Harmonizing Classrooms: Exploring Multicultural Education Through the Rich Tapestry of ASEAN Culture and Arts

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Abstract

This study aimed to understand how adding ASEAN culture and arts to multicultural education affected a large class of 124 students in the teacher education program. I chose participants using purposive sampling. I asked specific questions during interviews to get information. I used thematic analysis to find patterns and insights in the data. The findings show that ASEAN culture and arts positively affect students. They help increase understanding, tolerance, and appreciation among people with different backgrounds. The interviews captured how cultural elements and the educational environment interact, showing the richness of ASEAN's culture. This research highlights the potential to blend ASEAN culture and arts into educational frameworks, creating classroom harmony. The study affirms that adding diverse cultural elements improves the academic experience, promoting unity and inclusivity. The interdisciplinary pedagogical approach emerges as a critical aspect, emphasizing the need for a holistic integration of culture and arts in education. The transformative power of ASEAN culture and arts extends beyond theory, becoming evident in observable changes in student behaviors, attitudes, and academic performance. The study shows improvements in critical thinking, creativity, cultural sensitivity, and increased engagement with coursework. Detailed case studies illustrate how students apply insights from ASEAN Arts in practical contexts, demonstrating real-world impact. Valuable strategies for reinforcing intercultural awareness in educational settings are integrated, including recommendations for curriculum adjustments, incorporating diverse perspectives in teaching materials, and implementing experiential learning opportunities alongside ASEAN Arts.

Keywords: Intercultural Awareness, Interdisciplinary Pedagogical Approach, Transformative Power

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Introduction

In recent years, incorporating cultural diversity and arts into educational frameworks has gained significant attention in fostering inclusivity, understanding, and appreciation among students from diverse backgrounds. Within this context, integrating ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) culture and arts into multicultural education has emerged as a promising approach to enriching the learning experience and promoting intercultural competence. While existing research has highlighted the positive impacts of such integration on students' understanding, tolerance, and appreciation, there remains a notable research gap concerning the long-term effects and sustainability of these benefits. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the enduring impact of integrating ASEAN culture and arts into multicultural education within teacher education programs. By examining the potential challenges, limitations, and variations in student responses over time, this research seeks to provide valuable insights into the holistic integration of cultural elements into educational frameworks, thereby contributing to the enhancement of classroom harmony and intercultural awareness.

The concept of harmonizing classrooms through multicultural education can be vividly explored by examining the integration of ASEAN culture and the study of a program designed to enhance diversity knowledge and promote equality and equity in classroom participation. Both approaches emphasize the richness of cultural heritage and the importance of inclusive educational environments.

In the context of the ASEAN culture integration, thematic analysis revealed key themes, such as enhanced understanding, tolerance, and appreciation among students. This was achieved through exposure to ASEAN culture and arts, facilitating meaningful interactions and fostering a more inclusive learning environment. Furthermore, the interplay between cultural elements and the educational environment showcased ASEAN's cultural richness, deepening students' connection to course content and heightening cultural sensitivity. The integration also positively impacted students' academic performance, critical thinking skills, creativity, and overall engagement with coursework.

Similarly, the program implemented in a 4th-grade class in Geneva, Switzerland, focused on enhancing diversity knowledge and promoting equality and equity in classroom participation, particularly in high sociolinguistic diversity settings. The program, which integrated students' heritage languages into cooperative activities, followed four stages: fostering openness to others, highlighting linguistic diversity, celebrating cultural diversity, and conducting cooperative tasks involving heritage languages and personal family stories. These stages aimed to ensure students felt accepted and comfortable in multilingual cooperative activities. Feedback from the teacher, students, and parents indicated the program's successful integration into the regular curriculum and its positive reception. The program also improved students' sense of belonging and feelings of relatedness within the class (Buchs & Maradan, 2021).

Both approaches underscore the value of integrating cultural elements into educational settings to foster inclusivity, enhance academic and personal development, and promote a sense of belonging among students. The rich tapestry of ASEAN culture and the structured program in Geneva demonstrate effective strategies for harmonizing classrooms through multicultural education.

The concept of harmonizing classrooms through multicultural education is vividly explored by integrating ASEAN culture and arts, alongside addressing the growing linguistic and cultural diversity in European schools. Both studies underscore the importance of leveraging cultural diversity to foster positive attitudes toward inclusion and interculturality in broader society.

In the context of ASEAN culture integration, thematic analysis revealed key themes such as enhanced understanding, tolerance, and appreciation among students. Exposure to ASEAN culture and arts facilitated meaningful interactions and fostered a more inclusive learning environment. This integration positively impacted students' academic performance, critical thinking skills, creativity, and overall engagement with coursework.

Similarly, the study on European schools examined whether the increasing linguistic and cultural diversity could be used constructively to build positive attitudes toward diversity in society. Interviews with student primary school teachers in a two-year initial teacher education program in France revealed their readiness to address the multicultural classroom. The research analyzed their attitudes toward cultural and linguistic diversity and their capacity to go beyond merely managing these situations. The findings suggested that without significant changes in teacher education, school administration, and within schools, the potential to cultivate positive attitudes toward inclusion and interculturality through the presence of plurilingual students would remain untapped (Stunell, 2020).

Both approaches highlight the value of integrating cultural elements into educational settings to foster inclusivity, enhance academic and personal development, and promote a sense of belonging among students. The rich tapestry of ASEAN culture and the structured program in Geneva, alongside the challenges and opportunities presented by linguistic and cultural diversity in European schools, demonstrate effective strategies for harmonizing classrooms through multicultural education.

The concept of harmonizing classrooms through multicultural education, as illustrated in the integration of ASEAN culture and arts, aligns closely with the study's findings emphasizing teachers' pivotal responsibilities during the shift towards multicultural education. Yılmaz and Boylan (2016) highlight that teachers play a central role in creating inclusive educational environments where diverse identities and cultural attributes are respected and embraced. This responsibility becomes particularly crucial as schools increasingly reflect the cultural diversity of their communities.

The study underscores the importance of teacher education in preparing educators to effectively navigate and leverage cultural diversity in classrooms. Teachers' positive attitudes toward multicultural education are identified as essential in fostering coexistence, peace, and mutual respect among students from varied backgrounds. By promoting an environment where cultural differences are celebrated rather than feared, teachers can help mitigate societal divisions based on ethnicity or nationality.

In the context of integrating ASEAN culture and arts, the study suggests that exposure to diverse cultural perspectives enriches students' educational experiences and promotes deeper understanding and empathy. It emphasizes the role of curriculum adaptations and experiential learning opportunities that highlight cultural diversity and encourage intercultural dialogue.

Overall, the discussion supports the idea that effective multicultural education requires proactive engagement from teachers who are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes

necessary to nurture inclusive classrooms. By embracing multiculturalism in education, educators not only enhance academic learning but also contribute to building a more cohesive and harmonious society where all individuals feel valued and respected for their cultural heritage.

The emergence of multiculturalism in Asia, influenced by globalization through factors like immigration, cultural hybridity, and norms from multilateral and bilateral organizations, poses significant challenges for Asian economies, cultural policies, and higher education institutions. This societal shift mirrors experiences in the United States and Europe, where multiculturalism has long been integrated, contributing to models of cosmopolitan democracies and global citizenship education.

In parallel, studies such as Torres and Tarozzi (2019) delve into the theoretical underpinnings and debates surrounding multiculturalism, drawing lessons from the European Union (EU) and the United States. They explore cross-border learning experiences highlighted in international comparative education studies and examine potential crises within multiculturalism within these regions.

Conversely, the study on Harmonizing Classrooms: Exploring Multicultural Education Through the Rich Tapestry of ASEAN Culture and Arts exemplifies practical applications of multicultural education. It illustrates how integrating ASEAN culture and arts enriches educational experiences, fosters understanding, and promotes inclusivity in diverse classroom settings.

Together, these perspectives underscore the importance of adapting educational frameworks to embrace multiculturalism's complexities and opportunities. By learning from global experiences and applying culturally inclusive practices, Asian economies and cultures can navigate the challenges of multiculturalism effectively, contributing to a more cohesive global community.

The discussion on the concentration of equity-related skills development in standalone "multicultural" courses within teacher education programs across Canada and the United States, which often emphasize appreciation of diversity or cultural competence rather than critical engagement with inequities, connects with the study of Harmonizing Classrooms: Exploring Multicultural Education Through the Rich Tapestry of ASEAN Culture and Arts.

In both contexts, there is a recognition of the need for a critical orientation in multicultural education. The study by Gorski and Parekh (2020), based on a survey of instructors in Canada and the US, highlights that educators who take a more critical approach in their multicultural and intercultural education courses perceive less institutional support for their values. This challenges the educational systems to better align institutional support with the critical preparation of teachers to address inequities effectively.

Similarly, in the exploration of ASEAN culture and arts integration into multicultural education, there is an emphasis on fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity. This approach not only enriches educational experiences but also prepares students and educators to engage critically with issues of equity and inclusion in diverse classroom settings.

Thus, both studies underscore the importance of moving beyond a superficial appreciation of diversity towards a critical examination of inequities, supported by institutional frameworks that value and reinforce these critical perspectives in education. This alignment is crucial for advancing inclusive educational practices that effectively prepare educators and students to navigate and contribute to multicultural societies.

The discussion on educational policies and pedagogical approaches—transcultural education, multicultural education, or intercultural education—reflects on contemporary societal challenges such as globalization and interdependence. It begins with a clarification of terminology and semantics, drawing on historical developments in the US and Europe to address global terminological confusion and emphasize the importance of a unified vocabulary.

In this context, the study Harmonizing Classrooms: Exploring Multicultural Education Through the Rich Tapestry of ASEAN Culture and Arts exemplifies practical applications of multicultural education. It illustrates how integrating ASEAN culture and arts enriches educational experiences, fosters understanding, and promotes inclusivity in diverse classroom settings.

Portera (2020) proposes using 'multicultural' to describe societies and advocates for multicultural education as a strategy to enhance understanding and respect for ethnic and cultural diversities. Conversely, 'intercultural' is recommended for intervention activities involving interaction, such as encounters, dialogue, and conflict management. The author argues that contemporary intercultural education should encompass challenges like neoliberalism, climate change, power dynamics, and addressing special needs.

By aligning educational practices with these nuanced definitions, educators can effectively navigate and respond to diverse global challenges, promoting inclusive and respectful learning environments that celebrate cultural diversity and prepare students for a complex, interconnected world.

The discussion on multiculturalism, as argued in the paper, challenges its perception solely as an ideology or a binary social program ('for' or 'against'). Instead, it advocates for understanding multiculturalism as addressing a complex spectrum of issues related to cultural and religious diversity within society. This comprehensive view encompasses the management of both challenges and opportunities arising from such diversity.

In the study of Harmonizing Classrooms: Exploring Multicultural Education Through the Rich Tapestry of ASEAN Culture and Arts, practical applications of multicultural education underscore the importance of embracing cultural diversity in educational settings. By integrating ASEAN culture and arts, the study illustrates how educational environments can foster understanding, respect, and inclusivity among students from diverse backgrounds.

Nye (2007) argues that multiculturalism is not an optional feature but a factual reality for societies with open borders, necessitating appropriate societal and political responses to effectively manage cultural and religious diversity stemming from global migrations. This perspective aligns with the contextual understanding of multiculturalism as a dynamic process, highlighting the crucial role of state management in facilitating the positive development of diversity.

Together, these perspectives emphasize the need for educational frameworks that not only acknowledge but actively engage with cultural diversity, preparing students to navigate and contribute to multicultural societies in meaningful ways.

The connection between the findings on culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy (CRTSE) among preservice teachers and the study of Harmonizing Classrooms: Exploring Multicultural Education Through the Rich Tapestry of ASEAN Culture and Arts is profound in its implications for teacher preparation and classroom practice.

In the study by Chahar Mahali & Sevigny (2022), it was found that higher levels of CRTSE among preservice teachers were linked with lower levels of Emotional Exhaustion, a significant aspect of burnout syndrome. Additionally, these teachers reported more frequent cross-cultural experiences during their childhood and adolescence. This highlights the critical role of early exposure to diverse cultural contexts in shaping educators' abilities to effectively manage and embrace cultural diversity in their teaching practices.

Relating this to the exploration of ASEAN culture and arts in multicultural education, integrating such cultural elements into teacher training programs can enhance CRTSE. By familiarizing preservice teachers with diverse cultural perspectives and practices, they are better equipped to create inclusive classroom environments that celebrate and respect students' cultural identities. This approach not only improves educators' confidence and effectiveness but also contributes to fostering positive attitudes toward cultural diversity among students.

Moreover, the implications for preservice teacher training underscore the importance of curriculum development that incorporates multicultural perspectives and provides opportunities for hands-on experiences with diverse cultures. This prepares future educators to navigate the complexities of multicultural classrooms, promoting educational equity and fostering intercultural understanding among students.

In summary, both studies emphasize the transformative impact of CRTSE and multicultural education on enhancing teacher preparedness and promoting inclusive educational practices that embrace cultural diversity. This integration is essential for preparing educators to meet the diverse needs of students in today's multicultural societies.

The study of Harmonizing Classrooms: Exploring Multicultural Education Through the Rich Tapestry of ASEAN Culture and Arts aligns closely with the modern educational emphasis on enhancing teacher self-efficacy in multicultural classrooms (TSMC) through professional development in multicultural education (PDME). As educational landscapes become more diverse globally, countries are increasingly investing in PDME to equip educators with the skills needed to effectively teach diverse student populations.

Using data from the Teaching and Learning International Survey 2018, Choi and Lee (2020) examined how participation in PDME impacts TSMC and whether TSMC mediates the relationship between PDME and teachers' perceptions of school climate in secondary schools in the United States and South Korea. Their findings reveal a significant positive correlation between PDME and TSMC, with TSMC playing a pivotal role in enhancing the overall school climate. This underscores that PDME not only enhances teachers' abilities to manage multicultural classrooms but also contributes to fostering a positive and inclusive school environment.

Integrating multicultural education practices, such as those explored in the study of ASEAN culture and arts, into PDME can further enrich teachers' cultural competence and their ability to integrate diverse perspectives into classroom instruction. This holistic approach not only prepares educators to navigate multicultural settings effectively but also promotes educational equity and enhances students' learning experiences by celebrating cultural diversity. Therefore, the synergy between research on multicultural education and empirical studies on PDME highlights the transformative potential of culturally responsive teaching practices in fostering inclusive educational environments worldwide.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach to investigate the impact of integrating ASEAN culture and arts into multicultural education within a teacher education program. A sample of 124 students was selected using purposive sampling, ensuring representation from diverse backgrounds within the program. Data collection involved conducting semi-structured interviews with participants, allowing for in-depth exploration of their experiences and perspectives regarding the integration of ASEAN culture and arts.

Thematic Analysis was utilized to analyze the interview data, aiming to identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights regarding the impact of ASEAN cultural integration on students' understanding, tolerance, academic performance, and real-world application. This analytical approach facilitated a systematic examination of the qualitative data, enabling the extraction of meaningful findings and implications.

Results and Discussions

Theme	Description
Enhanced Understanding, Tolerance, and Appreciation	Increased understanding, tolerance, and appreciation for diverse cultures through exposure to ASEAN culture and arts.
Interplay of Cultural Elements and Educational Environment	Dynamic interaction between ASEAN cultural elements and the educational environment showcases the richness of ASEAN's cultural heritage.
Academic Improvement and Behavioral Changes	Positive impact on academic performance, critical thinking skills, and creativity, with observable changes in student behaviors and attitudes.
Real-World Application and Impact	Application of ASEAN cultural insights in practical contexts, demonstrating real-world impact and reinforcing intercultural awareness.

Thematic Analysis revealed several key themes regarding the impact of integrating ASEAN culture and arts into multicultural education within the teacher education program. One significant theme was the enhanced understanding, tolerance, and appreciation among students. They reported an increased understanding and appreciation for diverse cultures through exposure to ASEAN culture and arts. The inclusion of cultural elements facilitated meaningful interactions and discussions, fostering a more inclusive learning environment.

Thematic Analysis also highlighted the interplay of cultural elements and the educational environment. Interviews revealed a dynamic interaction between ASEAN cultural elements and the educational setting, showcasing the richness of ASEAN's cultural heritage. Students expressed a deeper connection to course content and demonstrated heightened cultural sensitivity in their interactions.

The integration of ASEAN culture and arts positively impacted students' academic performance, critical thinking skills, and creativity, leading to significant academic improvement and behavioral changes. Observable changes in student behaviors and attitudes reflected a greater engagement with coursework and a broader perspective on learning.

Detailed case studies illustrated how students applied insights from ASEAN arts in practical contexts, showcasing real-world impact beyond theoretical understanding. Strategies for reinforcing intercultural awareness, such as curriculum adjustments and experiential learning opportunities, were identified as valuable additions to educational settings.

The findings of this study underscore the significant positive effects of integrating ASEAN culture and arts into multicultural education within teacher education programs. By enhancing understanding, tolerance, and appreciation among students from diverse backgrounds, this integration promotes inclusivity and unity in the classroom. The dynamic interplay between cultural elements and the educational environment highlights the importance of a holistic approach to cultural integration in education.

Moreover, the observed improvements in critical thinking, creativity, and cultural sensitivity suggest that ASEAN culture and arts serve as catalysts for academic and personal growth. These findings align with the growing recognition of the transformative power of cultural education in shaping students' attitudes and behaviors.

The real-world application of ASEAN cultural insights further emphasizes the practical relevance of integrating cultural elements into educational frameworks. By providing students with opportunities to apply their learning in practical contexts, educators can facilitate deeper engagement and a more profound understanding of cultural diversity.

Overall, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on the integration of culture and arts into education, highlighting its potential to enrich the learning experience, promote intercultural understanding, and foster meaningful connections among students. The identified strategies for reinforcing intercultural awareness offer practical guidance for educators seeking to create inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments.

Conclusion

This study sheds light on the significant positive effects of integrating ASEAN culture and arts into multicultural education within teacher education programs. Thematic Analysis revealed key themes indicating enhanced understanding, tolerance, and appreciation among students, as well as improvements in academic performance and real-world application of cultural insights.

The findings underscore the importance of a holistic approach to cultural integration in education, highlighting the dynamic interplay between cultural elements and the educational environment. By fostering inclusivity and unity in the classroom, this integration aligns with

the goals of multicultural education, preparing students for diverse and globalized environments.

Moreover, the observed improvements in critical thinking, creativity, and cultural sensitivity suggest that ASEAN culture and arts catalyze academic and personal growth. The real-world application of cultural insights further emphasizes their practical relevance in preparing students for the complexities of today's world.

This study contributes valuable insights to the discourse on cultural integration in education, emphasizing its potential to enrich the learning experience, promote intercultural understanding, and foster meaningful connections among students. The identified strategies for reinforcing intercultural awareness provide practical guidance for educators seeking to create inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments, ultimately contributing to the cultivation of well-rounded and globally competent individuals.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

As authors, we acknowledge using generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in creating this work. These tools have enhanced the writing process, aiding in drafting, editing, and refining content. While the insights and narrative are my own, AI has contributed to the work's efficiency and breadth. This declaration is made for transparency and to acknowledge technology's evolving role in the creative process.

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