

## **Teachers' Perspectives toward Schools Diversity in Malaysia**

**Abdul Razaq Ahmad**

National University of Malaysia

**Norhasni Zainal Abiddin (Corresponding Author)**

Associate Professor

Department of Professional Development and Continuing Education

Faculty of Educational Studies

Universiti Putra Malaysia

43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor

Malaysia

E-mail: nonie@putra.upm.edu.my

**Zalizan Mohd Jelas**

National University of Malaysia

**Anisa Saleha**

National University of Malaysia

### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study is to investigate teachers' perspective towards schools diversity. Schools diversity refers to teachers' factors such as gender, race, teaching experience and position. A set of questionnaires is used as the main survey method in this study involving 161 teachers in the districts of Temerloh, Maran and Kuantan, in Pahang State of Malaysia. An instrument of 12 domains based on the School Diversity Inventory developed by Gottfredson and Jones (2001) was adapted and revised to be used for the purpose of this study. A pilot test was conducted to determine the reliability of the instrument. From the pilot test conducted earlier, the reliability of the instrument based on the Alpha Cronbach found to be high (0.8–0.9). The data were analyzed based on descriptive and inferential statistical techniques in terms of means, t-tests, and ANOVA. Findings of the study as related to schools diversity showed that the mean scores of teachers' perspectives found to be average (2.98). The ANOVA analysis of teachers' perspectives on teaching experience found to be significantly difference in terms of races, places of living and the family socio-economic status. The implication of the study reveals that schools diversity does exist. Thus, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education should improve the level of acceptance in schools diversity among teachers in order to uphold the quality of education without prejudice among Malaysian citizens.*

**Keywords:** teachers' perspective, schools' diversity, level of acceptance.

### **Introduction**

The implementation of education diversity approach in Malaysia is in line with the working target of the Ministry of Education (MOE) to bridge the gap among schools and to stop any discrimination towards students with learning disabilities and low achievement students. This is done with a great awareness that every human has self-needs in the matter of attention, acceptance, acknowledgement and love. This is based on the Maslow's hierarchy of needs model which indicates that fulfilment of the deficiency needs (food and accommodation) and the growth needs (safety, love and acknowledgement) will lead to an achievement of self-actualization.

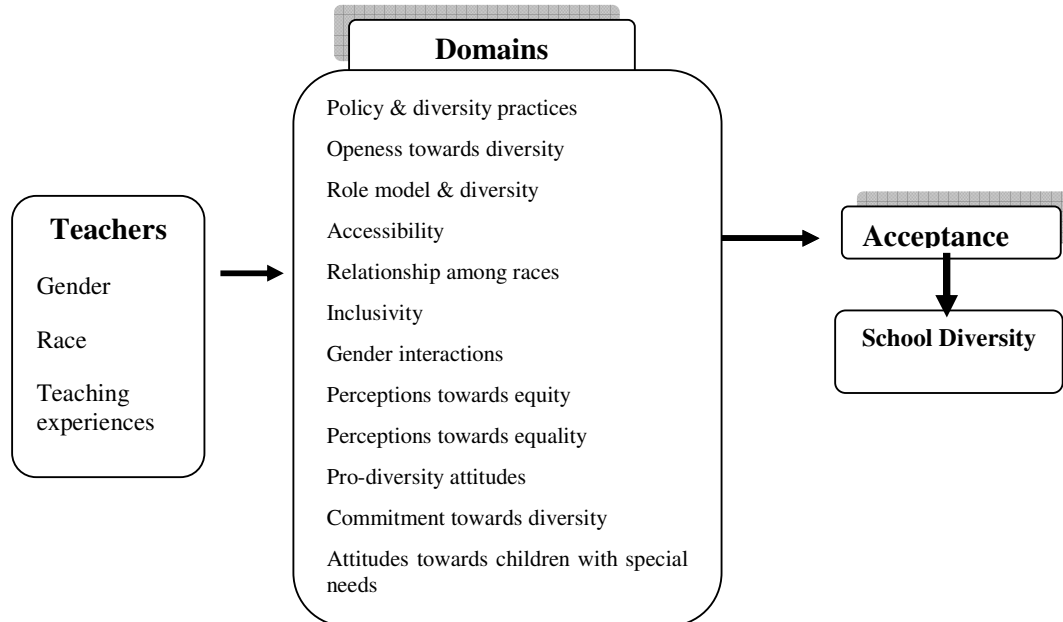
Policies of education diversity focus on two main parts: (1) integration of students with learning problems in special classes in a normal school, (2) support system provided by the government agencies, and several related parties to lessen the pressure, trauma and a feeling of hopelessness faced by this group of students in the education mainstream (Ainscow, 1999; Booth & Ainscow, 1998; Farrell et al, 2004; Vlauchou, 2004; Noddings, 2005). Education diversity is also part of a process where the schools, communities and government agencies strive to overcome learning challenges for all students. According to Ballard (1999), education diversity is to evaluate diversity and not simply to assimilate.

In facing the challenges of transforming education towards inclusive education or diversity concept, schools need to look into their own profiles of diversity and willing to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in order to successfully integrate every member and to create awareness to the whole school communities regarding the issues of inclusive education. Diversity of students in the classroom needs not only commitment from teachers of special needs but it also needs involvement of school's administration, parents and peers in establishing a solid teaching and learning process. The aspects of diversity in this study referred to multidimensional factors of: a survey of teachers' acceptance towards school diversity in terms of (1) gender, (2) races and (3) teaching experiences. As described by Farrell et al (2004), the inclusive construct is referred to several dimensions of integration such as acceptance, involvement and achievement.

This study examined teachers' perspectives towards students' diversity in school. In addition, this study was to examine different perspectives of teachers based on gender, races and teaching experiences towards the domain of students' diversity in school. Findings of this study will be used to develop an inventory of students' diversity profile from the perspectives of teachers. The findings also provide important baseline information for the schools in planning, improving and measuring their effectiveness in fulfilling the needs of all students.

### **Research Framework**

This study works on several domains of school diversity adapted and revised based on *School Diversity Inventory* an instrument developed by Gottfredson and Jones (2001) .



**Figure 1: Research Framework**

### **Literature Review**

According to Rohaty (2008), communities and schools in Malaysia are universal and showing noticeable diversity characteristics. Several influential factors of students' diversity are gender, health, physical, social and learning styles. Hence, the Malaysian government is focusing on education for all in developing humans' potentials to the optimum. Thus, children with special needs are not to be left behind. Downing (2005) stated that a supporting environment will enable students with special need to continue their learning without the fear of being isolated.

In Malaysia, inclusive education approach was introduced by placing special education students in mainstream classes to keep students learning together. There are three types of inclusive programs in Malaysia. The first type is called General Education Classroom Placement program, where some students with learning disabilities are placed in a general education classroom with their normal peers. Second type of programs is Special Education Placement with Part Time Inclusion. In this program, special students are taught by special education teachers for most of the day but join their normal peers for certain general subjects.

Whereas, in the Self Contained Special Education program, special students are learning in a special class that is located separately in the school, where they are taught by special education teachers and have very little contact with the general education program (Zarin Ismail, Safani Bari & Soo Boon Seng, 2004). It is important for the schools to examine diversity profiles in their premises and willing to assess their weaknesses and strengths in order to integrate all members of the schools. According to Masitah, Zalizan & Manisah (2009) there is still a lack of awareness among teachers and students on schools diversity particularly in the aspect of accepting students with special needs, hence caused these special students to be further isolated and unmotivated to learn. Therefore it is crucial for teachers to identify students' diversity in the class in order to know them better, to plan appropriate teaching and learning methods and to evaluate them appropriately. A research done by Zamri (2000) found that time management, resources, moral support provided for teachers are among the important aspects that need to be focussed on in managing the issue of diversity in schools.

As such, there are several learning style models applicable in dealing with diversity of students, such as the Dunn & Dunn Model, Kolb model, Dominance Instrument model by Hermann Brain, Filder-Silverman model and Canfield model. A common and universal design applicable in the educational system is the SAALE model. The SAALE model (Wood, 2002) suggested that in order to be effective, special education in integrated approach needs to be integrated with an adaptation process of socio-emotion, attitudes, physical, instructional and evaluation environments. There are three adaptation methods of the model; environment, teaching and learning adaptations. The model provides opportunities for students to venture their self-potentials, as a reference for teachers to improve their teaching and learning process and to diversify their teaching methods.

Richards, Brown and Forde (2006) categorized the culturally responsive pedagogy into three dimensions: (a) institutional, (b) personal, and (c) instructional. The institutional dimension reflects the administration and its policies and values. The personal dimension refers to the cognitive and emotional processes teachers must engage in to become culturally responsive. The instructional dimension includes materials, strategies, and activities that form the basis of instruction. All three dimensions significantly interact in the teaching and learning process and are critical to understanding the effectiveness of culturally responsive pedagogy.

A part from that, teacher's evaluation towards diversity of students should be in line with students' level of achievement. Traditional evaluation based on grades is no longer suitable since it causes several problems. According to Wood (2002) there are three problems of grading; the ability of lower grade in confirming failure, the ambiguity of grades in examining weaknesses and strengths and also failure of certain grades in determining students' functional level. And thus it is very critical for teachers to plan and adapt certain evaluations for every learning activity. This will ensure a smooth evaluation process and improve evaluation issues in the current education system.

Due to the need to improve and approve of the diversity, it is important to provide education for all in the aspects of (1) effective leadership; (2) staff participation; (3) commitment towards planning and professional sharing and (4) focusing on problem solving and learning reflection (Ainscow, 1999). In Malaysia, the set up of vision schools is one of the efforts in dealing with diversity of schools. The concept of vision schools involves putting a national school and other vernacular schools together at the same site to share common facilities such as the school canteen and sports ground. It is hoped that the close proximity between the students of various races as well as organized activities between the schools will encourage greater interaction between them and foster national unity (Mohd Izham & Jamallullail, 2010).

This study is to seek teachers' acceptance towards the implementation of schools diversity based on independent variables as follow: (1) gender, (2) race, and (3) teaching experience. There are 12 domains involved as dependent variables which include: (1) policy, (2) openness towards diversity, (3) role model and diversity, (4) accessibility, (5) relationship among races, (6) inclusivity, (7) gender interactions, (8) perceptions towards equity, (9) perceptions towards equality, (10) pro-diveristy attitudes, (11) commitment towards diversity, and (12) attitudes towards children with special needs.

### **Methodology**

The survey method was deemed suitable to this study to gather the data. A set of questionnaire was used as the main instrument of this study. The *School Diversity Inventory* developed by Gottfredson and Jones (2001) was revised and used in this study to measure teachers' perceptions towards students' diversity in school. The population of this study was 465 teachers from three districts; Temerloh, Maran and Kuantan of the Pahang state of Malaysia. The samples were randomly selected using a statistical method as suggested by Reaves (1992).

A pre-test was conducted and the reliability of the instrument based on the alpha Cronbach found to be high (0.913). Descriptive and inference analysis based on the *Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS-15)* were used to analyze the data. Descriptive analysis was conducted to measure the level of teachers' perception towards schools' diversity. Inferential analysis in terms of t-test and one-way ANOVA were also conducted in this study. The t-test was done to analyse any significant difference of perspectives based on gender towards diversity in school. The analysis of one-way ANOVA was conducted to investigate differences from the aspects of races, students' experiences and job designation towards Diversity in School.

### ***The Findings***

#### **Teachers' Perspectives towards Diversity in School**

Table 1 shows that in overall, the level of teachers perspectives is at the moderate level (mean=2.98, SD=0.376). Seven domains are at the high level: Policy & diversity practices (mean=3.18, SD=0.106), Openness towards diversity (mean=2.98, SD=0.227), Inclusivity (mean=3.18, SD=0.223), Role Model & diversity (mean=3.03, SD=0.277), Accessibility (mean=2.51, SD=0.266), Relationships among races (mean=3.12, SD=0.336), Gender interaction (mean=2.49, SD=0.687), Commitment towards diversity (mean=3.26,SD=0.095) Perception on education equity (mean=2.78, SD=0.421), Perception on equality (mean=3.11, SD=0.335), Pro-diversity attitudes (mean=3.22, SD=0.202), and Attitudes towards students with special needs (mean=2.83, SD=0.080).

**Table 1: Level of perspectives**

(N=161)	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Level
Policy & diversity practices	161	3.18	0.106	High
Openness towards diversity	161	2.98	0.227	Moderate
Inclusivity	161	3.18	0.223	High
Role Model & diversity	161	3.03	0.277	High
Accessibility	161	2.51	0.266	Moderate
Relationships among races	161	3.12	0.336	High
Gender interaction	161	2.49	0.687	Moderate
Commitment towards diversity	161	3.26	0.095	High
Perception on education equity	161	2.78	0.421	Moderate
Perception on equality	161	3.11	0.335	High
Pro-diversity attitudes	161	3.22	0.202	High
Attitudes towards students with special needs	161	2.83	0.080	Moderate
Total mean	161	2.98	0.376	Moderate

**Table 2: Results of the t-test on differences of perspectives based on gender**

Variables	Groups	N	Mean	S.D	t-value	Sig. (p)
Policy & diversity practices	male	41	3.26	0.579	0.957	0.340
	female	120	3.16	0.503		
Openness towards diversity	male	41	3.10	0.811	1.369	0.173
	female	120	2.94	0.604		
Inclusivity	male	41	3.12	0.694	-0.921	0.359
	female	120	3.21	0.519		
Role Model & diversity	male	41	3.09	0.771	0.660	0.510
	female	120	3.01	0.642		
Accessibility	male	41	2.57	0.658	0.765	0.445
	female	120	2.49	0.576		
Relationships among races	male	41	3.24	0.434	1.793	0.075
	female	120	3.08	0.513		
Gender interaction	male	41	2.39	0.55	-1.586	0.118
	female	120	2.54	0.430		
Commitment towards diversity	male	41	3.25	0.458	-0.187	0.852
	female	120	3.26	0.533		
Perception on education equity	male	41	2.72	0.552	-0.840	0.402
	female	120	2.81	0.584		
Perception on equality	male	41	3.11	0.689	-0.473	0.637
	female	120	3.16	0.498		
Pro-diversity attitudes	male	41	3.18	0.778	-0.439	0.661
	female	120	3.23	0.501		
Attitudes towards students with special needs	male	41	2.71	0.747	-1.240	0.217
	female	120	2.88	0.731		

### Different Perspectives of Teachers towards School Diversity based on Gender

Table 2 shows the result of the independent t-test analysis in terms of gender. The finding shows that there is no significant difference between the two groups of respondents on the Policy & diversity practices ( $t=0.957$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.340>0.050$ ), Openness towards diversity ( $t=1.369$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.173>0.050$ ), Inclusivity ( $t=-0.921$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.359>0.050$ ), Role Model & diversity ( $t=0.660$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.510>0.050$ ), Accessibility ( $t=0.765$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.445>0.050$ ), Relationships among races ( $t=1.793$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.075>0.050$ ), Gender interaction ( $t=-1.586$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.118>0.050$ ), Commitment towards diversity ( $t=-0.187$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.852>0.050$ ), Perception on education equity ( $t=-0.840$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.402>0.050$ ), Perception on equality ( $t=-0.473$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.637>0.050$ ), Pro-diversity attitudes ( $t=-0.439$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.661>0.050$ ), and Attitudes towards students with special needs ( $t=-1.240$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.217>0.050$ ).

### Teachers' Perspectives towards School Diversity based on Races

Result of the ANOVA analysis is shown in Table 3. The result shows that there is no significant difference between the respondents of different races on the Policy & diversity practices ( $F=0.050$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.951>0.050$ ), Openness towards diversity ( $F=0.669$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.514>0.050$ ), Inclusivity ( $F=2.286$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.105>0.050$ ), Accessibility ( $F=1.108$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.333>0.050$ ), Relationships among races ( $F=0.041$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.960>0.050$ ), Gender interaction ( $F=0.209$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.812>0.050$ ), Commitment towards diversity ( $F=0.841$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.433>0.050$ ), Perceptions on education equity ( $F=1.083$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.341>0.050$ ), Perceptions on equality ( $F=0.338$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.713>0.050$ ), Pro-diversity attitudes ( $F=0.460$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.632>0.050$ ), and Attitudes towards students with special needs ( $F=2.052$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.132>0.050$ ). Based on Table 3, it is found that there is a significant difference based on races towards the variable of Role Model & diversity ( $F=3.592$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.030>0.050$ ).

**Teachers' Perspectives towards School Diversity based on Teaching Experiences**

Based on the ANOVA analysis as shown in Table 4, the result shows that there is no significant difference between groups of different teaching experiences towards the following variables: policy and diversity practices ( $F=1.201, sig=0.311>0.05$ ), Inclusivity ( $F=2.543, sig=0.058>0.05$ ), Role model & diversity ( $F=1.749, sig=0.159>0.05$ ), Gender interaction ( $F=0.690, sig=1.060>0.05$ ), Commitment towards diversity ( $F=1.060, sig=0.368>0.05$ ), perceptions on education equity ( $F=2.389, sig=0.071>0.05$ ), Perceptions on equality ( $F=0.440, sig=0.725>0.05$ ), pro-diversity attitudes ( $F=1.125, sig=0.341>0.05$ ), and attitudes towards students of special needs ( $F=1.672, sig=0.175>0.05$ ). Whereas, there is a significant difference between the aspect of teaching experiences and dependent variables of Openness towards diversity ( $F=3.895, sig=.010<.050$ ), Accessibility ( $F=4.581, sig=.004<.050$ ), and relationships among races ( $F=4.571, sig=.004<.050$ ).

**Teachers' Perspectives towards School Diversity based on Position/Job Designation**

Based on the results of ANOVA analysis, Table 5 shows that there is no significant differences between respondents of different job position and dependent variables of policy and diversity practices ( $F=1.144, sig=-.338<.050$ ), Accessibility ( $F=.523, sig=.719>.050$ ), Gender interaction ( $F=1.915, sig=.111>.050$ ), Commitment towards diversity ( $F=1.085, sig=.366<.050$ ), Perceptions towards education equity ( $F=1.225, sig=.303<.050$ ), and Pro-diversity attitudes ( $F=2.607, sig=.05>.050$ ). However, there is significant difference based on job designation towards dependent variables of Openness towards diversity ( $F=4.374, sig=.002<.050$ ), Inclusivity ( $F=5.216, sig=.001<.050$ ), Role model and diversity ( $F=2.752, sig=.030<.050$ ), Relationship among races ( $F=2.760, sig=.030<.050$ ), Perceptions towards equality ( $F=3.380, sig=.011<.050$ ) and Attitudes towards students with special needs ( $F=6.009, sig=.000<.050$ )

**Table 3: ANOVA analysis of teachers' perspectives towards school diversity based on races**

Dependent variable	groups	N	Mean	S.D	F value	Sig. (p)
Policy & diversity practices	Malays	125	3.19	0.540	0.050	0.951
	Chinese	21	3.15	0.359		
	Indians	15	3.20	0.601		
Openness towards diversity	Malays	125	2.98	0.682	0.669	0.514
	Chinese	21	2.87	0.499		
	Indians	15	3.13	0.721		
Inclusivity	Malays	125	3.22	0.553	2.286	0.105
	Chinese	21	2.95	0.626		
	Indians	15	3.28	0.561		
Role Model & diversity	Malays	125	3.02	0.674	3.592	0.030
	Chinese	21	2.82	0.620		
	Indians	15	3.42	0.648		
Accessibility	Malays	125	2.49	0.572	1.108	0.333
	Chinese	21	2.50	0.620		
	Indians	15	2.73	0.758		
Relationships among races	Malays	125	3.12	0.493	0.041	0.960
	Chinese	21	3.09	0.396		
	Indians	15	3.13	0.676		
Gender interaction	Malays	125	2.49	0.453	0.209	0.812

	Chinese	21	2.49	0.478		
	Indians	15	2.57	0.597		
Commitment towards diversity	Malays	125	3.26	0.525	0.841	0.433
	Chinese	21	3.17	0.416		
	Indians	15	3.40	0.537		
Perceptions on education equity	Malays	125	2.75	0.568	1.083	0.341
	Chinese	21	2.84	0.592		
	Indians	15	2.97	0.610		
Perceptions on equality	Malays	125	3.16	0.575	0.338	0.713
	Chinese	21	3.12	0.414		
	Indians	15	3.04	0.532		
Pro-diversity attitudes	Malays	125	3.20	0.608	0.460	0.632
	Chinese	21	3.33	0.349		
	Indians	15	3.17	0.628		
Attitudes towards students with special needs	Malays	125	2.79	0.759	2.052	0.132
	Chinese	21	2.84	0.646		
	Indians	15	3.20	0.588		

\* Significant at 0.05.

**Table 4: Results of ANOVA analysis on teachers' perspectives towards school diversity based on teaching experiences**

Dependent variables	Groups	N	Mean	S.D	F value	Sig. (p)
Policy & diversity practices	Less than 3 years	18	3.35	0.312	1.201	0.311
	3 to 8 years	28	3.05	0.406		
	9 to 15 years	51	3.18	0.574		
	More than 15 years	64	3.21	0.567		
	Less than 3 years	18	2.98	0.491		
Openness towards diversity	Less than 3 years	18	2.98	0.491	3.895	0.010
	3 to 8 years	28	2.94	0.480		
	9 to 15 years	51	2.76	0.633		
	More than 15 years	64	3.17	0.748		
	Less than 3 years	18	3.24	0.392		
Inclusivity	Less than 3 years	18	3.24	0.392	2.543	0.058
	3 to 8 years	28	3.09	0.443		
	9 to 15 years	51	3.05	0.602		
	More than 15 years	64	3.32	0.607		
	Less than 3 years	18	3.00	0.676		
Role model & diversity	Less than 3 years	18	3.00	0.676	1.749	0.159
	3 to 8 years	28	2.89	0.667		

	9 to 15 years	51	2.94	0.619		
	More than 15 years	64	3.18	0.710		
Accessibility	Less than 3 years	18	2.68	0.504	4.581	0.004
	3 to 8 years	28	2.54	0.582		
	9 to 15 years	51	2.27	0.493		
	More than 15 years	64	2.64	0.652		
Relationship among races	Less than 3 years	18	2.87	0.414	4.571	0.004
	3 to 8 years	28	3.15	0.379		
	9 to 15 years	51	3.01	0.498		
	More than 15 years	64	3.27	0.524		
Gender interaction	Less than 3 years	18	2.38	0.628	0.690	0.559
	3 to 8 years	28	2.45	0.530		
	9 to 15 years	51	2.55	0.331		
	More than 15 years	64	2.51	0.485		
	Less than 3 years	18	3.22	0.511		
Commitment towards diversity					1.060	0.368
	3 to 8 years	28	3.11	0.553		
	9 to 15 years	51	3.31	0.439		
	More than 15 years	64	3.30	0.549		
Perceptions towards education equity	Less than 3 years	18	2.62	0.546	2.389	0.071
	3 to 8 years	28	2.61	0.585		
	9 to 15 years	51	2.77	0.587		
	More than 15 years	64	2.91	0.550		
Perceptions towards equality	Less than 3 years	18	3.24	0.533	0.440	0.725
	3 to 8 years	28	3.19	0.500		
	9 to 15 years	51	3.16	0.453		
	More than 15 years	64	3.09	0.646		
Pro-diversity attitudes	Less than 3 years	18	3.05	0.551	1.125	0.341
	3 to 8 years	28	3.29	0.482		
	9 to 15 years	51	3.15	0.486		
	More than 15 years	64	3.28	0.687		
Attitudes towards students with special needs	Less than 3 years	18	3.00	0.560	1.672	0.175
	3 to 8 years	28	2.92	0.508		
	9 to 15 years	51	2.65	0.824		
	More than 15 years	64	2.90	0.775		

\* Significant at 0.05.



**Table 5: Results of ANOVA analysis on teachers' perspectives towards school diversity based on job designation**

Dependent variables	Groups	N	Mean	SD	F value	Sig. (p)
Policy & diversity practices	Senior Assistant	14	3.3810	0.56775	1.144	0.338
	Head of department	15	3.1111	0.44840		
	Head of subject panels	38	3.2632	0.61100		
	Teacher	78	3.1239	0.50426		
	Staff	16	3.2708	0.38909		
Openness towards diversity	Senior Assistant	14	3.4762	0.36314	4.374	0.002
	Head of department	15	2.8889	0.63828		
	Head of subject panels	38	3.0965	0.65259		
	Teacher	78	2.8120	0.69338		
	Staff	16	3.2083	0.46944		
Inclusivity	Senior Assistant	14	3.5714	0.46093	5.216	0.001
	Head of department	15	3.2000	0.63994		
	Head of subject panels	38	3.2368	0.62916		
	Teacher	78	3.0299	0.50162		
	Staff	16	3.5417	0.45338		
Role model & diversity	Senior Assistant	14	3.1429	0.60925	2.752	0.030
	Head of department	15	3.2667	0.53748		
	Head of subject panels	38	3.0000	0.64375		
	Teacher	78	2.9103	0.71000		
	Staff	16	3.4375	0.59278		
Accessibility	Senior Assistant	14	2.6429	0.53051	0.523	0.719
	Head of department	15	2.6444	0.59717		
	Head of subject panels	38	2.5351	0.68242		
	Teacher	78	2.4573	0.58876		
	Staff	16	2.5208	0.50139		
Relationship among races	Senior Assistant	14	3.2619	0.49231	2.760	0.030
	Head of department	15	3.4222	0.55587		
	Head of subject panels	38	3.0702	0.51499		
	Teacher	78	3.0385	0.47135		
	Staff	16	3.2708	0.42546		

Gender interaction	Senior Assistant	14	2.3571	0.57682	1.915	0.111
	Head of department	15	2.7333	0.33806		
	Head of subject panels	38	2.4123	0.52809		
	Teacher	78	2.5043	0.43226		
	Staff	16	2.6250	0.43674		
Commitment towards diversity	Senior Assistant	14	3.4043	0.39610	1.085	0.366
	Head of department	15	3.4444	0.48250		
	Head of subject panels	38	3.1930	0.60345		
	Teacher	78	3.2265	0.49962		
	Staff	16	3.3333	0.45542		
Perceptions towards education equity	Senior Assistant	14	2.9524	0.86585	1.225	0.303
	Head of department	15	2.9778	0.42663		
	Head of subject panels	38	2.7281	0.64307		
	Teacher	78	2.7265	0.51456		
	Staff	16	2.9167	0.47920		
Perceptions towards equality	Senior Assistant	14	3.5238	0.58051	3.380	0.011
	Head of department	15	2.9111	0.15258		
	Head of subject panels	38	3.1140	0.54951		
	Teacher	78	3.0983	0.57134		
	Staff	16	3.3750	0.50000		
Pro diversity attitudes	Senior Assistant	14	3.4048	0.43713	2.607	.058
	Head of department	15	3.5333	0.53154		
	Head of subject panels	38	3.2281	0.48463		
	Teacher	78	3.0983	0.63815		
	Staff	16	3.3542	0.53705		
Attitudes towards students with special needs.	Senior Assistant	14	3.1667	0.71312	6.009	0.000
	Head of department	15	3.3111	0.51125		
	Head of subject panels	38	3.0000	0.47773		
	Teacher	78	2.5769	0.78528		
	Staff	16	3.0000	0.77936		

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\* Significant at 0.05.

### ***Implications of the Study***

Based on the findings of this study, it was found that the level of teachers' perspectives towards school diversity is still at the moderate level in the overall domains of school diversity. Only certain domains show a high level of mean scores, which regarding the policy and diversity practices, inclusivity, role model and diversity, relationship among races, commitment towards diversity, perceptions towards and pro-diversity attitudes. This finding shows that even though teachers are well-trained and well exposed, their attitudes towards school diversity are still inadequate. This is to support another finding which revealed that teachers' perspectives were still inadequate. This is due to the fact that teachers do not take this matter seriously in the education contexts in Malaysia. This finding also supports a statement that school environment in Malaysia is still not at the inclusive environment level (Rahimah, 1981).

This situation reveals that there is still lacking of awareness among teachers on the elements of diversity in school; this might be due to not enough exposure provided by the school administration and the Malaysian Ministry of Education. As suggested by Norshidah, Aliza and Zalizan (2009), that it is important for the schools to promote awareness of school diversity among teachers and students. This will help to enhance awareness to the necessary matters, whether to accept the disables in the class or to embrace the elements of cultural diversity in terms of different living styles, family economic status and ethnicity. This awareness is important in maintaining harmony among multi-races in Malaysia.

The finding also reveals that male and female teachers have similar perspectives towards school diversity. The findings also reveal that there is no significant difference of teachers perspectives towards school diversity based on races, position/job designation and teaching experiences. This shows that differences in background do not influence teachers' perspectives. In addition, this finding also supports a study conducted by Masitah et al (2009) which revealed that being different in terms of races, position and teaching experiences did not improve the quality of inclusive education in Malaysia.

This study identified the level of teachers' perspectives towards school diversity. The findings of this study show that the level of perspectives towards domains of school diversity is still very moderate and far from satisfactory. The significant finding is that differences in teachers' profiles do not influence teachers' perspectives. The inventory by Gottfredson and Jones (2001) used in this study was relevant in measuring the perspectives level. Thus, data of this study should be used by schools and the Ministry of Education in improving diversity education at least in the context of teachers. The 12 domains studied might be used as parts of schools' needs in improving the quality of education for all.

### ***Conclusion***

In providing better services for students with special needs, the main concern is on the effectiveness of the support system and technology aids. A list of elements listed by Edyburn (2000) should be taken into consideration, they are: (1) identifying functions and limited materials in improving achievement; (2) establishing technological concepts to be implemented; (3) creating new services related to technology; and (4) documenting the effectiveness of technology aids. This study is to suggest that a continuous evaluation needs to be conducted on the aspects of school diversity beyond the domains being studied. This needs to be done to examine strengths and weaknesses at the schools level, so that they can be restored or re-established in creating a conducive learning environment for all students and teachers. Results of this study are inputs for the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) and school administrations in executing awareness programs towards a better understanding on diversity in schools and improving facilities for teachers and students regardless of gender and personal background.

The 2002 policy of compulsory education for all children and children with special needs at the primary level is mandatory in Malaysia. Parents who fail to register their children to primary schools will be prosecuted. This is supported by Act 8, of the Malaysian Constitution which mandated 'Disabled Person Act 2002' and declarations of Malaysian commitment in the international declarations such as in the Declaration of Education for All (EFA) and Biwako Millennium Framework 2002. All of these show that the government is responsible in providing sufficient education based on needs of all children including the disabled ones. In fulfilling the responsibility, it is important for the MOE and other related ministries to provide education facilities especially for those children with special needs. Inclusive education approach is one of the alternatives provided for the children with special needs in Malaysia. There are four categories of special classes provided throughout education mainstream in Malaysia, there are classes for: (1) physical disability, (2) emotion and behaviours (autism), (3) special learning (dyslexia), and (4) basic skills of writing, reading and counting.

However, this kind of approach is still under constraints and limited to certain schools in the context of special education in Malaysia. In addition, greater awareness and attention are needed. The whole nations need to fully realize that school diversity is very important in improving academic achievement and it also goes beyond that as a social agent in enhancing unity among people of different abilities, races, and regardless of personal backgrounds in Malaysia. Thus, world class education at the school and university levels is essential in developing Malaysia as a well-developed country in this region.

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