General music teachers' attitudes and practices regarding multicultural music education in Malaysia

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This study examined the utilisation of multicultural music education by Malaysian music teachers, with an emphasis on the relationship between music teachers’ attitudes and their subsequent degree of effort in developing and implementing multicultural music education in their music classes. Respondents for the study were 456 music teachers; responses were collected via an adapted version of the original Music Specialist’s Multicultural Music Education Survey instrument. Results indicate that there is limited implementation of multicultural music education in music classrooms due to inadequate preparation and limited resources and insufficient knowledge of multicultural music. As such, music teacher training programmes are needed in order to address both the theoretical and practical aspects of multicultural music education throughout the curriculum in a comprehensive and long-term manner.

**Keywords:** multiculturalism; music education; teachers’ attitudes; Malaysia

1. Introduction

In the last decade of the twentieth century, music educators in many countries recognised the importance of multicultural music education. Numerous scholarly articles, books and dissertations have been written in favour of multicultural music education. Many writers advocate that knowledge and experience of multicultural music develop multicultural awareness, tolerance, understanding and acceptance of people from other cultures. Today, multicultural music education continues to be an important issue because music educators are confronted with the diversity of cultural, ethnic, religious and socio-economic groups in today’s society.

Being a culturally diverse country, music education in Malaysia adopts a multicultural approach in line with the Malaysian National Philosophy of Education (NEP). The NEP was formulated in 1988 with the ultimate aims of building a united and progressive society (National Philosophy of Education, Goal, and Mission 2001). Based on the philosophy contained in the NEP in Malaysia, the music curriculum was designed not only to produce students who are knowledgeable and competent in music, but also to develop awareness, tolerance and understanding of the different cultures, in addition to broadening students’ experiences and understanding of other cultures’ music (*KBSR 2000*). Therefore, the challenge for music teachers in Malaysia...
is to present a multicultural music education whereby all children can learn to accept the musical cultures of other ethnic groups. To begin with, we will provide a brief description of Malaysian primary music education with regards to its multicultural aspects.

1.1. Malaysian primary music education

Music education in Malaysia at the primary level is aimed at providing knowledge and a basic understanding of music to students, developing students’ fundamental skills in music making, developing students’ ability for creative and innovation through music making and developing students awareness and appreciation for music of various cultures and of various genre (KBSR 2000).

Music education is emphasised at the primary level from ages 7–12 and is compulsory in primary schools. In 1983, the music education curriculum known as the ‘Integrated Primary School Curriculum’ (Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah, KBSR) was first introduced as a compulsory subject in Malaysian primary schools. This is a six-year programme containing two levels: Level I, which encompasses Years 1–3 (aged 7–9) and Level II, which encompasses Years 4–6 (aged 10–12). In 1983, Level I music education was first introduced as a compulsory subject in all primary schools, followed by Level II in 1986 for all schools as well.

The Malaysian Ministry of Education provides the curricula, textbooks and teaching materials to all primary schools. Offered as part of the primary curricula, music is taken as a compulsory but non-examination subject for the majority of Malaysian students. Music lessons are conducted twice a week and last between 30 and 45 minutes. As education is centralised, all public schools use the same music curriculum. The subject is aimed at providing knowledge of musical elements, different kinds of music and musical instruments, and it also provides the opportunity to make simple music. The syllabus covers aspects of musical language, musical experience, creative expression and aesthetic appreciation (KBSR 2000).

The importance of multicultural music in Malaysian primary music education has increased due to the requirements set by the Integrated Curriculum for Primary Schools for music education. The contents are based on the following standards:

(1) Aesthetic perception: knowledge and understanding of musical concepts.
(2) Musical experience: singing and playing musical instruments (recorder and percussion).
(3) Creative expression: developing self-expression and creativity, and basic composition.
(4) Aesthetic appreciation: appreciating various types of Malaysian music and culture.

Given the multicultural characteristics of Malaysia, the importance of developing culturally music programmes is one of the key features of the Malaysian music education system. One of the four standards of the Integrated Curriculum for Primary Schools for music education requires students to appreciate different kinds of Malaysian music and culture. This particular standard pertains to multicultural music education whereas the remaining standards are related to other aspects of music, which are mainly based on Western classical music. The objective of employing
multicultural music is to let children be in touch with the music and cultures of the different ethnic groups in Malaysia, so that they understand the distinctiveness and variety of Malaysian music and culture, and thus build mutual respect and tolerance among the different cultures. Thus, music teachers should provide primary school students with ways of appreciating and being involved in musics of their own cultures, as well as cultures in their local community.

Therefore, multicultural music is not an optional type of music to be included or disregarded at the discretion of the teacher but it is required by the National Curriculum Standards for music education in Malaysia. In order to make improvements to the existing Integrated Curriculum for Primary Schools for music education, the Standard Curriculum for World Music for Primary Schools (Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah, KSSR) has replaced the existing curriculum in stages starting with Year 1 students in year 2011 (KSSR 2010).

The Standard Curriculum for World Music for Primary Schools is a learning programme for the first three years of primary school (Level 1). The curriculum is designed with a focus on cognitive development and students’ skills in music. Pupils are given numerous opportunities to express their creative musical ideas and to increase their aesthetic appreciation of music. This new music curriculum aims to build the potential in students to become creative individuals who appreciate and enjoy music intellectually through musical activities. In addition, a wider range of musical genres has been introduced into the new music curriculum to represent World Music. This new music curriculum includes various musical styles such as Asian music, Western classical music, popular music, instrumental music and Malaysian traditional music.

The Standard Curriculum for World Music for Primary Schools is based on three curricular modules:

1. Musical Experience Module: Pupils obtain musical experience through activities such as singing, movement and playing musical instruments.
2. Music Production Module: Students express creative ideas through musical activities experienced during the process of teaching and learning.
3. Music Appreciation Module: Students appreciate the variety of music through exposure to music from various cultures.

This new music education curriculum has also set a scope for developing the fundamentals of multiculturalism, where students appreciate the uniqueness of the variety of music from the various cultures in Malaysia. Therefore, it can be said that music programmes in Malaysia are aimed at developing interest in and appreciation of the music and songs of Malaysian culture among pupils in general (Shah 2006).

In today’s public schools, elementary general music teachers play a significant role in the construction and implementation of music curricula, as their attitudes and current practices within the general music classroom form the critical basis for the future of multicultural music (Meidinger 2002). Not only that, elementary general music teachers are also in a unique position to provide the foundation for students’ understanding of and participation in multicultural music in the global society (Petersen 2005). This raises important questions as to the current status of music teachers’ attitudes and practices with regard to multicultural music. As a first step, the present study examined general music teachers’ attitudes about multicultural music education in Malaysia.
1.2. Purpose of the study

This study examined general music teachers’ attitudes towards multicultural music education and their efforts to develop and implement multicultural music education in the music classroom. In order to achieve this purpose, the following research questions were addressed:

(1) To what extent do general music teachers’ attitudes towards the definition of multicultural music education, attitudes in multicultural music education, training and support for multicultural music education and practices of multicultural music education correlate with the Music Specialist’s Multicultural Music Education Survey?

(2) To what extent do the general music teachers’ characteristics of age, years of teaching experience, gender, ethnic identity and religion correlate with the Music Specialist’s Multicultural Music Education Survey?

For the purpose of clarity, the following operational definitions of terms were employed:

(1) multicultural music education: educating students from a perspective that will enable them to function musically within the multiple music cultures of a society; (2) ethnic identity: as an essential aspect of the self which is related to a sense of identification with or belonging to one’s own ethnic group and attitudes towards the group; (3) ethnic majority: ethnic Malays (which includes Bumiputera such as Orang Asli, Kadazan, Bajau, Iban, Melanau, Bidayuh and Penan); (4) bumiputera: embracing indigenous people of the Malay Archipelago; (5) ethnic minority: ethnic Chinese and Indians, and ‘other’ ethnic minorities such as the Eurasians and Sikhs; (6) attitude: learned predispositions to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner with respect to multiculturalism; (7) practices: music practices used by general music teachers to address the needs of students in music classes; and (8) religion: an individual’s values, beliefs and behaviours related to religious practices.

2. Method

2.1. Participants and procedure

Subjects for this study were 456 primary school general music teachers who attended a music curricula development course. The sample was classified according to age, gender, ethnic group, religion and years of teaching experience. Subjects included male and female general music teachers representing the different ethnic groups of Malaysia, i.e. Malay (n = 266), Chinese (n = 140), Indian (n = 42) and others (n = 8). The initial selection of subjects for this study was made based on the location of primary school music teachers and on the basis of the similarity of size and the ability to respond adequately to the questionnaire that required the subjects to reflect on their views about their attitudes and efforts in developing and implementing multicultural music education in the music classroom. Music teachers completed the demographic information and the Music Specialist’s Multicultural Music Education Survey. The survey took approximately 30 minutes to complete on average. Respondents were assured that information given in the questionnaires would remain anonymous and confidential.
2.2. Measure

The survey instrument used and modified specifically for this study was the Music Specialist’s Multicultural Music Education Survey developed by Petersen (2005). The instrument used in the main study contains 40 items and measures a primary schools’ general music teacher’s attitudes, practices and utilisation of multicultural music education. The survey contains the following categories: (1) definition of multicultural music education, (2) attitudes in multicultural music education, (3) training and support with multicultural music education and (4) practices of multicultural music education. Subjects responded to each statement using a 5-point Likert type scale with the response numbered 1 designating strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 undecided, 4 agree and 5 interpreted as strongly agree.

(1) The category of definition of multicultural music education consists of six items designed to measure the music teachers’ understanding of multicultural music education.

(2) The category of attitudes in multicultural music education consists of eight items designed to assess music teachers’ attitudes towards teaching multicultural music.

(3) The category of training and support for multicultural music education consists of six items designed to assess how sufficient is the training and support for music teachers in teaching multicultural music.

(4) The category of practices of multicultural music education consists of 20 items designed to assess the extent of practices of multicultural music education of music teachers in music classroom.

In addition to the scale mentioned above, music teachers were asked for demographic information such as age, gender, ethnic identity, religion and years of teaching experience.

2.3. Data analyses

The data collected from the Music Specialist’s Multicultural Music Education Survey were compiled and analysed using quantitative measures. The sorted data were evaluated using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS), utilising descriptive statistics, Pearson Product-Moment correlations and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). A probability level of \( p < 0.05 \) was set for all tests of statistical significance.

3. Results

Descriptive statistics were computed for each of the 40 items of the Music Specialist’s Multicultural Music Education Survey (see Table 1 for descriptive statistics). Subjects rated each statement on a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Results revealed that the means for the items in the definition of multicultural music education category (Items 1–6) were relatively homogeneous with means higher than 3.60. Means for all items ranged from 3.65 to 4.47. For this category, item 1, which addresses the issue of introducing diverse music of cultures recorded the highest mean \((M = 4.47)\) indicating a higher degree of agreement with this issue. In contrast, item 2
Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the 40 items of the Music Specialist’s Multicultural Music Education Survey.

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had the lowest mean score ($M = 3.65$) indicating a lower degree of agreement with this issue. On a scale of 1–5, responses to the six items generally showed a high degree of agreement on those issues. These six items had standard deviations of less than 1.00, showing a lower degree of variability.

Compared to the category of definition of multicultural music education, there was a wider range of means for the items within the attitudes in multicultural music education category (Items 7–14) with the highest being $M = 4.23$ and the lowest being $M = 2.54$. In this category, general music teachers showed the highest degree of agreement for item 8, which addressed the issue that multicultural music education can be used to promote better understanding among people. On the other hand, item 10 had the lowest mean score of 2.54 indicating that music teachers generally disagreed with this issue. Some degree of variability ($SD > 1.00$) was indicated for the two items. Six of the items had standard deviations of less than 1.00, yielding a lower degree of variability.

However, the means decreased for the items within the training and support for multicultural music education category (Items 15–20). Results showed that item 19 which concerns the support of administration for the use of multicultural music education in the classroom received the highest mean score of 3.40 while the lowest mean score of 2.52 was for the issue of insufficient training in multicultural music education. Standard deviation values were all greater than 1.00 except for items 19 and 20, which had standard deviation values that were less than 1.00.

Results for the items in the practices of multicultural music education category (Items 21–40) were quite varied. For this category, the highest mean value was $M = 4.04$ which addressed the issue of utilising the music of the ethnic Malays in the classroom, and the lowest mean value was $M = 2.38$ which addressed the issue of sufficient knowledge of indigenous music. Variability was also revealed in the standard deviation scores which were larger than 1.00 except items 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 and 39 which had values less than 1.00.
In summary, Table 1 shows that ‘Multicultural music education should introduce the diverse music of cultures to all students regardless of their own ethnic background’ was ranked the highest (with a mean value of 4.47) among all the items while ‘I have sufficient knowledge of the musical contribution of Indigenous people’ did not have a significant value for the music teachers.

Overall, the lowest five items of the Music Specialist’s Multicultural Music Education Survey, listed in order of descending mean values, are:

1. Multicultural music education is a threat to social unity because it focuses on cultural differences.
2. I had sufficient training in multicultural music education in my college courses.
3. I have a sufficient amount of authentic recordings of music from diverse cultures in my classroom.
4. I have a sufficient amount of ethnic instruments in my classroom.
5. I have sufficient knowledge of the musical contribution of indigenous people.

In contrast, the top five items of the Music Specialist’s Multicultural Music Education Survey, as selected by the music teachers, are:

1. Multicultural music education should introduce the diverse music of cultures to all students regardless of their own ethnic background.
2. Multicultural music education can be used to promote better understanding among people.
3. Multicultural music education is about teaching world music.
4. Multicultural music education is used to increase self-awareness and self-esteem of ethnically and culturally minority students.
5. Multicultural music education is an important part of elementary education.

In view of the data collected from the four classifications of the Music Specialist’s Multicultural Music Education Survey, the results in Table 2 reveal that the general music teachers (N = 456) ranked the ‘Definition of multicultural music education’ category as the highest with a mean score of $M = 4.03$, followed by the ‘Attitudes in multicultural music education’ category with a mean score of $M = 3.75$. The mean score was $M = 3.12$ for the category of ‘Practices of multicultural music education’, which was slightly lower than ‘Attitudes in multicultural music education’. Lastly, the ‘Training and support for multicultural music education’ received the lowest mean score $M = 2.90$ among the four classifications.

Table 3 shows that the continuous demographic variables namely age and years of teaching experience with the Music Specialist’s Multicultural Music Education Survey’s composite scores were found to be non-significant.

In Table 4, the results reveal that on the composite score of the Music Specialist’s Multicultural Music Education Survey, the effect of ethnic identity, $p = .166$ was not significant. In contrast, the results show that gender ($p = .04$) and religion ($p = .01$) variables had a significant effect on the composite score of the Music Specialist’s Multicultural Music Education Survey.
4. Discussion

4.1. Utilisation of multicultural music education

4.1.1. Definition of multicultural music education

The majority (97%) of the general music teachers felt that multicultural music education should include the diverse music of all cultures and could also be used to increase the self-awareness and self-esteem of minority students. On the other hand, 70% agreed that multicultural music education should not only include western classical music, while 88% thought that world music should be included in multicultural music education and believed that multicultural music education is valuable for minority students. Only 13% disagreed or strongly disagreed that multicultural music education should focus on racial and ethnic differences. The results showed that music teachers in Malaysia think that by including multicultural music it is hoped that students will value the wide spectrum of cultures and celebrate their diverse music. In addition, music teachers believe that multicultural music education should not only reference majorities but also include minorities. Music from a variety of cultures tends to be represented in the music teachers’ classrooms.

4.1.2. Attitudes in multicultural music education

Many of the music teachers reported that they had received insufficient multicultural training. Many of them feel inadequate in areas outside the realm of western classical music. Nonetheless, they are happy and comfortable teaching multicultural music. These results are in line with Petersen’s study (2005). However, there are other studies which have showed different results where teachers tend not to teach a variety of other cultures’ music (Moore 1993; Robinson 1996; Young 1996).

Most of the teachers think that multicultural music education is an important part of elementary education and that it can be used to promote better understanding among people, which is consistent with Meidinger’s study (2002). However, their responses were greatly varied regarding the attitude that multicultural music
education is a threat to social unity, where 54% disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 27% agreed or strongly agreed. As Anderson and Campbell (1989) noted, a multicultural approach can help develop sensitivity, understanding and respect for peoples from a broad spectrum of ethnic cultural backgrounds.

4.1.3. Training and support for multicultural music education

With regards to sufficiency of training in multicultural music education, 55% of the general music teachers reported that they did not have enough training during their college courses. Fifty per cent of the music teachers indicated that they had not attended enough workshops related to multicultural music education and that there is a lack of resources and materials for them to incorporate multicultural music in their classroom. Lack of knowledge, resources and expertise are among the most frequent responses obtained in this study, which is similar to the previous studies cited earlier (Moore 1993; Robinson 1996; Petersen 2005). There are many reasons for this. Even though the National Curriculum Standards for music education in Malaysia contain some multicultural aspects, a fully multicultural music education curriculum has not been implemented. In addition, many music teachers are not required to take any courses specifically related to multicultural music education either at college or university level in Malaysia. Most often, multicultural music education is seen as an additional item to music education rather than being infused into the music curriculum and instruction. Moreover, the concept of diverse music of all cultures was not clearly defined in the Malaysian music curriculum when they started their careers as music teachers.

In fact, many music teachers acquainted themselves with the concepts and practices of multicultural music education through a variety of means based on their own interests and levels of motivation or because of the insights and incentives of their school and district administrators. In the present study, 51% agreed or strongly agreed that they had received supportive measures from their school administrators.
on the application of multicultural music education but only 38% of the teachers had been offered professional development programmes related to multicultural issues by their respective districts. Therefore, all this has contributed to the lowest ratings being given by the teachers to training and support for multicultural music education, one of the four classifications of the Music Specialist’s Multicultural Music Education Survey. The results of the present study imply that general music teachers in Malaysia lack awareness regarding multicultural instructional materials and Malaysian educational policies, causing music teachers to expend time and effort conducting independent research for self-education. Consequently, this not only hinders the readiness of music teachers in Malaysia to play a creative role in multicultural curriculum development, but it may further contribute to the unwillingness of many music teachers to teach multicultural music in the classroom.

4.1.4. Practice of multicultural music education

To address the extent of the practice of multicultural music education, the music teachers were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed with the multicultural activities that are commonly used in music classes. Utilising the music of the ethnic Malays (85%) and demonstrating the relationship between music and culture by dancing and listening to music of multiple cultures (73%) were the activities reported most frequently. Acknowledging that the Malays are the dominant ethnic group in Malaysia, Malay music is considered to be one of the important cultural heritages of the nation. Therefore, Malay culture contributes to the largest part of the nation’s daily life, including music. Due to this, the contents of the programme implemented in Malaysia primary schools and secondary schools will also emphasise Malay music (Shah 2000).

Among other activities of interest are planning curriculum according to students’ cultural heritage (68%); developing appreciation for ethnic music among students by recognising the contributions of different ethnic groups (67%); utilising technology when teaching the music of diverse cultures (Internet resources, CDs, DVDs; 63%) and playing ethnic musical instruments (61%).

Fifty-six per cent of the music teachers reported that there is an insufficient number of ethnic instruments in the music classroom. Only 18% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they are provided with a sufficient amount of authentic recordings of music from diverse cultures in the classroom. These findings are in line with previous research which reports a lack of music materials and authentic ethnic instruments in the music classroom (Lundquist 2002; Petersen, 2005). Fung (1995) also suggests that music teachers should try to use the most authentic recordings as possible in the classroom. Anderson and Campbell (2010) confirmed this approach by stating ‘early exposure to different sounds is essential in helping students to become receptive to all types musical expression and musical traditions’ (3).

4.2. Music specialist’s multicultural music education survey – summary of survey items (Lowest five)

When sorting data according to statistical mean on a scale of ‘1–5’ with ‘5’ being the highest rating of ‘Strongly Agree’, Items 10, 15, 35, 37 and 38 had an average mean less than 2.6. For example, Item 10 – ‘Multicultural music education is a threat to
social unity because it focuses on cultural differences’ had a mean of 2.54. Perhaps most of the music teachers in Malaysia believe that multicultural music education is not a threat to social unity but rather an opportunity to enhance better understanding, improve relationships and self-concept among students and also improve the multicultural climate in schools.

For Item 15 – ‘I had sufficient training in multicultural music education during my college courses’ had a mean score of 2.52. Results indicate that undergraduate music education programmes or music training programmes in Malaysia do not prepare pre-service teachers to teach multiculturally. Meidinger (2002) also reported that music teachers had received limited training in multicultural music within their music education degree programmes and were basically self-taught with regards to multicultural music. A possible solution advocated by Volk (1998) and Robinson (2002) is a world music course for music education majors oriented around multicultural teaching methods. A course like this could include instruction in a diversity of musical genres, while also attending to various philosophical and practical considerations of multicultural music education and implementing curricula that encourage multicultural awareness.

‘I have sufficient knowledge of the musical contribution of indigenous people’ as Item 35 had a mean score of 2.38. One could reasonably argue that music teachers in Malaysia are generally lacking in knowledge of music from a more global perspective and are not familiar with the musical contribution of indigenous people. This indicates a general need to equip music teachers with knowledge in this area so that they understand better the musical cultures of students whose ethnicity, race, exceptionalities, language and religion are different from their own.

Item 37 – ‘I have a sufficient amount of ethnic instruments in my classroom’ and Item 38 – ‘I have a sufficient amount of authentic recordings of music from diverse cultures in my classroom’ had a mean score of 2.42 and 2.45, respectively. Results indicate that most general music teachers in Malaysia understand that ethnic musical instruments and authentic music recordings are mostly unavailable in the classroom or are limited for general music instruction in the classroom. A possible explanation for the lack of ethnically authentic materials and equipment is budgetary constraints in schools that hinder the procurement of authentic materials for classroom usage. O’Neill (2009) pointed out that ‘many music teachers avoid making music choices that they feel uncomfortable, inadequate or less efficient teaching’ (71). Consequently, the lack of the use of multicultural music resources will affect the delivery of multicultural music education in the classroom.

4.3. Music specialist’s multicultural music education survey – summary of survey items (Top five)

Conversely, when sorting the Music Specialist’s Multicultural Music Education Survey data according to mean, Items 1, 3, 5, 7 and 8 had means higher than the standard mean score of 4.05.

Item 1 – ‘Multicultural music education should introduce the diverse music of cultures to all students regardless of their own ethnic background’ had the highest mean of 4.47. Results show that these music teachers agree that exposure to different types of music is vital for students who live in a culturally diverse society, particularly in Malaysia. As suggested by Schaus (2007), music is an important
part of culture and multicultural music can be taught at school in order to recognise
the diverse student population and to expose students to different cultures. Anderson
and Campbell (2010) gave support to this approach by suggesting ‘early exposure to
different sounds is essential in helping students to become receptive to all types of
musical expression and musical traditions’.

Item 3 – ‘Multicultural music education is about teaching world music’ had a
mean of 4.16. This reveals that music teachers in Malaysia believe the term
‘multicultural music’ includes world music. One might infer that the term ‘world
music education’ is favoured equally by most music teachers. This result is further
corroborated by Meidinger (2002), who found that music teachers agreed to the
synonymy of the terms ‘world music’ and ‘multicultural music’. Item 5 – ‘Multi-
cultural music education is used to increase self-awareness and self-esteem of
ethnically and culturally minority students’ recorded an average mean of 4.09.
Results show that music teachers in Malaysia believe that teaching the music of a
minority ethnic group encourages students from that group to share their culture. It
also shows that their ethnicity is recognised by society. As a result, it helps minority
students develop their ethnic identity, which can, in turn, help them become actively
involved in society at large as well as with their specific group. This is further
supported by Schaus’ (2007) assertion that where a minority population can strongly
relate to both their ethnic culture and the mainstream culture, a healthy ethnic
identity must be developed.

Item 7 – ‘Multicultural music education is an important part of elementary
education’ and Item 8 – ‘Multicultural music education can be used to promote
better understanding among people’ had a mean of 4.08 and 4.23, respectively. The
results indicate that general music teachers believe that multicultural music
education enables students to understand the uniqueness of cultures in Malaysia
while also appreciating the universal qualities that bind the cultures together. This is
in line with Trehub (2003), who suggested that music is a subject that deserves the
same status as language and math because it is a universal phenomenon, as well as a
potential that is born within every human being. This is also seen in Robinson
(1996), where almost all educators recognise multicultural music instruction for its
ability to encourage students to appreciate all music, to promote better understand-
ing of all peoples and their cultures and to recognise the contributions of various
ethnic groups.

Besides, the results also revealed that only gender and religious beliefs had
significant effects on the teachers’ attitudes in the Music Specialist’s Multicultural
Music Education Survey. The present study reveals that female teachers are inclined
to have more favourable attitudes towards multicultural music education even
though both male and female music teachers had positive attitudes towards
multicultural music education. This could be due to the fact that gender is a variable
which is often linked to cultural factors, with some cultures ascribing multicultural
education to female teachers. The results of the present study are partly validated by
Moore’s (2007) finding that one’s gender has a significant effect on multicultural
music education. Moore explained that female elementary music teachers reported to
be comfortable with the materials, training and support given to them for teaching
multiculturalism in the classrooms but the males showed otherwise. This is further
supported by Chen (2000) where female teachers showed more positive attitudes
towards multicultural education than males.
In addition, the present results also show that religious beliefs may affect a teacher’s utilisation of multicultural music education in the classroom. According to Diez (2009), religious belief recognises the importance of diversity, interactions with people, recognition of cultural identity, a reflective action and the increasing awareness of multiculturalism. It respects the interplay of cultural experiences and allows people to claim their own identities and respond to the identities of others. Furthermore, it requires that the learner not only know about other cultures, but also have a positive and loving attitude towards those cultures and their members. Malaysia is considered to be multi-religious; the Malaysian constitution guarantees freedom of religion and there are religious associations and institutions nationwide to promote better religious understanding among different ethnic groups. The different religious groups are generally quite tolerant towards each other and religious harmony is always maintained in Malaysia. Therefore, it could be said that teachers show their religious beliefs and actions by being more multicultural when teaching music in the classroom.

Age did not significantly impact on the responses of the music teachers concerning the utilisation of multicultural music education in the present study. Results indicate that general music teachers in Malaysia responded similarly to items relating to teachers’ attitudes and practices of multicultural music, regardless of age. This result is consistent with the findings reported by Petersen (2005) and Moore (2007), which means music teachers’ age had no significant relationship with attitudes to and interests in multicultural music.

5. Conclusion

Malaysia is a society with a diverse population, which is often considered a national advantage. Therefore, the music curriculum should be infused with multicultural musical values in order to promote egalitarian education and an egalitarian society. The results of this research affirm that multicultural music education is widely perceived by general music teachers to be an important part of elementary education for all students, as it helps them to be aware of multicultural diversity and it promotes better understanding, tolerance and acceptance of the peoples around them. In this study, the teachers strongly agreed that introducing the diverse music of cultures to all students in the music curriculum provides an important benefit for their students. Nonetheless, the main reasons for the limited implementation of multicultural music education in the music classroom in this study are teachers’ inadequate preparation and resources, and insufficient content knowledge of multicultural music. In teaching multicultural music, teachers should adapt and use multicultural music and materials to assist students in developing knowledge, positive attitudes and relevant skills which will help them function in a diverse world with a more global viewpoint that is more realistic for their everyday lives (Lockwood 1992; Banks 1994; Carolin 2006). Therefore, it is vital for educators and tutors involved in music education to initiate a proactive way of including the multicultural music curriculum in higher education, whether in existing courses or when developing new courses in music education. Malaysia’s Ministry of Education must ensure that music teachers have full and easy access to multicultural materials, teaching methods and authentic musical examples from a wide range of cultures. In addition, the authorised parties should also organise various philosophical and
practical considerations in multicultural music education in order to improve the music teacher’s competency in implementing a multicultural music education.

Disclosure statement
No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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