

Reading Lives and Practices of Singapore Teachers and the Use of Multicultural Children's Literature to promote Socio-emotional Learning

Myra Garces-Bacsal, Ruanni Tupas and Sarinajit Kaur

KEY IMPLICATIONS

- There is a need to create more reading spaces for pupils and teachers, and to also build the capacity of teachers to choose reading materials for their respective schools.
- Introduce a professional development version of the higher degree course MSE 835 (Using Multicultural Picturebooks to promote social and emotional learning) to in-service teachers in Singapore.
- To create a robust reading culture, it is important to conduct workshops on creating lifelong readers to parents in a parent engagement course that will expose them to high-quality multicultural picture books for social and emotional learning.

BACKGROUND

Many teachers choose not to read even if they can. Additionally, the context within which teachers operate have become more complex culturally. There is thus a clear need for capacity-building among them, especially in handling diversity and socio-emotional learning (SEL) in the classroom.

FOCUS OF STUDY

- To determine the teachers' baseline understanding of the use of multicultural children's literature with their own students.
- To go beyond a skills-based approach to reading and explore a more aesthetic approach which helps build a more affective and potentially transformative experience with a book.
- To develop a multicultural text-set that would provide a vast array of titles to teachers which they can use in the classroom.

KEY FINDINGS

The following is the profile of teacher respondents as readers:

- They are not engaged in reading in a sustained way.
- Those who read for pleasure are more likely to engage in instructional practices beyond completing worksheets and assignments and reading for information.

A visual trajectory of key findings can be drawn up to capture changes in teacher respondents' awareness of use of SEL through multicultural picturebooks (MPBs):

Stage 1: Starting with Multiculturalism as Multi-Ethnicity

Stage 2: Immersion in MPBs

Stage 3: Reconfiguration of Beliefs —State of Dissonance

Stage 4: Discursive Compartmentalization

Stage 5: School Support and Theory-Practice Link

SIGNIFICANCE OF FINDINGS

Implications for Practice

- a. Create reading spaces in school for pupils
 - The important point to consider is to institutionalize these reading spaces at the school level, and not just leave these decisions to individual teachers.
 - Schools must encourage teachers to build reading groups.
- b. Build the capacity of teachers to choose reading materials for their respective schools
 - At present, schools typically rely on external vendors to make such decisions. This does not empower teachers to make decisions on their own.

Implications for Policy and Research

- a. Introduce a professional development version of the higher degree course elective MSE 835 to in- and pre-service teachers in Singapore
 - Sustained engagement with MPB and its relevance to promoting SEL raises teachers' awareness of the importance of reading in the lives of teachers and learners.
- b. Conduct workshops for parents on nurturing lifelong readers who read for pleasure and expose them to quality picture books that introduce social and emotional learning themes in a parent engagement course
 - Parents are critical allies in creating a robust reading culture in Singapore.

PARTICIPANTS

A survey questionnaire was conducted among 345 teachers enrolled currently in various programmes in NIE.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The survey questionnaire was pretested with a group of higher-degree students and then conducted among 345 teachers enrolled currently at the NIE. Two focus group discussions were also conducted with a group of higher degree students. Archival/document study was also used to analyze the content of multicultural picture books for SEL themes.

About the authors

Myra GARCES-BACSAI, Ruanni TUPAS and Sarinajit KAUR are with the National Institute of Education, Singapore.

Contact Myra at rhoda.bacsai@nie.edu.sg for more information about the project.

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