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# Level of Knowledge of Multicultural Education Among Primary National Type School Teachers in Negeri Sembilan

Pilus, Suzana Muhamad<sup>1</sup>, Abdul Wahab, Norwaliza<sup>2\*</sup> & Pratama, Hendri<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2\*</sup>Faculty of Human Development, Sultan Idris Education University, Tanjung Malim, Malaysia

<sup>3</sup>Faculty of Technical and Vocational, Sultan Idris Education University, Tanjung Malim, Malaysia

\*Corresponding Author: [norwaliza@fpm.upsi.edu.my](mailto:norwaliza@fpm.upsi.edu.my)

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**Abstract:** This study aims to examine the level of knowledge of Multicultural Education among national school teachers in Negeri Sembilan. This study was conducted on 927 teachers who teach in national schools in Negeri Sembilan. The objective is to identify the level of knowledge of teachers related to multiculturalism from the aspects of content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction and empowerment of school culture and social structure among national school teachers in Negeri Sembilan. In addition, it also aims to identify whether there is a difference in the level of knowledge of multicultural education from the aspects of content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction and empowerment of school culture and social structure based on the gender of the teacher and the location of the school. In this study, the approach chosen is quantitative and the research design used is survey research. The quiz was distributed to 927 respondents consisting of teachers who teach in national schools in Negeri Sembilan. The data of this study was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 26.0. Two types of statistics are used, namely descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics using frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation are used to describe the profile of the respondents and answer the research questions. Inferential statistics, i.e. One-Way MANOVA is used to identify whether there is a difference in the level of multicultural education knowledge from the aspects of content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction and empowerment of school culture and social structure based on gender and school location. The findings of the study show that teachers' knowledge related to content integration, knowledge related to the construction of multicultural knowledge, knowledge construction to equity pedagogy and knowledge related to reducing prejudice in the context of multicultural education is at a moderate level. The findings of the study also show that there is a significant difference in the level of multicultural education knowledge from the aspects of content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction and empowerment of school culture and social structure based on gender. The results of this study need to be taken seriously by relevant parties so that it can be used as a guidance in education system which the attitude of acceptance in multicultural and ethnic circles is a challenge but it still needs to be faced. This is to allow each uniqueness to be shared, respected and accepted as a symbol of national identity.

**Keywords:** Multicultural Education, teachers, primary schools

## 1. Introduction

Malaysia is a country with diverse races and religions. The three largest races are the Malays, Chinese and Indians followed by ethnic minorities including the Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia and the Orang Asal in East Malaysia namely Iban, Melanau, Kadazan and others (Ramli & Maarof, 2014). The diversity of cultures and ethnic groups and the application of appreciation for diversity is a critical value to create unity and it is a challenge in the world of education (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2013). Education is the best way to achieve understanding and mutual respect (Ramli, 2009). Thus, the role of teachers becomes very large because they are important agents to interact with students and students have backgrounds from various cultures (Gates, 2006). With the changing landscape in the educational environment, this also indirectly causes teachers to face more complex teaching to prepare students to face

the globalized world today (Auziņa, 2013). The Malaysian government also takes into account the unity agenda that needs to be further strengthened among students. This is expressed through the 5 System Aspirations in the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013). According to the statement, students are seen to spend part of their time in school starting from the age of 7 to 17 years old. School is a very suitable place to foster unity. Through interaction with individuals who have gaps in terms of socio-economics, religion and ethnic background, students will learn to understand, and accept all differences openly (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2013).

### 1.1 Problem Statement

The diversity of cultures and ethnic groups and the application of appreciation for diversity is a critical value to create unity and it is a challenge in the world of education (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2013). Racial attitudes are the main challenge to form harmonious ethnic relations in this country. Through a Berita Harian newspaper report (January 14, 2016) where a Malay teacher who teaches at Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina in Mersing, Johor filed a police report claiming that the school did not protect him in several incidents of commotion and was insulted by his students and the students' parents. In another case, mStar Online (July 24, 2013) reported that the Headmaster of Seri Pristana National School (SK) in Sungai Buloh, who was hit by controversy regarding the spread of pictures of non-Muslim students eating in the locker room, filed a police report today claiming he had been defamed.

Apart from racism, the low achievement factor among minority students in a classroom is due to the lack of cultural continuity resulting from very low knowledge of the students' cultural background among the teachers who teach them (Collins, 2009). Delpit's study (2006) also saw districts, schools and teachers focusing more on spreading the curriculum to students without looking at their background. Therefore, he thinks that if you want to give equal education to every student, the implementation of multicultural education must be done consistently along with theory and must be seen from various dimensions. Teachers must also be able to identify, differentiate and understand each complex dimension. In addition, teachers also need to understand that proper and effective multicultural education is not just about changing the curriculum but as a mechanism to unite the multiculturalism found among students (Abdullah & Abdullah, 2018).

The Malaysian Ministry of Education also takes into account the unity agenda that needs to be further strengthened among students. This is expressed through the 5 System Aspirations in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013 (Shan et al., 2016). According to the statement, students are seen to spend part of their time in school starting from the age of 7 to 17 years old. School is a very suitable place to foster unity. Through interaction with individuals who have gaps in terms of socio-economics, religion and ethnic background, students will learn to understand, and accept all differences openly (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2013). Therefore, the role of teachers is very important to realize the wishes of the National Education Philosophy. Teachers not only need to prepare themselves with an open mind but also have knowledge, awareness and skills which in turn will make them alert in adapting methods to be used in catering these towards the differences among students (Abdullah & Abdullah, 2018).

Various actions need to be taken to maintain the harmony by accommodating the students' multiculturalism. Since the primary school students are the best medium to cultivate that awareness, several actions for instance methods or programs that do not require too much expenditure but are effective to deal with this issue. Therefore, this study needs to be carried out to identify the level of knowledge of multicultural education, the implementation of multicultural education and the importance of multicultural education from the perspective of primary school teachers. Next, the findings of this study are expected to help the Curriculum Development Division to formulate the curriculum by thinking about the methods that need to be taken to overcome this issue later.

### 1.2 Research Objective

The objective of this study is as follows:

- a. Identifying the level of knowledge about multicultural education from the aspects of content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction and empowerment of school culture and social structure among national school teachers in Negeri Sembilan.

## 2. Methodology

The design of this study uses a quantitative research approach by using the survey method. This survey study uses a questionnaire as the main instrument to collect data or information related to the knowledge of multicultural education from the perspective of primary school teachers. Since the number of samples varies according to the district, the stratified sampling method is the most suitable one (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The respondents of this study consisted of 927 national school teachers from 103 schools throughout the districts in Negeri Sembilan where a total of 9 respondents represented each school, namely 3 teachers who taught Year 4, 3 who taught Year 5 and 3 who taught in Year 6.

This study uses a questionnaire as the main instrument for data collection to answer the research questions. The questionnaire of this study is an adaptation of the instrument developed by Gates (2006). The constructed questionnaire was tested for validity through face validity and content validity. A pilot study was conducted on 59 teachers to test the

administration of the questionnaire and also to obtain the validity and reliability index of the questionnaire. Cronbach's Alpha reliability index for the questionnaire to measure all aspects in this study is between 0.742 to 0.934. Cronbach's Alpha reliability index is high. Based on the views of Stone (1993) and Ueno & Sekaran (1992), then the item reliability index for this questionnaire is acceptable and high.

Due to the problem of the Covid 19 pandemic that hit the country, the data collection for this study was done using the google form application. The data of this study was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 26.0. Two types of statistics are used, namely descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics using frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation are used to describe the profile of the respondents and answer the research questions.

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1 Level of Teacher Knowledge Related to Multicultural Education

This section reports the findings of a study on the level of teacher knowledge related to multicultural education which covers five aspects, namely the aspect of content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction and empowerment of school culture and social structure. The results of the descriptive analysis of the level of knowledge of teachers related to multicultural education are as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Mean score, standard deviation and level of teacher knowledge related to multicultural education

No.	Aspects of Teacher Knowledge Related to Multicultural Education	Mean	S. D	Level
1.	Knowledge Related to Content Integration	4.044	0.538	Moderate
2.	Knowledge Related to Knowledge Construction	4.162	0.588	Moderate
3.	Knowledge Related to Equity Pedagogy	4.169	0.588	Moderate
4.	Knowledge Related to Prejudice Reduction.	4.315	0.607	Moderate
5.	Knowledge Related to Empowering school Culture and Social Structure	4.440	0.571	High
<b>Teacher's Knowledge of Multicultural Education As a Whole</b>		<b>4.226</b>	<b>0.490</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

Based on Table 1, it was found that overall, the level of knowledge of teachers related to multicultural education as a whole is at a moderate level (mean=4.226; s. d.=0.490). A detailed analysis of each aspect of teachers' knowledge related to multicultural education shows that teachers' knowledge related to content integration, knowledge related to the construction of multicultural knowledge, knowledge related to equity pedagogy in the context of multicultural education and knowledge related to prejudice reduction are also at a moderate level. However, knowledge related to the empowerment of school culture and social structure is at a high level. Each aspect of teachers' knowledge related to multicultural education contains four items. A detailed analysis of each item in each aspect of teachers' knowledge related to multicultural education is as in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Mean score, standard deviation for each item in each aspect of teacher knowledge related to multicultural education

Aspect	No	Statement	Mean	S. D	Level
1. Content Integration Knowledge	1.	Incorporation of ethnic content into the curriculum	4.21	0.663	Moderate
	2.	Searching for the materials that contain various cultures and ethnicities.	4.18	0.692	Moderate
	3.	Identifying and using teaching materials that depict ethnic differences in a realistic way.	4.17	0.641	Moderate
	4.	The usage of school libraries in finding multiethnic materials for students and classroom teaching.	3.62	0.708	Moderate
	<b>1.</b>	<b>Content Integration Knowledge</b>	<b>4.044</b>	<b>0.538</b>	<b>Moderate</b>
2. Construction Knowledge towards Multicultural	1.	Teaching students to interpret events from a diverse cultural point of view. For example, teaching students why different ethnic and cultural groups have conflicting views on the same historical event or contemporary situation.	4.17	0.627	Moderate
	2.	Teaching students how the construction of	4.20	0.704	Moderate

		knowledge is influenced by racial perspectives.			
	3.	Teach students to analyze the truth in all areas	4.28	0.678	Moderate
	4.	Teaching students to understand written history in a society that only sees 'victory versus defeat'.	4.00	0.835	Moderate
	<b>2.</b>	<b>Construction Knowledge towards Multicultural</b>	<b>4.162</b>	<b>0.588</b>	<b>Moderate</b>
3. Knowledge of Equity Pedagogy in the Context of Multicultural Education	1.	Using instructional strategies that can give the closest picture of the learning patterns of students of various ethnicities in school.	4.05	0.710	Moderate
	2.	Modifying learning objectives that can give the closest picture of the learning patterns of students of various ethnicities in school.	4.09	0.707	Moderate
	3.	Using an assessment procedure that can give the closest impression of the cultural diversity of students.	4.08	0.697	Moderate
	4.	Making modifications to teaching patterns when students see no progress in learning.	4.45	0.692	High
	<b>3.</b>	<b>Knowledge of Equity Pedagogy in the Context of Multicultural Education</b>	<b>4.169</b>	<b>0.588</b>	<b>Moderate</b>
4. Prejudice Reduction Knowledge	1.	Creating and using a curriculum that can encourage students to have an attitude of supporting cultural diversity.	4.38	0.676	High
	2.	Creating and using a curriculum that can help students to identify differences between cultural groups.	4.35	0.674	High
	3.	Creating and using a curriculum that helps students develop the skills they need for cross-cultural student interaction and helps students learn how to function effectively in a multicultural environment.	4.24	0.668	Moderate
	4.	Creating curriculum and opportunities according to the pattern of public schools to help all students explore and explain the noble values that are practiced in their ethnic circles.	4.29	0.711	Moderate
	<b>4.</b>	<b>Prejudice Reduction Knowledge</b>	<b>4.315</b>	<b>0.607</b>	<b>Moderate</b>
5. Knowledge of School Cultural Empowerment and Social Structure	1.	A reflective school administration is not too judgmental towards the behavior patterns of all cultures in the school community.	4.30	0.710	Moderate
	2.	School administration that fosters positive interactions among diverse cultural groups.	4.53	0.668	High
	3.	A curriculum that provides ongoing opportunities for all students to develop a better sense of self	4.52	0.657	High
	4.	Teaches students how to act on social problems that affect cultural and ethnic groups.	4.41	0.691	High
	<b>5.</b>	<b>Knowledge of School Cultural Empowerment and Social Structure</b>	<b>4.440</b>	<b>0.571</b>	<b>High</b>

Based on Table 2, it was found that the level of teachers' knowledge about content integration in multicultural education as a whole is at a moderate level (mean=4.044; s. d.=0.538). Primary school teachers in Negeri Sembilan were found to have knowledge about the content integration in multicultural education at a moderate level in aspects related to the knowledge of incorporating ethnic content into the curriculum; searching for materials containing various cultures and ethnicities; identifying and using teaching materials that depict ethnic differences in a realistic way; and the usage of school libraries in finding multiethnic materials for students and classroom instruction.

The level of teachers' knowledge about the construction of multicultural knowledge in multicultural education as a whole is at a medium level (mean=4.162; s. p.=0.588). Primary school teachers in Negeri Sembilan were found to have knowledge about the construction of multicultural knowledge in multicultural education at a moderate level in aspects

related to the knowledge of teaching students to interpret events from a diverse cultural point of view; teaching students how the construction of knowledge is influenced by racial perspectives; teaching students to analyze the truth in all areas, and teaching students to understand written history in a society that only sees victory over defeat.

The level of teachers' knowledge about equity pedagogy in the context of multicultural education as a whole is at a moderate level (mean=4.169; s. d.=0.588). Primary school teachers in Negeri Sembilan were found to have knowledge about equity pedagogy in the context of multicultural education at a moderate level in aspects related to knowledge of using instructional strategies that can give the closest picture of the learning patterns of students of various ethnicities in school; modify the learning objectives that can give the closest picture of the learning patterns of students of various ethnicities in school; and using assessment procedures that can give the closest impression of the diversity of students' cultures. However, the level of knowledge of teachers related to making modifications to teaching patterns when they see that students are not progressing in learning is at a high level.

The level of teachers' knowledge about prejudice reduction in the context of multicultural education as a whole is at a medium level (mean=4.315; s. d.=0.607). Primary school teachers in Negeri Sembilan were found to have knowledge about prejudice reduction in the context of multicultural education at a moderate level in aspects related to knowledge in creating and using a curriculum that can help students develop the skills they need for cross-cultural interaction between students as well as helping students learn how to function effectively in a multicultural environment; and creating curriculum and opportunities following the pattern of public schools to help all students explore and explain the noble values practiced in their ethnic circles. However, teachers' knowledge about prejudice reduction at a high level is related to creating and using a curriculum that can encourage students to have an attitude of supporting cultural diversity; and creating and using a curriculum that can help students to identify differences between cultural groups.

The level of teachers' knowledge about the empowerment of school culture and social structure in the context of multicultural education as a whole is at a high level (mean=4.440; s. d.=0.571). Primary school teachers in Negeri Sembilan were found to have knowledge about reducing the empowerment of school culture and social structure in the context of multicultural education at a high level in aspects related to school administration that fosters positive interaction among diverse cultural groups; a curriculum that provides ongoing opportunities for all students to develop a better sense of self; and teach students how to act on social problems that affect cultural and ethnic groups. However, teachers' knowledge about the empowerment of school culture and social structure is only moderate in relation to school administration which reflects not too judgmental on the behavior patterns of all cultures in the school community.

#### 4. Discussion and Implications

The level of teacher knowledge related to multicultural education in the context of the study covers five aspects, namely the content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction and empowerment of school culture and social structure. This study found that the level of knowledge of teachers in national schools in Negeri Sembilan related to multicultural education as a whole is at a moderate level. This study is not in line with the findings of Wahab et al. (2018) on primary school teachers using the Byram Model (1997) which looks at the aspects of knowledge, skills, attitudes and practices where it shows the level of teachers' knowledge of multiculturalism is high compared to the general public. This difference is clear as in Byram's Model, the aspects identified are between cultures. It also only emphasizes the communication efficiency between teachers' cultures in the classroom through the interview and observation methods. In five dimensional model by Banks & Banks (2019), teacher knowledge covers the aspects of content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction and empowerment of school culture where it is more comprehensive and includes the needs in the transformation of students in Malaysia which consists of from various backgrounds.

A detailed analysis of each aspect of the teacher's knowledge related to multicultural education found that the teacher's knowledge related to the content integration, knowledge related to the construction of multicultural knowledge, knowledge related to equity pedagogy and knowledge related to the prejudice reduction in the context of multicultural education is at a moderate level. However, knowledge related to the empowerment of school culture and social structure in the context of multicultural education is at a high level. In line with the findings of Yusuf et al. (2018) study, awareness of multicultural education among primary school teachers in Malaysia is still at a moderate level. He suggested that a multicultural awareness campaign be implemented in all schools to ensure that every student feels that they are part of society despite having different backgrounds.

In this study it was found that, national school teachers in Negeri Sembilan have knowledge about the content integration in multicultural education at a moderate level in aspects related to the knowledge of incorporating ethnic content into the curriculum; Search for materials containing various cultures and ethnicities; Identify and use teaching materials that depict ethnic differences in a realistic way; and The usage of the school library in finding multiethnic materials for students and classroom teaching. Knowledge about the content integration in multicultural education is important because it requires teachers to use examples and content from multicultural and groups to illustrate the main concepts, principles, generalizations and theories in the points subjects or fields taught by them (Maaruf & Siraj, 2011).

Banks & Banks (2019) assert that including ethnic and cultural content in the subject area is something logical and it is one of the efforts to succeed in this dimension in an orderly manner.

This study found that national school teachers in Negeri Sembilan have knowledge about the construction of multicultural knowledge in multicultural education at a moderate level in aspects related to the knowledge of teaching students to interpret events from a diverse cultural point of view; Teaching students how the construction of knowledge is influenced by racial perspectives; Teaching students to analyze the truth in all areas, and Teaching students to understand written history in a society that only sees victory over defeat. According to Banks and Banks (2016) in this aspect of knowledge construction, teaching activities help students to understand, investigate and further make implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives and biases of researchers and book writers that affect the way knowledge is constructed.

From the aspect of knowledge about equity pedagogy in the context of multicultural education, this study found that the level of knowledge about equity pedagogy is at a moderate level in the aspect related to the knowledge of using instructional strategies that can give the closest picture of the learning patterns of students of various ethnicities in school; Modify learning objectives that can give the closest picture of the learning patterns of students of various ethnicities in school; and Using assessment procedures that can give the closest impression of the cultural diversity of students. However, the level of knowledge of teachers related to making modifications to teaching patterns when they see that students are not progressing in learning is at a high level. Knowledge related to equity pedagogy which is an important dimension where teachers have the knowledge to modify their teaching methods so that students from various races, cultures, socio-economics and languages can feel that learning is facilitated to help their academic achievement. According to Maaruf and Siraj (2011), knowledge related to various ways and approaches, varies according to the needs of a culture by involving cooperative learning techniques especially in giving instructions in teaching especially for Mathematics and Science subjects.

This study also found that primary school teachers in Negeri Sembilan have knowledge about prejudice reduction in the context of multicultural education at a moderate level in aspects related to the knowledge of creating and using a curriculum that can help students develop the skills they need for cross-cultural interaction between students and help students learn how to function effectively in a multicultural environment; and Creating curriculum and opportunities according to public school patterns to help all students explore and explain the noble values practiced in their ethnic circles (Zhao et al., 2022). However, teachers' knowledge about prejudice reduction at a high level is related to creating and using a curriculum that can encourage students to have an attitude of supporting cultural diversity; and create and use a curriculum that can help students to identify differences between cultural groups. Teachers' knowledge of prejudice reduction helps students develop positive and democratic racial attitudes. In addition, it is also seen to help students understand how ethnic identity is influenced by the schooling context, attitudes and beliefs of the more dominant social group. Allport (1954) asserted that prejudice can be reduced with interracial relationships if the relationship situation has characteristics such as (1) they are cooperative rather than competitive; (2) each individual has equal experience status; and (3) there are restrictions in the relationship by the authorities, namely parents, principals and teachers.

From the aspect of teachers' knowledge about the empowerment of school culture and social structure in the context of multicultural education, the findings of this study show that it is at a high level in aspects related to school administration that fosters positive interaction among diverse cultural groups; A curriculum that provides ongoing opportunities for all students to develop a better sense of self; and Teaching students how to act on social problems that affect cultural and ethnic groups. However, teachers' knowledge about the empowerment of school culture and social structure is only moderate in relation to school administration which reflects not too judgmental on the behavior patterns of all cultures in the school community. Knowledge related to the empowerment of school culture and social structure in the context of multicultural education among teachers is important because according to Mohd Noor (2005), this dimension involves structuring the culture and organization of a school so that students who are multicultural, ethnic, socio-economic and group language receives equality. Through this dimension, school staff members examine and change the cultural and social structure of the school. Group practices and labeling, involvement in sports, achievement gaps found among groups and interactions between staff and cross-ethnic and cultural students are important variables in assessment and reform. The empowerment of the school structure requires different relationships between various groups in the school as well as created qualitatively (Mohd Noor, 2005). Daud and Don (2012) assert that the relationship is based on mutual understanding and mutual respect for cultural differences, which will eventually reflect the school's goals, cultural norms and practices.

Indeed, in an effort to achieve the effectiveness of multicultural education, in order to improve racial integration in Malaysia, teachers who have a high level of knowledge related to multicultural education in all aspects including content integration knowledge, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction and empowerment of school culture and social structures. Ahmad & Yusof (2017), asserted that teachers not only need to prepare themselves with an open mind but they must have knowledge, awareness and skills that will in turn make them always sensitive to different students' backgrounds and dealing with them using positive and proactive methods. According to Chebankova (2012), knowledge of multicultural education becomes important especially when a person has to interact with those of

different cultures. An individual need to realize that it is quite difficult to think and act because they have to adapt their cultural practices to other cultures (Yasmin & Sohail, 2018).

In the context of education in Malaysia, which is a country with racial and religious diversity, issues related to racial integration are the main agenda that needs to be given priority. One of the efforts to improve racial integration is through education and multicultural education. It is an effective methodology in fostering understanding between races. We need to be careful in dealing with issues involving race to avoid any incident that can cause tragedy and violence (Awang-Shuib et al., 2017). We also need to be aware that every individual has differences and every action taken needs to take into account the risks that will be faced (Mao et al., 2009). This is to avoid misunderstandings that will eventually make the relationship between cultures tense. Therefore, knowledge of cultural differences can reduce the risk for a person to act unexpectedly and it is seen as able to maintain the harmony of a relationship (Yasmin & Sohail, 2018). Accordingly, racial unity needs to be a basic goal in managing the country (Abdullah et al., 2016), and teachers with high knowledge in multicultural education are very much needed in order to be able to carry out their duties effectively in fostering unity through the national education system. Indeed, education is the best way to achieve understanding and mutual respect (Ramli, 2009). Therefore, the role of teachers becomes very large because they are an important agent to interact together with students and students have backgrounds from various cultures (Gates, 2006).

## 5. Conclusion

The findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

- a. The level of knowledge of teachers related to multicultural education as a whole is at a moderate level.
- b. Teachers' knowledge related to content integration, knowledge related to the construction of multicultural knowledge, knowledge related to fair pedagogy and knowledge related to reducing prejudice in the context of multicultural education is at a moderate level. However, knowledge related to the empowerment of school culture and social structure in the context of multicultural education is at a high level.
- c. There is a significant difference in the level of knowledge of multicultural education from the aspects of content integration, knowledge building, fair pedagogy, reduction of prejudice and empowerment of school culture and social structure based on gender.
- d. There is no significant difference in the level of multicultural education knowledge from the aspects of content integration, knowledge building, fair pedagogy, reduction of prejudice and empowerment of school culture and social structure based on school location.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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