Fostering Multicultural Competence in Primary School Students and Teachers through Participatory Media Production

Natcha Promsri, Nannaphat Saenghong and Nongyao Nawarat
Faculty of Education, Chiang Mai University, Thailand
Prasit Leepreecha
Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, Thailand
E-mail: natcha.prmim@gmail.com,nannaphat.s@cmu.ac.th
nongyao.n@cmu.ac.th and prasit.lee@cmu.ac.th

Abstract

This study examined the impact of participatory media production on developing multicultural competence in students and teachers at a diverse primary school. Participants included 32 fifth-grade students and three teachers actively engaged in activities targeting multicultural competence enhancement. The study employed a theoretical framework of participatory communication. Results indicated significant improvements in students' multicultural competence albeit with variations in individual growth levels. On average, students demonstrated intermediate-level growth, with attitudes exhibiting the highest progress, followed by knowledge and skills. Teachers also experienced growth in multicultural competency, with knowledge showing the most significant improvement, followed by attitudes and skills. Notably, there were variations in the level of development among the teachers. Overall, the study underscores the efficacy of participatory media production in fostering multicultural competency while acknowledging that the impact may vary among individuals, as evidenced by diverse growth levels observed among students and teachers.

Keywords: Multicultural education, Multicultural competency, Participatory media
             production, Communication

Introduction

Multicultural competence refers to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to effectively interact with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds (Spanierman et al., 2011; Sue & Sue, 2013). It enables individuals to navigate and engage in meaningful cross-cultural interactions, understand and challenge their biases and assumptions, and effectively communicate and collaborate across cultural boundaries (Sue & Sue, 2013). Multicultural competence is considered an essential quality for teachers (Gay & Howard, 2000; Hamilton, 2016; Lehman, 2017). It empowers teachers to actively and effectively engage with students from diverse cultural backgrounds, leading to the creation of creating inclusive and responsive learning environments (Gay & Howard, 2000; Manning & Baruth, 2004). In a study by Hamilton (2017), the psychometric properties of the multicultural teaching competency scale (MTCS) were examined among in-service teachers, revealing its positive influence on teaching

self-efficacy and teacher-student relationships. Furthermore, multicultural competence enhanced well-being, reduced stress, and increased teacher job satisfaction (Hamilton, 2017). Equipped with multicultural competence, teachers can appreciate cultural differences, adapt instructional practices, and promote educational equity (Gay & Howard, 2000; Manning & Baruth, 2004). With multicultural competence, teachers can appreciate and respect cultural differences, adapt their instructional practices to meet students' diverse needs and work towards promoting equity in education (Gay & Howard, 2000; Manning & Baruth, 2004).

Various approaches have been identified in research for developing multicultural competence among teachers. School-based workshops have proven successful (Yongyuan et al., 2010; Arphattananon, 2021; Sinchadechochai, 2017). Other approaches for promoting multicultural competence encompass participation in a professional development training workshop centered on multicultural education (Lehman, 2017; Spanierman et al., 2011), collaboration with culturally diverse families and communities (Manning & Baruth, 2004), engagement in reflective practice (Gay & Howard, 2000), and involvement in multicultural service-learning initiatives (MSL) (Smith et al., 2011), and use of using video clips (Pennock & Schwartz, 2012). Gay and Howard (2000) emphasize the significant role of teacher education programs in fostering multicultural competence. They advocate for integrating multicultural competencies throughout the entire teacher education program, encompassing coursework, practicum experiences, exit requirements, certification processes, and employment opportunities.

Multiple studies, including those by Derman-Sparks & Edwards (2020), Ladlia (2012), Nawarat (2018), and Manning and Baruth (2004), have emphasized the importance of cultural competence and multicultural competence for children. According to Derman-Sparks & Edwards (2020), children can perceive and develop attitudes toward diversity early on. Therefore, fostering children's comprehension, skills, and attitudes concerning cultural differences is vital. In response to the growing diversity many cities and schools worldwide are experiencing, there is increasing recognition of the need to address multicultural competence in educational settings. Research also suggests various strategies to enhance multicultural competency in children. These strategies include engaging in implementing community-based activities (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2020; Nawarat, 2018), utilizing literature and storytelling (Ladlia, 2012) employing arts-based learning and teaching (Hulsbosch, 2010; Manning & Baruth, 2004; Yongyuan et al., 2010) strategies aim to provide students with immersive experiences that promote understanding, appreciation, and respect for diverse cultures and perspectives. Educators can create inclusive learning environments that celebrate diversity and contribute to developing multicultural competence by actively engaging students in these activities.

However, the current body of literature reveals a research gap in exploring multicultural competency development among teachers and students through participatory media production, specifically in video clip creation. Participatory media production involves groups or communities collaborating to produce various media types, including audio, video, images, and text. It empowers individuals by allowing them to create their own media, express their thoughts and ideas, and contribute to positive and meaningful transformations (Pennock & Schwartz, 2012 & Sarria-Sanze et al., 2023). Pennock & Schwartz (2012) conducted a study demonstrating video clips' effectiveness in enhancing multicultural knowledge and pedagogical skills in pre-service teacher education. Similarly, Sarria-Sanze et al. (2023) investigated the use of participatory video (PV) with 14 refugees in the Netherlands. Through the Digital Place-makers program, the researchers taught editing and storytelling, which boosted the refugees' confidence and shed light on social injustices. The study emphasizes challenging vulnerability labels in refugee research and promoting knowledge co-production to empower participants and foster ownership of their work.

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of utilizing participatory media production, specifically digital video-making, to promote multicultural competence among students and teachers in a culturally diverse primary school setting. By addressing a research gap, the study seeks to contribute to our understanding of how participatory media production can effectively enhance multicultural competence in educational environments.

Research objective

To examine the impact of participatory media production on promoting multicultural competence among students and teachers in a diverse primary classroom setting.

Theoretical framework

Participatory communication is a central theoretical framework in this research study. It encompasses diverse definitions provided by scholars in the field. Participatory communication is the processes or designs essential for groups facing common problem issues and engaging in reciprocal learning and understanding through dialogue (Ascroft, 1987; Bordenave, 1994; Nair & White, 1993; Narula, 1994). It also entails facilitating long-term changes and empowering communities to make collective decisions (Melkote & Leslie, 2001). Participatory communication emphasizes the active involvement of stakeholders in the communication process to promote development and problem-solving activities (Kitruenromsuk, 2005). It aims to train groups of people or social members to exchange information, analyze social problems, find solutions, and make decisions based on comprehensive information (Kitruenromsuk, 2005).

Satapitanon (2006) outlines the principles of participatory communication that contribute to public conscientization and transformative learning within groups and communities. These principles consist of four components. The first component emphasizes acknowledging the diverse backgrounds of participants, which shape their thoughts, perspectives, attitudes, communication skills, pride in their involvement, and commitment. The second component underscores the importance of ensuring equal participation, wherein all participants actively engage in various stages of the process, including analysis, issue identification, cause identification, impact assessment, exchanging perspectives and opinions, and participating in decision-making. The third component highlights the rights and responsibilities of participants, encompassing respect for one's own and others' thoughts, active and thoughtful listening, and recognition of the fundamental rights and responsibilities of social members. The fourth component focuses on participants' rights and freedom to access media and information on a level playing field across three dimensions: physical, economic, and cultural-social. Ensuring accessibility to media and communication channels within these dimensions facilitates a shared understanding of community issues, empowerment, and equality among individuals (Kaewthep, 2006; Satapitanon, 2006). By incorporating these principles, the study aims to foster active and inclusive engagement, promote meaningful change, and enhance multicultural competence.

Methodology

This study employed participatory action research (PAR) as its methodology, aiming to foster collaborative efforts and drive meaningful change throughout the research process (Kemmis & Taggart, 1988). The study occurred in a public primary school characterized by cultural diversity in ethnicity, migration, language, gender, socioeconomic status, and disability. Although the student population represented a range of backgrounds, the school did

not have adequate multicultural teaching and learning activities in place, despite the teachers recognizing the diversity within the school. The school selection was based on Banks' (2010) framework of "The School as a Social System," which recognizes the school as a complex social entity and considers factors such as school policies, curriculum, teachers, and stakeholder involvement.

Participant

This study involved three fifth-grade teachers and 32 fifth-grade students as participants. The informants were selected using purposive sampling, meaning that the participants were intentionally chosen based on specific criteria that aligned with the research objectives (Phothisita, 2019).

Research activity

The study emphasized the integration of participatory media production as a crucial component of the research process. It was specifically designed to align with the four key principles of participatory communication, namely acknowledging diverse backgrounds, ensuring equal participation, respecting participants' thoughts and rights, and emphasizing access to media and information, as established by Satapitanon (2006). Recognizing the importance of these principles as a foundation, the study sought to provide participants with equal opportunities to contribute, respect their perspectives and rights, and promote access to media and information.

The research activities were conducted in two cycles, following the participatory action research framework. In the first cycle, after the initial planning and implementation phase, teachers and students actively participated in training sessions focused on multicultural education and global citizenship. These sessions likely involved interactive discussions, collaborative activities, and multimedia resources to engage participants in exploring and understanding diverse cultures and perspectives. As part of the first cycle, the teachers and the researcher developed and implemented three learning units. These include Unit 1 focused on equality and social justice, Unit 2 explored identity and diversity, and Unit 3 examined globalization and interdependence. Each address important themes related to multicultural education.

During the second cycle, the focus shifted towards enhancing teaching and learning activities through participatory media production. Collaborating with a media specialist, the researcher (first author) provided training to both students and teachers on creating storybooks and producing video clips. This training encompassed practical guidance on various technical aspects of media production, storytelling techniques, and the effective utilization of multimedia tools. With the guidance of the three participating teachers, students formed groups and actively engaged in creating video clips on diversity and related topics. This participatory approach to media production provided students with a platform to explore their creativity, express their perspectives, and collaborate with their peers to produce impactful visual representations of multicultural concepts and personal experiences. Students were encouraged to brainstorm ideas, plan their video content, and allocate tasks among themselves within their respective groups. The student collaboration resulted in the creation of nine video media that address various multicultural themes. These include stories about the ethnic group, transnationalism, community issues, and the impact of COVID-19 on bullying. These videos serve as valuable resources for multicultural learning and promote understanding among students. The research concluded with an exhibition during the school's academic showcases, where the student-produced video clips were displayed and appreciated by teachers, the school principal, students, parents, and school committee members. This exhibition celebrated the students' accomplishments and allowed the wider school community to acknowledge and value their efforts in participatory media production.

Data collection

The study used two multicultural competence scales, one for students and one for teachers, administered at the beginning and end of the research activities. The multicultural competency scale was developed using Lister's (1999) cultural competence and Campinha-Bacote's (2000) cultural competence framework. The student scale measured knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to cultural diversity, including understanding classmates' ethnicity, language, religion, costumes, and traditions, positive interactions, adaptability, effective communication, collaboration, and accepting diverse opinions. The teacher scale assessed knowledge of student cultures and multicultural pedagogy, positive attitudes towards diverse students, and skills in designing activities that foster tolerance and acceptance of cultural differences. The study also utilized direct observations by the first author, who actively participated and observed students during all activities, particularly during the collaborative video clip creation process. This approach provided a deeper understanding of students' behaviors, interactions, and engagement levels. The combination of the multicultural competence scale and direct observations offered a comprehensive assessment of students' multicultural competence development, capturing nuanced details and insights that may have been missed using the multicultural competence scale alone.

Data analysis

The study utilized quantitative data analysis with the SPSS program to examine the changes in multicultural competency among students and teachers before and after the research activities. The analysis involved calculating percentages, means, and standard deviations to assess variations in multicultural competency scores. A formula developed by Kanjanawasee (2009) was applied to determine the relative growth level in multicultural competency. The scores were then interpreted using predetermined criteria consisting of four levels: "significant" for scores ranging from 76 to 100, "high" for scores from 51 to 75, "moderate" for scores from 26 to 50, and "initial" for scores from 0 to 25. Additionally, the observation data were analyzed, focusing on these aspects: role and responsibility, communication, interaction, participation and collaboration, and attention to learning diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences.

Results

This research aimed to enhance the multicultural competence of primary school students and teachers through the utilization of participatory media production—digital video-making. By analyzing multicultural competency scales and observations, the study revealed positive advancements in multicultural competence for teachers and students in knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Detailed information about these developments is provided below.

Changes in students' multicultural competence

The study aimed to assess how participatory-based video clip production impacted the multicultural competence of students and teachers. The findings showed positive improvements across all three aspects: knowledge, skills, and multicultural attitudes, indicating an overall enhancement in multicultural competence. Participants were categorized into four groups based on their relative growth scores: significant, high, moderate, and initial. Further details regarding each group's transformation are outlined below.

According to the data in Table 1, one student who identified as Shan ethnicity out of the thirty-two students exhibited a significant change in multicultural competence across the dimensions of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. This represents approximately 3.13% of the total student population. This student's growth in skills showed the highest relative growth level of 100, followed by attitudes at 82 and knowledge at 42.

Table 1 Relative growth score of multicultural competency at a very high level

Student	Ethnicity and Nationality	Multicultural Competence		
		Knowledge	Attitude	Skill
B018	Shan, Thai	42	82	100

The interview and observation data indicated a student showcased multicultural competency in various areas. In terms of knowledge, the student understood their friends' languages and cultures and could identify differences in ethnicity across more than five ethnic groups. Regarding attitudes, the student exhibited openness to different opinions and encouraged their peers during collaborative tasks. Additionally, the student actively participated in media production, assuming roles such as directors and actors while demonstrating multicultural skills by listening attentively to diverse opinions.

Table 2 Relative growth score of multicultural competency at a significant level

Student	Ethnicity and Nationality	Multicultural Competence		
		Knowledge	Attitude	Skill
B01	Shan, unknown	100	33	30
B08	Thai, Thai	74	69	0
B09	Lisu, unknown	71	38	40
B019	Thai, Thai	100	43	0

The analysis of the relative growth scores in Table 2 reveals the significant changes observed in students' multicultural competence who demonstrated a high level of improvement. These students comprise 12.50% of the total student population. All four students in Table 2 demonstrated remarkable improvements in knowledge, indicating a comprehensive understanding of multicultural competence. Student B01 achieved the highest growth score of 100, followed by Student B08, with notable growth at 74. Student B09 and Student B019 also significantly increased, scoring 71 and 100, respectively. These findings highlight the successful enhancement of knowledge regarding cultural diversity among these students. However, it is worth noting that two students showed no change in skills. These students took on leadership roles in video production and showed increased confidence and tolerance. They actively participated, enjoyed learning, and embraced teaching through media production.

Table 3 displays the relative growth scores of multicultural competence for students who exhibited an intermediate level of change. Out of the total of thirty-two students, eleven students (34.37%) were classified in this group. Among the students in Table 3, most experienced changes in two aspects of multicultural competence. Specifically, they demonstrated growth in knowledge and attitudes, attitudes and skills, or knowledge and skills. Some students did not show any change in knowledge. Two students made no change in attitudes, and four students did not exhibit skills growth. These variations highlight the diverse development patterns in different aspects of multicultural competence among the students. However, they displayed comparable growth in multicultural competence across the attitude, knowledge, and skill dimensions.

Table 3 Relative growth score of multicultural competency at a moderate level

Students	Ethnicities and Nationalities	Multicultural Competence		
		Knowledge	Attitude	Skill
B07	Lisu, Thai	0	38	36
B010	Hmong, Thai	56	40	0
B011	Thai, Thai	0	57	50
B013	Shan, Myanmar	43	50	0
B014	Shan, Myanmar	59	33	10
B016	Hmong, Thai	17	43	50
B021	Thai, Thai	44	69	0
B023	Thai, Thai	36	50	0
B024	Shan, Myanmar	29	0	43
B026	Thai, Thai	44	0	36
B027	Thai, Thai	29	60	22

      The observation data highlights the positive behaviors displayed by this group of students concerning multicultural competency. They demonstrated the ability to learn and understand the basic languages spoken by friends from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, they exhibited open-mindedness by their peers to collaborate effectively. These behaviors showcase their willingness to embrace diversity and cultivate an inclusive environment within the group.

Table 4 Relative growth score of multicultural competency at an initial level

Students	Ethnicity and Nationality	Multicultural Competence		
		Knowledge	Attitude	Skill
B02	Shan, Unknown	25	33	25
B03	Shan, Unknown	0	0	22
B04	Lisu, Thai	0	33	0
B05	Shan, Thai	29	14	0
B06	Thai, Thai	25	75	0
B012	Myanmar, Unknown	22	0	0
B015	Shan, Burmese	71	17	22
B017	Shan, Thai	22	0	44
B020	Thai, Thai	20.	33	0
B022	Lisu, Thai	30	22	14
B025	Thai, Thai	0	20.	0
B028	Thai, Thai	0	14	22
B029	Thai, Thai	0	36	0
B030	Thai, Thai	40	0	0
B031	Myanmar, Unknown	0	36	0
B032	Thai, Thai	0	50	0

      According to Table 4, Group 4 consists of sixteen students out of thirty-two (50%) who demonstrated an initial level of change in multicultural competence. Most of these students showed improvement in only one aspect, while a few exhibited growth in two elements, and very few displayed progress in all three parts. Most students demonstrated the highest growth

in multicultural competence in the attitude dimension, followed by knowledge and skill. From observations, it is evident that these students actively participated in weekly learning and teaching activities, indicating their commitment and responsibility. However, they primarily took on supportive roles in the video production process and had fewer primary responsibilities than the other three groups. Nevertheless, similar to the other groups, most students in Group 4 were interested in learning new languages or stories from their counterparts, highlighting their openness to diverse cultural experiences.

Changes in teachers' multicultural competence

According to Table 5, the teachers displayed varying change levels in multicultural competency. Among them, teacher A3 exhibited the highest level of growth, particularly in the knowledge and attitude aspects. Teachers A1 and A2 showed initial and moderate gains in all three aspects, mainly in knowledge.

Table 5 Relative growth score of multicultural competency of teachers

Teacher	Ethnicity and Nationalities	Multicultural Competency		
		Knowledge	Attitude	Skill
A01	Thai, Thai	22	29	29
A02	Thai, Thai	29	0	0
A03	Thai, Thai	100	100	71

The teachers demonstrated the highest level of improvement in their knowledge of cultural diversity, followed by a positive shift in their attitudes towards diversity and improved skills to manage and promote multicultural education effectively. In addition, the observations revealed that following their participation in the research processes, the teachers became more attentive to classroom differences. They actively created opportunities to express diverse languages and cultures, such as allowing students to dress in ethnic costumes and incorporating students' ethnic languages into the production of video clips.

Discussions

This study examined the impact of participatory media production, specifically video production, within a participatory action research framework on the multicultural competence of primary school students and teachers. The findings, based on data collected through multicultural competence scales and observations, revealed a positive influence of this approach on enhancing multicultural competence among students and teachers. The study's findings demonstrate that the application of participatory communication principles in video production led to an increase in students' multicultural competence. The principles, including acknowledging diversity, ensuring equal participation, promoting inclusivity, respecting students' thoughts, and emphasizing media access, were key factors in fostering shared understanding, empowerment, and equality among participants. The use of video production and media channels was instrumental in achieving these positive outcomes.

However, the research also revealed variations in students' multicultural competence development, resulting in the identification of four distinct groups. This observation aligns with previous studies that have recognized the existence of diverse outcomes when using different approaches to foster multicultural learning among children (Ladlia, 2012; Hulsbosch, 2010; Hirunrux, 2017; Nawarat , 2018; Yongyuan et al., 2010). A considerable number of students were categorized into the initial and intermediate growth groups, suggesting that the approach

and its activities may not uniformly promote multicultural competence among all students. Several factors could contribute to this variation, such as limited involvement in leadership roles, fewer assigned responsibilities, or reduced interest in learning from peers representing diverse backgrounds. These findings emphasize the need for further exploration and tailored interventions to address the specific needs of students within different growth groups. Strategies such as facilitating leadership roles, assigning increased responsibilities, and nurturing interest in learning from diverse peers can contribute to promoting multicultural competence among students.

The study's findings demonstrate differences in the degree of change in multicultural competence among the three teachers, with one experiencing a significant change and two showing moderate changes. These results are consistent with previous research conducted by Pennock & Schwartz (2012), Nawarat (2018), and Yongyuan et al. (2010), which also observed similar patterns of improvement in teachers' competence through their involvement in multicultural education interventions. The findings indicate that the teachers significantly improved their knowledge of cultural diversity, followed by a positive shift in their attitudes towards diversity and improved their skills. These findings align with the research conducted by Yongyuan et al. (2010), which focused specifically on kindergarten to 3rd-grade teachers engaged in developing and implementing a multicultural education model in a diverse school. The study's results demonstrated improved average scores regarding knowledge and practices related to multicultural education literacy among these teachers. However, it is essential to note that the study by Yongyuan et al. (2010) did not find significant variations in the teachers' appreciation of multicultural education literacy, respect for cultural diversity, and recognition of a multicultural environment. These aspects primarily pertain to attitudes. The variations in the level of change among the teachers can be attributed to their roles, active participation in research processes, and direct interaction with students. Teacher A3, who actively engaged in research and demonstrated a genuine interest in multicultural education, showed a higher level of change in their multicultural competence. This underscores the significance of active engagement and sincere interest in fostering multicultural competence among teachers.

The study underscores the effectiveness of participatory action research in engaging students and teachers as active participants in the research process and promoting their multicultural competence. The study adopts a participatory approach, wherein students play a central role in the research activities. Four key principles guide the implementation of this approach. Firstly, creating safe spaces allows students to freely express their opinions, fostering an inclusive environment that values diverse thoughts and perspectives. This encourages open and respectful discussions, leading to multicultural learning. Secondly, the approach emphasizes the importance of taking action and active participation throughout the research process. Students are involved in various stages, including topic identification, decision-making, and designing video content. This active involvement enables the development of knowledge and skills related to multicultural competence. Additionally, the study recognizes the significance of delegating roles and responsibilities among participants and effectively managing time. This ensures that work processes are well-organized and productive, particularly in media production. By implementing participatory action research, the study aims to enhance students' understanding and appreciation of cultural differences, fostering their multicultural competence.

Conclusion and suggestions

This study provides evidence that participatory media production positively influences multicultural competency development in students and teachers. By actively engaging in creating video clips centered on diversity topics, students could enhance their knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to cultural diversity. Teachers also experience growth in their multicultural competency, improving their knowledge and attitudes toward diversity. The findings underscore the effectiveness of participatory media production as a valuable tool for fostering multicultural competency in educational settings. However, the study also acknowledged that the impact may vary among individuals, highlighting the importance of recognizing and catering to each learner's unique needs and interests. Future research should investigate the factors influencing the varying levels of multicultural competency development among students engaged in participatory media production. Additionally, exploring the long-term sustainability and transferability of multicultural competency gained through this approach is crucial. These investigations can provide valuable insights for developing targeted interventions and instructional strategies to enhance student multicultural competency.

New knowledge and the effects on society and communities

Participatory Teaching Materials to Promote Multicultural Learning for Primary School Classroom.

Acknowledgments

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