

THE WORLD CAFE : A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO ENHANCING LEARNING EFFECTIVENESS AMONG PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS AT IPGK TUANKU BAINUN

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Abstract

The paper reports on a study which identifies the knowledge and effectiveness of the World Cafe method among the pre-service teachers in an IPGM. The main purpose of this study is to measure the understanding and effectiveness of World Cafe among the pre-service teachers in IPGM. The knowledge of the method, interest in it, and its effectiveness of pre-service teachers in an IPGM. This study used both quantitative and qualitative data collection. Questions and students' responses used to measure the changes in the dependent variables. The study involved a total of 26 Education for Sustainable Environment Pre-service teachers in IPGM. A total of 26 questions were used to identify the knowledge of the method, interest in it, and its effectiveness of pre-service teachers in an IPGM. The data suggests a highly positive response to the method, both in terms of engagement and educational value. As such, World Cafe is a participatory approach that can be adopted to infuse knowledge, interest and effectiveness of the method among pre-service teachers in an IPGM. The study highlights the need for professional development programs that prepare educators to utilise participatory approaches such as the World Café. This could assist pre-service teachers in applying similar tactics in their future classes. The findings of this study indicate that the World Café method is an effective tool for enhancing knowledge, interest, and engagement among IPGM pre-service teachers, particularly in Education for Sustainable Environment. It highlights the potential of integrating innovative participatory methods into teacher education programs in IPGM.

Keywords: World Café, participation, Pre-service Teacher, IPGM

Abstrak

Kertas kerja ini melaporkan kajian yang mengenal pasti pengetahuan dan keberkesanan kaedah Kafe Dunia dalam kalangan guru praperkhidmatan di IPGM. Tujuan utama kajian ini adalah untuk mengukur kefahaman dan keberkesanan World Cafe dalam kalangan guru pra perkhidmatan di IPGM. Pengetahuan tentang kaedah, minat terhadapnya, dan keberkesanannya guru pra-perkhidmatan di sebuah IPGM. Kajian ini menggunakan pengumpulan data secara kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Soalan dan respons pelajar digunakan untuk mengukur perubahan dalam pembolehubah bersandar. Kajian ini melibatkan seramai 26 orang guru pra-perkhidmatan Pendidikan Alam Sekitar Lestari di IPGM. Sebanyak 26 soalan telah digunakan untuk mengenal pasti pengetahuan tentang kaedah, minat terhadapnya, dan keberkesanannya guru pra-perkhidmatan di sesebuah IPGM. Data menunjukkan tindak balas yang sangat positif terhadap kaedah tersebut, baik dari segi penglibatan dan nilai pendidikan. Oleh itu, World Cafe adalah pendekatan penyertaan yang boleh diguna pakai untuk menyemai pengetahuan, minat dan keberkesanan kaedah di kalangan guru pra-perkhidmatan dalam IPGM. Kajian itu menekankan keperluan untuk program pembangunan profesional yang menyediakan pendidik untuk menggunakan pendekatan penyertaan seperti World Café. Ini boleh membantu guru praperkhidmatan dalam menggunakan taktik yang sama dalam kelas masa depan mereka. Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa kaedah World Café adalah alat yang berkesan untuk meningkatkan pengetahuan, minat dan penglibatan dalam kalangan guru praperkhidmatan IPGM, khususnya dalam Pendidikan Alam Sekitar Lestari. Ia menonjolkan potensi mengintegrasikan kaedah penyertaan yang inovatif ke dalam program pendidikan guru di IPGM.

Kata kunci: *World Café, penyertaan, Guru Pra-perkhidmatan, IPGM*

INTRODUCTION

Effective implementation of novel pedagogies requires a clear understanding of teachers' roles and responsibilities in transformed classrooms. The literature on student-centered classrooms outlines these roles and responsibilities, particularly in environments that use student-centered pedagogies such as constructivist and inquiry-based

instruction. A successful classroom promotes enthusiasm and motivation for learning, encourages active participation, and ensures high levels of engagement. Teachers must not only be knowledgeable about the content they teach but also understand the impact of their teaching on students' ability to become self-directed, lifelong learners (OECD, 2005).

The shift towards a more collaborative and participatory approach in education closely aligns with the principles of participatory research. This approach involves engaging community stakeholders to work alongside academics throughout all stages of the research process. Community and stakeholder engagement is defined as involving relevant stakeholders as full partners in every phase of research. This requires building relationships based on trust and respect, irrespective of the partners' training or experience in science or research (Woolf et al., 2016). In this context, and throughout the research process, participation is a central principle, emphasizing the value of each person's contribution to the co-creation of knowledge in a process that is practical, collaborative, and empowering (ICPHR, 2013).

The World Café (WC) method is a widely used participatory tool for citizen engagement and organizational change. According to Lohret et al. (2020), the WC method facilitates the exploration and discussion of topics within large and diverse groups. It emphasizes intimate exchanges, disciplined inquiry, cross-pollination of ideas, and possibility thinking. As a conversational process, the WC method helps groups engage in constructive dialogue on critical questions, build personal relationships, and foster mutual learning (Fouché & Light, 2010).

There is a notable lack of research investigating the knowledge, interest, and effectiveness of various teaching methods among pre-service teachers at Institut Pendidikan Guru Malaysia (IPGM) campuses. In a separate study, Tholibon et al. (2022) highlighted that teachers frequently resorted to traditional teaching approaches due to factors such as poor classroom environments and uninspiring learning spaces. Specifically, this study revealed significant knowledge gaps among Malaysian pre-service teachers regarding the WC method, which is recognized as an effective tool for teaching.

This study is limited to students enrolled in the *Education for Sustainable Environment* course at IPGKTB. It does not include participants from other courses, institutions, or educational settings. As such, the findings may not be generalisable to a broader population or other contexts outside of IPGKTB. The main purpose of this study is to measure the understanding and effectiveness of WC among the pre-service teachers in IPGM. In line with the objectives of the study, the following research questions are formulated:

1. What is the level of understanding of students with the World Cafe Method prior to participating in the discussions?
2. What is the effectiveness of the World Cafe Method in enhancing students' understanding of environmental issues?

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Watkins (2002) Effective learning results in several important outcomes. It fosters a deeper integration of related knowledge, allowing for a more connected understanding of concepts. Learners develop a wider range of strategies and exhibit greater complexity in their comprehension of the material. Their actions become more aligned with their goals and context, reflecting enhanced appropriateness. Increased engagement and self-direction mark a higher level of involvement and autonomy in the learning process. A more reflective approach emerges, coupled with positive emotions and a stronger affiliation with the learning experience. Additionally, learners cultivate a clearer vision of their future selves and improve their ability to collaborate with others. They also experience a heightened sense of participation within a knowledge community.

Thus, The World Café represents a modern evolution of group wisdom discussion methods, extending beyond traditional workshop formats as described by Brown and Isaacs (1998). This strategy involves small, flexible group discussions conducted in a relaxed setting to uncover collective insights and foster synchronized dialogue. By encouraging reflection, knowledge sharing, and the exploration of new opportunities, the World Café facilitates dynamic and collaborative conversations. Unlike conventional strategy workshops, the World Café incorporates a rotation of group members, which enhances the diversity of perspectives. Additionally, it employs systematic outlines or mind maps to organize and focus the discussion,

enabling logical thinking and detailed strategic planning. As a result, the World Café is increasingly adopted by enterprises for developing operational strategies, providing a structured yet flexible approach to strategic planning (Carter & Swedeen, 2012).

A research conducted by Chang, W. L., & Chen, S. T. (2015) with 120 participants attending an entrepreneurial program held by the government are observed. The results indicate that the World Café strategy has a significantly higher positive effect on their strategic planning capability than with traditional Strategy Workshops. In addition, the World Café assigns assistants to outline important ideas, vocabulary, and concepts during discussion as reference materials for the other attendees.

Lohr et al., 2017 showed that WC was successful in creating chances for building relationships and sharing stories as the method enabled communication on a more personal level beyond the usual work context. In addition, the WC was also only one of the first steps in a participatory design process for conflict management. Further narratives were obtained and dialogues facilitated over the course of 1 year.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a participatory approach by engaging 26 pre-service teachers who took the Education for Sustainable Environment course in an IPGM. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their interest in sustainability education, prior experience with environmental projects, and commitment to integrating sustainable practices into their teaching methodologies.

This research was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The participants answered 26 objective questions and 4 structured questions, supporting the study's quantitative aspect. The data collection focused on the students' opinions of the 'World Café' method, used during classroom teaching to facilitate discussions on sustainability and environmental education. The objective questions gathered measurable feedback, while the structured questions allowed for a deeper exploration of the participant's views on the effectiveness of this participatory teaching approach.

Conducting a World Café method with 26 pre-service teachers from IPGM to discuss environmental issues involves creating a relaxed, café-like setting where students can engage in structured but informal group discussions. To start the discussion, environment topics such as biodiversity degradation, climate change, ozone depletion, solid waste management, acid rain and air, noise pollution. Next, the teacher defines what is the objective of this activity and outcome of this discussion, such as raising awareness, generating ideas for solutions, or understanding the students' viewpoints. The space was prepared by arranging the room with small tables and chairs, providing markers, colour pencils, sticky notes, large sheets of paper, and refreshments to create a welcoming environment. Discuss a series of open-ended questions related to the chosen environmental issues, with each table focusing on one question at a time.

Begin the session by dividing the students into small groups of 4-5 per table. Each table starts with a different question, and a host at each table (who stays at the table throughout the session) will welcome participants and briefly introduce the question. Students discuss the question for 20 minutes, writing down key points, ideas, and insights on the sticky notes and paste it on large paper. After the first round, students rotate to a new table, except the table host, who summarizes the previous discussion to the new group. The new group continues the discussion, building on the ideas left by the previous group. Continue the rotation and discussion for several rounds, ensuring that each group has the opportunity to discuss different questions.

After the final round, bring everyone together for a plenary session where table hosts share the key insights and ideas from their tables. Capture the main points on a whiteboard for everyone to see. Encourage students to reflect on the discussions by asking what they learned, what surprised them, and what actions they might take.

As a follow-up, use a Likert scale questionnaire to gauge students' perceptions of the World Café method and the discussions. Questions could cover aspects such as understanding of the WC method, interest and effectiveness of the method. Encourage students to stay involved in environmental issues through clubs, projects, or classroom activities. This approach fosters collaborative learning, encourages active participation, and helps students develop a deeper

understanding of environmental issues through shared knowledge and ideas.

RESULT, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of the descriptive analysis provide insight into the effectiveness and reception of the World Café method among pre-service teachers. Overall, the data suggests a highly positive response to the method, both in terms of engagement and educational value.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Knowledge of the World Cafe Method

Statement	M	SD
Before this session, I was familiar with the World Cafe Method	1.58	.809
I understood the purpose of the World Cafe Method before participation	3.15	1.347
The instructions for the World Cafe Method were clear and easy to follow	4.58	6.43

Based on the results from Table 1, it can be concluded that the participants indicated a relatively low familiarity with the World Café method before the session ($M = 1.58$, $SD = 0.809$), highlighting its novelty for the group. However, despite this unfamiliarity, they quickly grasped the purpose of the method ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.347$). This suggests that the participants were able to adapt to the method as the session progressed, aided by the clarity of the instructions provided ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 0.643$).

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics for Interest and Engagement*

Statement	M	SD
I enjoyed the interactive nature of the World Cafe method	4.77	0.514
The World Cafe discussions kept me engaged throughout the session	4.73	0.452
The topics discussed in the World Cafe were relevant and interesting to me	4.77	0.430

Based on the results from Table 2, it can be concluded that the World Café method was reported to be engaging, with participants indicating high levels of enjoyment and interactivity (M = 4.77, SD = 0.514). This aligns with the positive skewness in responses, where participants overwhelmingly rated the discussions as engaging and relevant to the topics at hand. This is supported by the high ratings for statements such as "The discussions kept me engaged" (M = 4.73, SD = 0.452) and "The topics discussed were relevant and interesting" (M = 4.77, SD = 0.430).

Table 3*Descriptive Statistics for Effectiveness of the World Cafe Method*

Statement	M	SD
The discussions in the World Cafe were meaningful and impactful	4.77	0.430
The small group discussions made it easier to stay focused	4.85	0.368
The World Cafe method helped me better understand environmental issues	4.65	0.562

The World Cafe method helped me connect theoretical knowledge with real world issues	4.65	0.485
I would like to participate in more World Cafe sessions in the future	4.73	0.533
The World Cafe method is an effective way to facilitate group discussions	4.65	0.562

Based on the results from Table 3, it can be concluded that the method's ability to foster meaningful and impactful conversations is also evident. The statement, "The discussions were meaningful and impactful," scored highly ($M = 4.77$, $SD = 0.430$), indicating that participants found value in the dialogue and exchange of ideas. The small group format, characteristic of the World Café, seems to have contributed to this, as participants reported that the small group discussions made it easier to focus and stay engaged ($M = 4.85$, $SD = 0.368$).

Additionally, the method helped bridge theoretical knowledge with real-world issues. Responses to "The World Café Method helped me better understand environmental issues" ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.562$) and "The method helped connect theoretical knowledge with real-world issues" ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.485$) demonstrate that participants found the approach effective in contextualizing abstract concepts in a practical, discussion-based setting.

The overwhelmingly positive ratings for "I would like to participate in more World Café sessions" ($M = 4.73$, $SD = 0.533$) and "The World Café Method is an effective way to facilitate group discussions" ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.562$) suggest that this method has potential for broader application in various educational contexts.

While the quantitative data provided valuable insights into participants' overall engagement and satisfaction with the World Café method, the qualitative responses offer a deeper exploration of the specific aspects that contributed to or detract from their experience. To

gain a more nuanced understanding of the participants' perceptions, the responses to four open-ended questions were analyzed. These responses reveal important themes related to what participants enjoyed most, how the method impacted their understanding of the topics, challenges they encountered, and their suggestions for improvement.

Participants consistently highlighted the interactive nature of the World Café as one of the most enjoyable aspects of the method. Several respondents mentioned that the small group format allowed them to engage more actively, which aligns with the quantitative data showing a mean score of 4.77 for engagement. One participant noted, "*I enjoyed being able to hear diverse perspectives in a more intimate setting,*" indicating that the discussion format encouraged richer interaction compared to traditional lectures.

The World Café method was also reported to have positively impacted participants' understanding of the topics discussed. Many participants shared that the discussions helped them connect theoretical concepts to real-world applications, which made the learning process more meaningful. This is reflected in the quantitative data, where the statement "*The World Café method helped me better understand environmental issues*" received a mean score of 4.65, suggesting that the method effectively deepened comprehension through interactive dialogue.

Despite the overwhelmingly positive feedback, a few participants noted challenges with certain aspects of the World Café method. Some felt that the repetition of information by group leaders could be tiring. One participant commented, "*It might be tiring for the leaders to repeat everything multiple times.*" However, these minor issues did not seem to significantly affect the overall high engagement and enjoyment reported, as evidenced by the quantitative results (M = 4.77 for enjoyment).

Additionally, participants offered several suggestions for improving the World Café discussions. Some recommended conducting the sessions in a more relaxed, outdoor setting, which they believed would enhance the learning experience. One participant mentioned, "*It would be great to hold the discussions in a more relaxed, outdoor environment.*" Others suggested allowing more time for in-depth discussions. These suggestions indicate that, while the

method was generally well-received, there are opportunities to refine the experience to make it even more engaging and effective.

CONCLUSION

Future research could explore the impact of the *WC method* across different educational topics, such as mathematics, science, or language arts. Additionally, its implementation could be tested within diverse classroom settings, such as varying age groups, student proficiency levels, or educational environments (e.g., rural vs. urban schools). Such studies would help determine the method's versatility and adaptability across different contexts, further broadening its applicability and potential benefits in education.

In summary, the World Café method was perceived as an engaging, interactive, and effective way to discuss and learn about environmental issues. Its participatory nature, combined with small group discussions, facilitated both engagement and deeper understanding of the topics covered, making it a valuable addition to classroom teaching strategies.

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