally relevant, pedagogy-based teacher education courses to help future teachers become more culturally competent. This study was conducted at a Thai public university with a long history of teacher training and a diverse student body, including students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, underrepresented ethnic groups, and rural communities.

Sample

The research involved 36 fourth-year pre-service teachers, one instructor (one of the paper's four authors), and the director of an art education program. Participants were chosen using a purposive sampling technique. The 36 pre-service teachers enrolled in the two required art education courses. During the first semester of the 2020 academic year, they enrolled in Art Instruction I and then Art Instruction II, respectively (See Table 1). Pre-service teachers come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. Some are from ethnic minority backgrounds, others from non-dominant religious backgrounds, some are from urban or rural areas, and others identify as members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities (LGBT).

Data collection and research instruments

This study gathered both qualitative and quantitative data. Before and after the completion of the two courses, semi-structured interviews were conducted with student participants and the program director. The culturally relevant pedagogy-based semi-structured interview protocol for student participants included questions regarding their knowledge of and experiences with cultural diversity in the classroom and at home, as well as their perspective on incorporating culturally responsive teaching into art instruction courses. Additionally, one of the authors, a course instructor, conducted participant observation while implementing culturally relevant pedagogy-based art instruction courses. The multicultural education self-assessment scale, based on culturally relevant pedagogy, was used to gather qualitative data. The three primary components of the scale are knowledge, skill, and attitude. The scale is a 5-point scale, with 5 representing the greatest level, 4 representing a higher level, 3 representing a moderate level, 2 representing a low level, and 1 representing the lowest level. Before beginning the first course, students completed a multicultural education self-assessment scale, which they repeated after completing the second course.

Research activities

The research activities encompassed two phases: Phase 1 from August 2019 through October 2020 and Phase 2 from October 2020 through February 2021. Participatory action research, which consists of four phases: plan, act, observe, and reflect, was utilized to guide the execution of the activities. The activities are detailed in table 1.

Table 1 Research activities

Period/ Stages	Activity	Participant	Location	Duration	Result/output
Phrase 1					
Plan	1) Conducting interviews regarding art education's teaching and learning experiences and cultural diversity viewpoints.	All participants	- Campus - Schools	Aug 2019 – Nov 2019	Perspectives and experiences of participants
	2) Analyzing and synthesizing interview data to build a guideline for incorporating culturally responsive teaching into the selected course—Art Instruction I	All participants	Campus	Nov 2019	A guideline for incorporating culturally responsive teaching into the selected course.
	3) Holding group meetings with all target groups to discuss how to apply the guideline to reconstruct the selected course.	All participants	Campus	Nov 2019	A draft of the revised curriculum and instructional approaches for the selected course.
	4) Examining a draft of the redesigned curriculum and instructional strategies for the chosen course.	Researcher	Campus	Nov 2019 – May 2020	Newly redesigned syllabus and instructional strategies for the selected course.

Period/ Stages	Activity	Participant	Location	Duration	Result/output
Act	1) Introducing the newly designed courses—Art Instruction I — to participating students.	Researcher	Campus	June 2020 - Oct 2020	- Course implementation - Students' perceptions of the course and its teaching and learning activities.
	2) Implementing the newly designed course—Art Instruction I.				
	3) Participating students practiced teaching in classroom settings.	Participating students	Campus	Aug 2020	Students gaining experience in teaching using culturally relevant pedagogy.
	4) Participating students practiced teaching in schools with diverse cultures.	Participating students	Schools	Sep 2020	- Lesson plans, instructional videos and instructional materials
Observe	1) Observing the implementation of the newly designed course and the teaching practices of students in classrooms and schools.	Researcher	- Campus - Schools	June 2020 - Oct 2020	Students' responses to the course's instructional and learning activities.
Reflect	1) Conducting the activity in which students wrote their course reflections.	- Participating students - Researcher	Campus	Oct 2020	Reflections and feedback from participating students
	2) Conducting the activity in which students reported the outcomes of their teaching practice.				

Period/ Stages	Activity	Participant	Location	Duration	Result/output
Phrase 2					
Plan	Incorporating culturally responsive teaching into the chosen course—Art Instruction Art Instruction II —using a guideline developed in the first phrase and based on input from the initial course implementation.	- Researcher - Participating students	Campus	Oct 2020	Newly redesigned syllabus and instructional strategies for Art Instruction II
Act	1) Introducing the newly designed courses—Art Instruction II — to participating students.	Researcher	Campus	Oct 2020 - Feb 2021	- Course implementation - Students' perceptions of the second course and its teaching and learning activities.
	2) Implementing the newly designed course-Art Instruction 2.				
	3) Participating students practiced teaching in classroom settings.	Participating students	Campus	Jan 2021	
	4) Participating students practiced teaching in schools with diverse cultures.	Participating students	Schools	Jan 2021	
Observe	Observing the implementation of the newly designed Art Instruction II and the teaching practices of students in classrooms and schools.	Researcher	- Campus - Schools	Oct 2020 - Feb 2021	Responses of students to the instructional and learning activities in a course.
Reflect	Conducting the activity in which students wrote their course reflections.	- Participating students - Researcher	Campus	Feb 2021	Reflections and feedback from participating students

Data analysis

The data from interviews and field notes were analyzed using content analysis. The interview data were transcribed, carefully read, and then coded to identify patterns and recurring themes. To analyze quantitative data from the multicultural competence self-assessment scale, descriptive statistics including mean, percentage, and standard deviation were employed.

Results

This study sought to strengthen the multicultural competency of pre-service teachers by incorporating culturally responsive teaching into two art education courses. The findings are as follows.

Integrating Culturally Responsive Pedagogy into Teacher Education Curriculum: Key Guidelines

The study chose to incorporate culturally responsive pedagogy into two art education courses—Art Instruction I and Art Instruction II—for two primary reasons. First, these two courses allow pre-service teachers to translate previously acquired theories and concepts in art education and culturally responsive teaching into K-12 instructional possibilities. Second, these courses provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to design and implement lesson plans in realistic classroom and school settings. The school setting particularly provides pre-service teachers with the opportunity to connect with pupils from diverse cultural backgrounds and to experiment with lesson plans developed with and without students' backgrounds in consideration.

This engagement comprises three stages; preparation for change, action to effect change, and reflection on actions for further change. During the first phase, which occurred primarily before implementing the first art instruction course, key activities included obtaining participant interest and agreement and organizing workshops for pre-service teachers to learn about cultural diversity, multicultural education, and culturally relevant instruction. The second phase focuses on implementing two courses, Art Instruction I and Art Instruction II, that adopt culturally responsive pedagogy components. Teaching and learning activities in the classroom, pre-service teachers teaching at local schools, and pre-service teachers working on assignments such as lesson plans and teaching materials are important activities during this time. In the final phase, the dominant activity is reflection. During a reflection session, preservice teachers wrote their thoughts and course evaluations. At the same time, the instructor reviewed the preservice teachers' lesson plans and instructional materials, planned Art Instruction II implementation based on Art Instruction II implementation, and conducted semi-structured interviews (this was done after the second course implementation).

Implementing two newly developed courses over two semesters identifies six core components for strengthening the multicultural competency of pre-service teachers. These six important components can serve as a framework for incorporating multicultural themes and concepts into any teacher education course that strives to cultivate multicultural competency

among pre-service teachers. These are designated by the acronym ACCEPT, which stands for attitude, culture, caring, ethics, pedagogy, and trust. Attitude refers to a positive perspective on the diversity of learners, including their gender, age, religion, ethnicity, lifestyle, culture, and tradition, among other factors. The cultural diversity that students brought to the classroom was an excellent opportunity for teaching and learning management.

Additionally, those responsible for regulating the teaching and learning in art education must have a positive view of the artwork. The culture component stresses how important it is for teachers to learn about different cultures and learn from their students' experiences in a variety of ways so that they can plan and put into practice relevant teaching and learning. Caring refers to the teachers' awareness and respect during the teaching and learning processes, including using words, expressions, gestures, attitudes, and other actions that are sensitive to the students' feelings. Without caring, a teacher could impede pupils' sentiments of comfort and respect for themselves, their peers, and their teachers. Furthermore, it may lead to discriminatory practices. Ethics relates to the moral standards required of professional educators. Pedagogy focuses on instructors' abilities to incorporate students' knowledge, voices, perspectives, and life experiences into the classroom and teaching and learning activities. Trust necessitates that teachers have faith and confidence in their students. Teachers must have faith in their students, believing they can learn and will do so with enthusiasm.

Teaching and learning played a significant part in fostering cultural awareness, acceptance, and respect. Integration of culturally appropriate pedagogical concepts into courses such as Art Instruction I and Art Instruction II is one example among many. However, one important consideration is incorporating them into the course without diluting its core.

Changes in Pre-Service Teachers' Multicultural Competence

This research aims to improve the multicultural competency of pre-service teachers by exposing them to courses that integrate culturally relevant pedagogical principles. According to the findings, their multicultural competence, comprised of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, altered due to taking the courses. The results of the self-assessment scale for multicultural competency indicate that 36 pre-service teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes have improved marginally after completing the courses. As demonstrated in Table 2, after completing the courses, the mean and standard deviation of their multicultural competency increased from 3.56 and 0.73 to 3.96 and 0.76.

Table 2 Pre-service teachers' multicultural competence before and after taking culturally relevant pedagogy-based art instruction courses

Multicultural competence	Pre-study			Level	Post-study			Level	Mean differences	Results
	X	%	S.D.		X	%	S.D.			
Knowledge	3.19	63.73	0.72	Moderate	3.78	75.51	0.78	high	0.59	+1
Skill	3.28	65.53	0.74	Moderate	3.85	77.06	0.78	high	0.57	+1
Attitude	4.23	84.56	0.77	high	4.25	84.97	0.74	high	0.02	0
Total	3.56	71.27	0.73	high	3.96	79.18	0.76	high	0.4	0

Regarding each component of multicultural competence, knowledge and skills changed more than attitudes. Before taking the courses, the average level of knowledge of pre-service teachers was moderate, with a mean of 3.19 and a standard deviation of 0.72. But after completing the course, the mean level of knowledge was 3.78, and the standard deviation was 0.78. Before enrolling in the courses, the average skill level of the students was moderate, as shown by a mean score of 3.28 and a standard deviation of 0.78. However, after completing the courses, students reported significantly greater skill levels—a mean score of 3.85 and a standard deviation of 0.78. Of the three aspects of multicultural competence, attitude is the least likely to shift over time. Before enrolling in the classes, pre-service teachers had a positive attitude, with a mean of 4.23 and a standard deviation of 0.77. After enrollment, pre-service teachers' attitudes remained positive, with a mean score of 4.23 and a standard deviation of 0.74.

Discussions

1. This study incorporated five culturally relevant pedagogy components developed by Gay (2002) into two art instruction courses and implemented both courses for two semesters (each for one semester). This engagement is comprised of three stages: preparation for change, action to effect change, and reflection on actions for further change. The research identified ACCEPT, an acronym for attitude, culture, caring, ethics, pedagogy, and trust, as the six guiding principles for such engagement. Some fundamental guidelines are comparable to Gay's culturally relevant teaching elements (2002, 2010), including learning about different cultures, developing a curriculum that is sensitive to those cultures, making classrooms inclusive of students of all backgrounds, promoting meaningful cross-cultural communication, and adapting teaching methods to accommodate students' diverse learning styles. The ACCEPT guideline is comparable but differs for some practical reasons. First, the course subjects establish the extent to which teachers can integrate culturally appropriate material and the amount that can be done. The course topics that lend themselves most to incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy are curriculum design, instructional management procedures, teaching techniques and approaches, classroom management, and the creation and utilization of teaching materials. Second, the course learning objectives and material restrict chances for

group-based learning, which hinders the creation of a community of learners supported by culturally relevant instruction. Therefore, instructors emphasized fostering a positive or joyful classroom environment using various techniques. Lastly, preservice teachers and instructors, as well as pre-service teachers and pre-service teachers, encounter challenges in learning one another's languages because of linguistic diversity, limited time, and the course content that must be completed each semester to meet the program's curriculum requirements. This limits the ability of the two-arts instruction course's execution to utilize the cross-cultural communication component properly. However, the design and selection of visual language-based art instructional resources may be an alternative to spoken communication. The ethics component is distinctive since it is adapted to the local context, including Thai professional standards and ethics, addressing desirable characteristics in the practice of the educational profession and Thailand's basic core curriculum. The ACCEPT principles can serve as the basis for incorporating multicultural concepts or goals into teacher education, particularly by incorporating such concepts into the curriculum of existing teacher education programs. The ethics component is distinctive since it is adapted to the local context, including Thai professional standards and ethics, addressing desirable characteristics in the practice of the educational profession and Thailand's basic core curriculum. The ACCEPT guidelines can serve as the framework for bringing multicultural concepts or aims into teacher education, notably through incorporating such notions into existing teacher education programs' curricula.

2. According to the findings, enrolling in the two courses with culturally responsive pedagogy, which invalidates deficit-based thinking or "cultural blindness (Gay, 2010), altered the multicultural competence of pre-service teachers in all three areas, including knowledge, attitudes, and skills. The positive impact of incorporating culturally responsive pedagogy into art education courses is consistent with the findings of field-based experiences such as service-learning (Barnes, 2016; Krummel, 2013) and studying abroad (Byker & Putman, 2019). According to Rychly and Graves (2012), teachers with culturally responsive pedagogy possess the following characteristics: compassion and empathy, a reflection of their attitudes and beliefs regarding other cultures, knowledge of other cultures, and their own cultural frameworks. Before and after completing the two courses, the pre-service students in this study demonstrate a positive attitude. They enter the classroom with empathy and sympathy for others. This study found, however, that the skills and knowledge of preservice teachers increased from moderate to high levels. The attitude component, which was already high before the courses, increased slightly and remained higher than the other two despite undergoing the least change. This result suggests two focus areas. The first is that the students' attitudes toward cultural differences such as ethnicity, religion, and beliefs were positive. The newly developed two art instruction courses have little effect on their attitudes. Possessing positive attitudes may not necessitate additional educational opportunities, such as those investigated in this study. It is necessary to conduct research to determine, if necessary, how and in what way the attitudes component of multicultural competence can be promoted further. The second implication is that the newly developed two art instruction courses have a measurable impact on the multicultural knowledge and skills of preservice teachers. This was in accordance with the findings of Suwanma and Srisuk (2017), who discovered that, following

the workshop, teachers had the opportunity to practice teaching in classrooms with students of different ethnicities, thereby enhancing their teaching and learning management skills. The progress of pre-service teachers in this study may be influenced by the course design embedded with the ACCEPT guideline, the students' active participation with the instructors' encouragement, hands-on learning in which they designed and implemented lesson plans in the classroom and school, and their prior cultural understanding. Also intriguing is the question of whether a positive attitude toward cultural diversity influences the acquisition of multicultural knowledge and skills. If this is the case, how will future research on incorporating multicultural concepts into teacher education courses address this issue?

Conclusion and suggestions

The study's findings indicate that culturally responsive teaching-based courses in teacher education encompass six fundamental areas: attitude, culture, consideration, ethics, and pedagogy (or ACCEPT). In addition, enrollment in pedagogy-based teacher preparation courses led to an increase in pre-service students' multicultural competence. Among the three components of multicultural competency, statistics indicate that knowledge changes the most, followed by skills and attitudes. The study argues that incorporating multicultural education concepts into teacher education courses fosters multicultural competency in future teachers, albeit to varying degrees.

Based on the investigation's findings, the study made the following suggestions.

1. Recommendations for implementation

1.1 The circumstances, challenges, and backgrounds of participating students must be explored and effectively addressed to design the most relevant and appropriate teaching and learning and to foster the development of multicultural competence among participating students.

1.2 Few courses are insufficient to foster multicultural competence in pre-service teachers. It is strongly recommended that multicultural concepts, such as culturally relevant pedagogy, be incorporated into the entire teacher education curriculum. Also, teacher education programs could investigate other approaches for cultivating such competency, incorporating culturally relevant teaching, for instance, into other courses or student activities within and outside the art education curriculum. More opportunities to develop multicultural competence would enable future teacher to understand, accept, and cherish diverse cultures.

2. Recommendations for future research

2.1 Before and after finishing the courses, the attitude of pre-service teachers was stronger than their knowledge and skills, according to this study. Future research might investigate the relationships between attitude and the other two components, as well as how to employ attitude to foster the other two sets of competence.

2.2 Future studies could investigate an alternative approach for fostering multicultural competence in pre-service teachers compared to the approach adopted in this study, which promotes multicultural competence to some extent.

New knowledge and the effects on society and communities

New teachers entering the area of art education have the power to influence their students' understanding and appreciation of art in a multicultural society (Knight, 2015). To accomplish this, they will need multicultural competence and the ability to adapt their teaching to the diverse cultural backgrounds and learning styles of their students. This study illustrates that "culturally relevant pedagogy" or other concepts can be incorporated into pre-existing teacher education courses to facilitate a change toward cultural diversity in art teacher training and art education. This study demonstrates that integrating multicultural concepts such as culturally responsive teaching into teacher preparation courses equips future teachers with multicultural competency. The study identified six essential components for integrating and implementing culturally responsive teaching in courses for teacher education. This is represented by the acronym ACCEPT, which stands for attitude, culture, care, ethics, pedagogy, and trust. The ACCEPT can serve as a guide or framework for preparing prospective teachers to work with students from diverse backgrounds and to deliver equitable and meaningful teaching and learning in their future classrooms and schools. Teacher education programs and institutions can use ACCEPT to develop culturally competent future teachers by adapting the framework to their own social, cultural, and political contexts.

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