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Multicultural Education to Support Internationalization of Universities: Implication for English Medium Instruction

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Introduction

Multicultural education has become an important element both in supporting the internationalization of higher education and in the English medium instruction programs. The embedded multicultural education strategies in higher education institutions can further aims and commitments of multiculturalism. Multicultural commitments cover a broader

commitment to social justice and explicit strategies to develop intercultural understanding and enhance community relationships (Tonbuloglu, Aslan, & Aydin, 2016). Strategies for multicultural education often involve looking at the similarities and the differences to bring about cross-cultural understanding (Dollah, Abduh, & Talib, 2017). Such understanding within the community can eventually result in creating a culture of respect for differences and promoting harmony, unity, and tolerance.

Such committed culture of tolerance and harmony established through curriculum and teaching of subjects via English medium instruction (EMI) can support the equity pedagogy and equality enhancing the internationalization of educational programs. Students from other countries may enroll in the program due to the equal access and opportunity for developing cross-cultural competence (Rosmaladewi & Abduh, 2017). As a result, learners enroll in international programs where they not only learn their specialized subjects but also develop their multicultural competence needed for global citizenship.

Research on developing the model of multicultural education in international English medium instruction programs seems neglected by researchers and scholars (Dangan & Cruz, 2021). Consequently, not much information was found in the academic publications of such issues particularly relating to the multicultural strategies within the international EMI program. Therefore, this research fills the current knowledge gap by exploring strategies of multicultural education that support the international EMI programs. This research can contribute to the knowledge of multicultural education and how multiculturalism is implemented within them.

Multiculturalism, Internationalization, and EMI

Multicultural education encompasses fairness and equality for everyone (Antonios, 2000), critical pedagogy, social justice, and inclusiveness (Banks & Banks, 2010). Authors such as Canen and Canen, (2002) also mention that equality links to equal opportunities, which protects minorities from discrimination and unequal cultural relations. They affirm that 'equal opportunity' entails a focus on discrimination; a recognition of the issues of minorities; and the legitimization of positive action. In this context, educational programs should aim to understand the sensitivity of culturally diverse perspectives and promote the representation of cultural and ethnic minorities in whole institutional contexts. Multicultural education is also essential for the preparation of internationalization of higher education where the cross-cultural components (Abduh, Wello, & Asnur, 2021) may determine the successfulness of the internationalized programs.

The internationalization of universities includes the policy and practices by individuals, academic systems, institutions (Wit, 2011). The reasons for internationalization can include the acquisition of new literacy and technology, economic motives, and internationalization of curriculum (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Others view that internationalization relates to academic mobility (Morosini, Corte, & Guilherme, 2017) and political consideration (Knight, 2003). In this context, internationalization reflects that the key driving factors are both academic and non-academic staff. Academics see this context as the opportunity to encourage mobility from one continent to another in academic and non-academic activities. For example, there are large opportunities for young scholars to work as post-doctoral scientists and researchers in western institutions. Within Asian contexts such as Japan, Indonesia, and Thailand, the internationalization of higher education have more focused on English medium instruction (Rose & McKinley, 2018). This is due to English medium instruction programs only occur to some courses, while others still use national language, rather than EMI.

EMI is inevitably important for higher education in Asian contexts where many universities struggle to deliver their courses in English. One of the important reasons for this is to attract international students to study there. For Example, many universities in Indonesia have strong awareness and commitment for internationalization through supporting the internationalization of the curriculum, using EMI for course delivery, and encouraging partnership and global collaboration (Abduh, Rosmaladewi, & Basri, 2018). The use of EMI within the university context can assist the development of internationalization and improve the capacity of academic staff concerning the mastery of foreign language. The mastery of foreign language and the delivery, of course, using EMI are part of the internationalization process (Abduh & Rosmaladewi, 2019) where teaching staffs, on the one hand, learn to teach contents through English, and on the other hand, they learn other culture to deliver the course effectively in the target culture.

Connecting multiculturalism, internationalization, and EMI, these three components are the essential elements to drive universities internationally. Multicultural education provides key points to facilitate internationalization through equal and fair access for everyone. The delivery of multicultural education contents are using EMI can be an integrative approach (Islam, 2021). Such EMI is one of the indicators for globalization and English becomes a lingua franca that facilitates the internationalization of universities. Since there is no research on the connection of these three components, this article addresses this knowledge gap by exploring the strategies of multicultural education and EMI for the internationalization of universities.

Research method

Research design

This present study is an interpretative case study of institutional strategies of three colleges to further the aims of multicultural education. The case study provides a unique description of the phenomenon being investigated (Yin, 2013). The phenomenon here is the multicultural education that supports the internationalization of higher education and its implication to EMI.

Data collection and colleges

The data were collected from three sites by using a variety of techniques including the collection of information from documents, websites, and interviews. For this paper, the data reported from in-depth interviews which last more than an hour. In each college, researchers interviewed key leaders to understand their perceptions of multiculturalism, EMI, and internationalization. College A reflects a public institution, College B reflects a private educational institution, and College C reflects a religious public institution.

Data analysis

For data analysis, researchers used an ‘interpretational approach’ (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007) to establish a systematic framework of multicultural education. In this approach, researchers coded each of the interview transcripts to find a framework of themes and issues that are common to the colleges and/or unique to one or some of the colleges

Findings

Four distinct patterns emerged from the data. From these patterns, we categorized the following themes: Strong policy to promote equality and respect diversity, facilitating intercultural dialogue, curriculum, and participating in community.

Strong policy to promote equality and respect diversity

The three colleges have placed equality as a mainstream value in their institutions, which reflected in treating all people who come to their campus the same way. As the leaders of the three colleges said:

We are very conscious that different families come to our doors who are really in different situations so we try hard to make sure that if you enter a door that you are treated in the same way whether you are a very wealthy family or you are very poor family (College A)

This means that the institution promotes the values of anti-discrimination as part of the equality strategy. The institution also ensured that there was no discrimination in terms of race and gender:

We will make sure that there is no discrimination on race, there is no discrimination on gender, and there is no discrimination on how much money your family has (College A). Equality is expressed from the outset in the attitude of welcoming everyone to the campus. One of the things is to set core values to welcome everybody. Similarly, in College B, equality is part of the essential key multicultural value in their institution. Equality is introduced through the formal curriculum and values. The leader explained:

We introduce the notion of equality again through our curriculum and through our values, approaches to education where the values of love and dignity of men are paramount in our value scale (College B).

The multicultural perspective is included in the unit of the formal curriculum, for example, the culture of Asia Pacific countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, and Srilanka. This perspective aims to promote a holistic perspective of students in understanding different cultures, different values, and different systems.

In college C, an institution is a caring place that caters to the need and the interests of each student through building teams of academics to look after them:

The college is catering for each individual, we offered strong pastoral care support, we offered many support services, special supports for disabled and disadvantaged students and families (College C).

The college also supports the students through pastoral programs. One of the examples is that the campus conducts research into effective teaching and learning that emphasizes building a close relationship with students, the learning environment, and developing cognitive learning. Establishing a relationship with students is the basic condition for having them ready to learn.

Facilitating multicultural dialogue

The institutions encouraged their students to understand and to be aware of other beliefs, religions, and cultures. As an important part of intercultural understanding, the students also established international partnerships with their Japanese counterparts. It allows students to look and understand a different part of the world:

We have a relationship with the Japanese institutions that we want to continue because culturally it gives our students a look at another part of the world, and another way,

which students function. We have been doing that for quite a few years...We have two institutions from Japan coming at different stages of the year. Even though we are different, we can all work together. It is important for us in terms of exposing our kids to a completely different world and completely different culture, making them more aware again about the world around them and the people are different (College A).

The institutions have placed importance on developing students' knowledge and cultural awareness. To understand other cultures and beliefs, the institution runs outreach international cultural programs. The leader said:

We run very dynamic international outreach programs. These programs are run continuously throughout the year where integration of students, and certainly exposure to students from other religions, identities, and cultures is a high priority for us. Because it is our views of multicultural harmonious society (College B).

The other activity is the city project where the students can participate in several things such as cultural events, and music festivals. Those activities aim to expose students to be part of and to be familiar with events and activities of the wider community:

Well, it is part of preparing students for changing of a global society; the city will become part of their lives, because of cultural events, sporting events, festivals, music, the theatre, and the entertainments. There is very little connection to the broader community and other cultures (College C).

The institutions have also done brilliant community capacity-building programs including social capital, intellectual capital, and organizational capital. These capitals help them to promote intercultural understanding and dialogue among students.

Curriculum

Multiculturalism in education largely has been placed in the curriculum. One of the leaders of the college has indicated that:

We do very well in making people feel welcome when they are coming to the doors because it can be very frightening walking through the gate. After all, you do not know what you can get and you do not know what beyond the gate. However, the first image people can get is the place that you can get in. that is also part of the curriculum (College A).

Students need to understand a broader perspective of the worldviews in the order they can accept that there are different ideas, different philosophies, different religions, and different views that exist around them. Therefore, multicultural education strategies are placed through curriculum

We certainly have a curriculum focus that encourages and leads our students to be broad-minded. The aim is for accepting those arguments that normally have more than two sides and very often issues are not just black and white. They have various sides of grey in the middle that students need to understand and accept that. Very often world views are derived from one's personal beliefs, values, ideals, which may not always others' people's personal beliefs, values, and ideals, and all of that indicates that there is a difference (College B).

College C is also committed to open to all students not only the intellectually disadvantaged children in the curriculum. The leader indicates:

In my time, the institution was certainly committed to being an open and inclusive campus that took all comers to it. The campus is seen as a caring place for all students that is the emphasis of the curriculum (College C).

Participating in the community

The experience of learning provides opportunities for students to develop their learning skills and to start to take responsibility for their learning actions. In addition, this will help students to improve their confidence in decision-making and problem solving through different types of community participation. One of the colleges stated:

One of the things they are certainly focusing on is environmental sustainability, and looking at how we have damaged the environment and how we can improve that, so it does not continue. Therefore, they have a clear picture and they have a very clear focus on what they want to do, and it makes more aware of students the world around them and they make differences (College A).

The campus provides several activities for students so that they can learn from and contribute to the surrounding community. The students learn culture and community focusing on local communities, the broader community, and international society:

We have a theme focusing on students coming to college feeling safe and getting settled in. They are moving to the local community, and we do the engagement there. They also focus on international communities and global perspectives. They learn about different cultures and different communities a lot at this stage (College B).

Many students at this campus receive welfare support and some of them come from single-parent families. This is part of community programs to ensure equal access. The leader commented:

As part of the government program, many of our students receive support, and it is to aim that they can continue their education and ensure equal access for everyone in education (College C)

The institutions in this study conduct a community consultation involving students, parents, and teachers to establish a clear vision for the campus. This vision becomes a shared goal for the parents and the colleges

Discussion

Equality is seen as a basic value underpinning college policy in multicultural contexts. The colleges have practiced the values of equality as Abduh, Wello, and Asnur (2021) have written about, as all students, the staff is equally valued, and this includes valuing their differences. Equity is shown in the way the colleges treat students and their staff, and in the way, colleges treat anyone who comes to the colleges. All students regardless of their backgrounds have equal opportunities to enhance their potential to succeed.

Across the four colleges, there are five main strategies for building multicultural values and activities to varying degrees. These are:

1. Strong policy to promote equality and respect diversity
2. Facilitating intercultural dialogue
3. Curriculum
4. Participating in community

The colleges have mediated cross-cultural interactions with other colleges through dialogues, conferences, sporting events, and visiting campuses. These intercultural relations are based on acceptance and mutual understanding of differences between individuals among different ethnic and cultural groups. The values of acceptance and intercultural understanding of differences have been embedded in every aspect of college life. In this way, the principles of multiculturalism (Saud & Abduh, 2018) in professional ways (Rosmaladewi, Abduh, & Basri, 2020) are being carried out.

Intercultural communications have become part of the colleges' value systems to promote tolerance, look at similarities and respect the differences. In this context, the colleges have shown their roles in improving inter-group relations and empowering positive relationships among multicultural communities (Banks, 2009). This eventually will bring a united and harmonious interaction and communication among multiethnic and multicultural societies.

The focus on multiculturalism at colleges reflects its multi-ethnic and multicultural college population. Its policies reflect a strong commitment to social justice, underpinned by the beliefs and a very strong commitment to multiculturalism, equality, and social justice, enacted in various ways. This commitment can be interpreted in many forms of colleges' translation of multicultural practices (Jabu, Abduh, & Rosmaladewi, 2021). This would also be an outcome of the culturally diverse college population and surrounding community. The colleges' values are based on secular ideas of social justice as reflected in social democratic education policies.

In each college, the curriculum has a pivotal role in introducing and teaching students about multiculturalism that support the internationalization of each college. Students are encouraged to learn about other beliefs, other cultures, and their characteristics. Students are taught about different ethnic communities that exist in other parts of the world as well as the values of respecting individual and human dignity. These multicultural practices can enhance the process of internationalization: quality factors (Madrid & Julius, 2017), and academic mobility (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Park, Kim, & DeMatteo, 2016). For example, the colleges have provided a wider perspective on curriculum contents that enable students to learn about different ethnicities and communities from international perspectives. The inclusive curriculum enables students to have a wider perspective on what is happening around the community and all over the world. This also makes students more aware of and sensitive towards multicultural and multiethnic communities.

Implication for EMI

The development of multiculturalism in the context of internationalization of colleges has several implications for English medium programs. This is due to EMI is a type of delivery program for international programs where multiculturalism exists there. The pedagogical implication is:

- EMI program needs to incorporate multicultural education activities both inside and outside campus activities to ensure that students to expose to the local, regional and national cultures.
- EMI stakeholders need to consider the development of national and international multicultural engagement activities so that students can participate to develop their multicultural awareness and cross-cultural competence.

- It is pivotal for teachers and students who enroll in EMI programs to expose themselves in a variety of ways to develop their learning plan on developing their competencies of multiculturalism so that they can be a global citizenship

Conclusion

We found that in each of the three colleges there was a strong spirit or ethos of the college to further multiculturalism within the colleges and to contribute more broadly to a multicultural society, which can be a key factor in the internationalization of colleges. We encounter that the colleges have successfully adopted multicultural policies and implemented them in different ways in the college and the community. This process is very useful in developing and promoting cross-cultural and cross-religious understanding within the multicultural community. Building those understandings, we believe, at the end can bring about the spirit of living in unity and harmony by promoting and celebrating the similarities and respecting the characteristics of each individual and each ethnic and culture. This spirit is essential for building an international campus that can accept international students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The colleges also have a strong commitment to continuously expose their students and their students to wider local and global communities through curriculum and college programs. In terms of curriculum, students learn about global society and its characteristics through special programs such as going out to a certain community to help and to live with them will help students to better understand the community.

More importantly, this research looks at the positive strategies of colleges, without describing challenges and unavoidable negative images of multiculturalism. Therefore, it is important to conduct further research on multiculturalism by investigating challenges, and unpleasant multicultural practices that can occur in Asia, Europe, Middle East, and Latin America.

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