INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN MALAYSIA AND PREJUDICE REDUCTION:
A PRELIMINARY SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

As a result of some unresolved historical, political and socio-economic issues, prejudicial attitude (though it might be implicit) is still rampant among Malaysian societies. This detrimental attitude if is not handled wisely could lead to racial discord and even riots such as May 13, 1969 incident. Few researchers in the field of prejudice reduction have proposed several approaches to reduce prejudice including dialogue that is grounded on contact hypothesis. Contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954) proposes that any contact that occur under four specified conditions (i.e. equal status, common goals, cooperative interactions and support from authorities) can generate learning and understanding about others which consequently lead to reduction of prejudice. Apparently, even though inter-religious dialogue in Malaysia has been implemented over the years by many organizations, it has yet to reach its full potential let alone to demonstrate the effect on prejudice reduction. This study therefore aims to review the practice of inter-religious dialogue in Malaysia and examine some organizational dialogue models in order to determine to what extent these models conformed to the contact hypothesis. The findings suggested that inter-religious dialogue in Malaysia was synonymous with forum, public lecture, seminar, conference or roundtable dialogue. The analysis based on contact hypothesis indicated that these formats of dialogue did not allow all four optimal contact conditions to occur. In order to achieve the desired goals such as reducing prejudice, inter-religious dialogue practitioners and organizations should consider developing a systematic inter-religious dialogue design that is grounded on specific theories in the future.

Keywords: Inter-religious dialogue, Prejudice, Contact hypothesis

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia has always been in the limelight for its highly diverse and plural society. However, it has also been a great challenge for Malaysia to maintain the peaceful coexistence among its multi-religious and multi-ethnic societies. This harmonious living is constantly tested by number of inter-religious and inter-ethnic conflicts. The horrific May 13, 1969; mass brawl between the Malay and Indian communities in Petaling Jaya 2002; assaults on churches, mosques and temples; cow head march; and few other contentious issues constantly resonates in this country.

These unfortunate events and issues allegedly emerged out of uncontrolled and unaddressed prejudicial attitudes ingrained among multi-religious and multi-ethnic Malaysian societies. Supposedly,
inter-religious dialogue that has taken place in Malaysia for more than a decade ago would heal this wounded relationship. However, to this day, it is still unable to reach its full potential.

This reality contradicts with dialogue practices which adopted Inter-group Dialogue framework. These dialogue models demonstrated several positive outcomes such as improved troubled relationship and breakdown of stereotype and prejudice. Conceivably, more systematic, well-established design of dialogue that is incorporated with specific theories influence the effectiveness of Inter-group Dialogue model.

This study therefore focuses on few issues revolves around: 1) The reality of prejudicial attitude among Malaysian; 2) The role of Inter-group Dialogue in reducing prejudice; 3) Overview of the implementation of inter-religious dialogue in Malaysia; and analysis of two inter-religious dialogue models (i.e. Center for Civilizational Dialogue and Student Affairs Division (MMU) models) based on Contact Theory as proposed by Inter-group Dialogue framework.

THE REALITY OF PREJUDICIAL ATTITUDE AMONG MALAYSIAN

Before we delve into this issue much further, we will catch a glimpse of a silent yet detrimental attitude known as prejudice. According to Gordon Allport (1979:6), prejudice is “thinking ill of others without sufficient warrant” which simply means that a judgment towards others is made despite insufficient information and knowledge about them.

Prejudice influences three important domain of an individual (i.e. the cognitive, affective and behavioral domain). The cognitive component of prejudice is manifested in the form of stereotype, affective component expressed in the form of the feeling of liking or disliking and the behavioral component is translated into discrimination (Allport, 1979).

Few other theories and models also provide useful information in understanding prejudice. The realistic conflict model view prejudice as a consequence of conflict between groups over limited resources (Campbell, 1965). Personality theory on the other hand, associates prejudice with the so called ‘authoritarian personality’ (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950). A person with this type of personality is more likely to make assumption that members in the same group as superior, whereas members in other groups are regarded as inferior therefore are treated with rejection, opposition or disdain. Tajfel’s Social Identity Theory suggests that the process of categorizing people into in-groups and out-groups in order to enhance individuals’ positive self-image and social identity supports the formation of prejudice (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Prejudice if untreated and handled wisely will lead to disparities in health, economic, and education (American Psychological Association [APA], 2001), terrorism and even genocide (Sternberg, 2003).

In Malaysian context, we have witnessed few gruesome inter-ethnic clashes such as May 1969 and March 2002 where several lives and properties were lost. Few researchers such as Sri Rahayu Ismail, Zaid Ahmad, Haslinda Abdullah and Norbaya Ahmad (2009) have attributed these inter-ethnic conflicts to unaddressed and overlooked prejudicial attitude among multi-religious and multi-ethnic Malaysian society.

“Malaysia Truly Asia” the slogan that is promulgated all over the world to show how diverse Malaysian societies are and how proud we are to maintain the peaceful coexistence. However to what extent this ‘peaceful coexistence’ has been enjoyed by plural society in Malaysia? Is this peaceful living for real or merely superficial?

Ani Arope in his speech at a gathering of the Fulbright Association admits that Malaysian society is still restrained with prejudice since this problem never been handled wisely. The problems instead, were suppressed and eventually it turned into self-denial. According to him, the prejudicial
attitude is embedded in both, minority and majority groups in this country (“Enhancing Tolerance,” 2009).

Result from an interview conducted by Abdul Rahman Embong (2001) has further revealed the reality of prejudicial attitude that exist among Malaysian society. One of the informants for instance admits that ethnic relations are not as close as it seems because “a lot of jealousy and prejudices toward one another still exist”. Another informant said that, the inter-ethnic or inter-religious harmony or unity that we currently experience is bounded on the basis of toleration not so much on civility and mutual reciprocity. The unity is born “out of necessity...it is unity for survival” unity that is “instrumental, collective and artificial” and not “unity of the heart” (Abdul Rahman Embong, 2001:75-77).

Another finding from a survey conducted by Merdeka Center in 2011 reported that offensive racial stereotypes are still rampant among Malaysian. Since the last survey in 2006, belief in racist stereotypes such as “The Malays are lazy”, “The Chinese are greedy” and that “The Indians cannot be trusted” only declined marginally by 2%, 3% and 2% respectively. These stereotypes are not only believed by members of differing racial groups but ironically they were also accepted by the members of the stereotyped community which indicates how deeply rooted these stereotypes are (Tan S. K., 2011).

Issues that Instill Prejudice

The prejudicial attitude as mentioned in previous discussion was found to have originated from number of issues that were failed to be addressed and left unchecked. These issues were raised and experienced by both communities in Malaysia (i.e. Muslim majority and non-Muslim minority).

The Islamization Policy

The advancement of Malay cultural and language during the formation of the new state of Malaysia in 1960 had already caused uneasiness among the non-Malays since it was seen as a threat to their own religious and cultural heritages. This disenchantment was further exacerbated in 1980 when the government launched the Islamization policy.

The implementation of this policy was manifested through the allocation of funds for the establishment of institutions dedicated to research on and to propagate not only Islamic but also Malay arts and cultures since Islam constitutionally associated with Malay ethnicity as stipulated in article 160. A Malay is a “person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language.” The Islamization process therefore indirectly involved the expansion of Malay cultural and Islamic symbols and practices in public sphere (Lee, 2000).

This process allegedly demanded the reduction of other religious symbols and practices for example the limitation of other religious groups’ places of worships. Tan C.K (1985) argues that the state allocated large amount of funding to build mosques while suppressed the funding and the permits to build churches and temples. This could be seen with the increased number of mosques throughout the peninsular Malaysia.

Other Contentious Issues

Other than issues related to Islamization policy, several other issues have been raised and some of these issues remain unsolved. Among the issues as stated in the “Note of Protest” prepared by MCCBCHST (n.d) (Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism Sikhism &
Taoism) are, the issue of Lina Joy (a Malay Muslim born woman who converted to Christianity), prohibition of the use of the word *Allāh* by non-Muslim, the ban of “*al-Kitāb*” (the Christian bible in Malay language) and the issue of performing *qurbān* at a multi-religious and multi-ethnic schools (Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism [MCCBCHST], 2011).

**Economic Deprivation Issues among Malays**

As the non-Malays minority in this country perceives the advancement of Islamic and Malay religious and cultural values as a threat, the Malays on the other hand consider the increased economic control among the non-Malays as a bad sign. This perceived economic threat worsen when most Malays remained in the traditional agricultural sector and they had been left out from full participation in the economic development of the country by the non-Malays especially the Chinese who dominated the small and medium businesses and modern sectors of employment (Lee, 2000).

For this reason, New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced by Tun Abdul Razak, the then Prime Minister soon after May 1969 incident as a measure to restructuring society and eradicating poverty (Mahdi Shuid & Mohd. Fauzi Yunus, 2003:85). This measure was taken due to the perceived unfair distribution of economic resources that undermined the Malay majority which allegedly become the source of conflict.

Unfortunately, the NEP also led the inter-religious and inter-ethnic relation to nowhere as it still failed to address the Malays economic problems and improved the sore relationship. According to Lee (2000: 20-21):

> While the state’s perceived highhanded intervention in pushing the preferential policies alienated the Chinese, the Malays remained resentful of the fact that their community continued to receive much less than what they desire and believe they deserve.

Consequently, 1980 did not only witness the economic downturn, but it also became a bad period for inter-religious and inter-ethnic relation (Lee, 2000).

**INTER-GROUP DIALOGUE AND PREJUDICE REDUCTION**

If economic measure only deteriorated inter-religious and inter-ethnic relation, what measure then can we rely on to reduce prejudice? Based on in-depth examinations, researchers in the field of prejudice reduction have identified several approaches to reduce this harmful attitude such as cooperative learning, entertainment, cross-cultural/inter-cultural training, social categorization and diversity training. Other than those strategies, they also identify dialogue as one of the interventions that seem promising in reducing prejudice (Paluck & Green, 2009).

One of the significant element in Inter-group Dialogue that allow the process of learning about others to take place, hence reducing prejudice is Inter-group Contact Theory which is introduced by Gordon Allport (1954). According to Allport’s (1954) inter-group contact results in positive effects with the present of four key conditions:

i. Equal group status within the group encounter
ii. Common goals
iii. Cooperative interactions
iv. Support of those with social influence and power

These key conditions also intertwined with one another. Lack of one condition will affect the effectiveness of the others. For instance, common goals are one of a significant factor (Chu & Griffey,

1985), but this factor may become less important than Allport (1954) originally suggested when it is detached from cooperative interaction (Gaertner, Dovidio, Rust, Nier, Banker, Ward, 1999).

In one of their studies on Inter-group Dialogue, Nagda, Gurin and Zúñiga (2008) have structured the dialogue program based on the four conditions that are outlined by Allport for positive inter-group contact. The equal status condition is guaranteed at the beginning of the dialogue itself during enrolment of equal number of students from each identity group.

Cooperation and personal interaction are assured by exercises and assignments that require students to work together and to get to know each other in non-superficial ways. Support from authorities is evident because these courses are made compulsory to gain college credit. Inter-group Dialogue therefore, allows for structured and facilitated contact to occur and this contact will lead to the increased level of understanding that eventually deepen the opportunities for reducing prejudice amongst the participants.

Few researchers (e.g., Parrott, Zeichner & Hoover, 2006) prove that Inter-group Dialogue has facilitated positive changes in prejudicial attitudes or behaviours and improve troubled relationships. Study in university setting found that students involved in inter-group dialogue were reported to have more positive views of conflict and expressed greater support for multi-cultural and affirmative action policies compared to the non-participating students (Gurin, Peng, Lopez, & Nagda, 1999).

Results from dialogues in community and international settings have included breakdown of stereotyping, facilitation of personal relationships, establishment of trust and consensus building leading to critical social policy development, and commitment to social change (Alvarez & Cabbil, 2001).

However, in between these many positive outcomes of inter-group dialogue, most researchers often seek to reduce inter-group anxiety, prejudice, and other harmful attitudes that potentially become the source of conflict (Miller & Donner, 2000; Nagda, Kim & Truelove, 2004).

OVERVIEW OF INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN MALAYSIA

If Inter-group Dialogue model which incorporated the four contact conditions is found to be effective in achieving its desired goals especially in reducing prejudice, in the following discussion we will examine the extent to which the current models of inter-religious dialogue are designed to incorporate the four optimal contact conditions. But before that we will also take a look at a brief history of implementation of dialogue in Malaysia and the goals of those dialogues.

Inter-religious Dialogue: Malaysia’a experience

The history of inter-religious dialogue in Malaysia can be traced through the establishment of few inter-religious organizations as early as 1950. With a noble mission to promote mutual understanding and cooperation among all religions, Malaysia inter-religious Organization (MIRO) was established in 1956. This organization however was dissolved due to May 1969 incident.

Its role then was taken over by National Unity Board, a government body chaired by the late Tun V.T Sambanthan. Other than this government body, inter-religious relations and dialogue also become the interest of non-government organizations. Among these non-government organizations was Bishop’s Institute of Inter-religious Affairs (BIIRA). This organization was established after 1969. Malaysian Consultative Council for the Buddhists, Christians, Hindus and Sikhs that was established in 1983 also shared the same interest as BIIRA that was to addresses inter-religious issues and concerns (Ghazali Basri, 2005).
Few researchers opine that the implementation of inter-religious dialogue was not so apparent until the *Islamization* policy was executed by the government in 1982. Even though inter-religious dialogue had taken place since 1950, the actual application or implementation could only be seen in the early 1980s.

Most of the earliest inter-religious dialogue efforts however were geared and dominated by the non-Muslim organizations and leaders while some Muslim organization only involved as guests or participants. For example, in October 1980, *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* (ABIM) (Malaysian Muslim Youth Movement) sent its members to an inter-religious seminar organized by Young Men Christian Organisation (YMCA) with a Partners of People of Other Faiths.

Consumer Association of Penang (CAP) and ALIRAN were two other Muslim organizations that used to involve in inter-religious dialogue (Ghazali Basri, 2005). University of Malaya finally made a breakthrough among Muslim organizations to initiate an International Seminar on Islam and Confucianism in March 1995. This historic event was well received by the non-Muslim especially the Chinese community.

**The Goals of Inter-religious Dialogue in Malaysia**

In the light of aforementioned, the real form of inter-religious dialogue had taken place during the 1980 once the *Islamization* policy was launched in this country. The inter-religious dialogue that took place then was between the government (representing Muslims majority) and the non-Muslims minority. The discussion mainly revolved around the *Islamization* policy especially on how it affected the non-Muslims’ life.

Inter-religious dialogue therefore back then was conducted as a platform for the government to explain about the *Islamization* policy to the non-Muslims. Nevertheless, as time goes by, the focus of inter-religious dialogue thereafter shifted to community and national development (Khairulnizam Mat Karim & Suzy Aziziyanah Sali, 2012). Azizan Baharudin (2008), asserts dialogue is also necessary in order to strengthen national unity and integration. Dialogue in Malaysia according to her, should aim at explaining “the foundation of the way of being of the participating cultures” (Azizan Baharudin, 2008:6), that are taking place in the development of Malaysian civilization.

Based on the knowledge of these foundations, each culture will find basic human universal values that cross the cultural boundaries. These universal values signify the similarities among different cultures that can be the stepping stone towards greater cooperation among those cultures.

Even though the goals of dialogue has evolved in present day, it does not mean that the discontent of the non-Muslims towards Islamization policy has completely gone and has no longer become the main focus of inter-religious dialogue. In fact, to this day there are number of issues have been raised occasionally.

Accordingly, the major role of inter-religious dialogue in Malaysia is to clarify any misunderstanding of the non-Muslim towards Islam and also to answer and explain any issues raised by them concerning their rights and the implementation of Islamic law in this country. For instance, there are issues raised related to religious administration or execution of law that affected other religions such as the construction of temple and civil or Syariah court system (Muhammad Farid Muhammad Syahran, 2008).

Hashim Musa (2005) posits that inter-religious dialogue is a good platform for the non-Muslim to get firsthand information about Islam instead of receiving the information from secondary or tertiary sources which could have been misleading. Khadijah Khambali (2005) also asserts that in order to clarify those misunderstandings, a platform like dialogue where people can meet and discuss
together, exchange opinions and exploring the truth while simultaneously preserve the peaceful coexistence among the community is crucial.

Khairulnizam Mat Karim and Suzy Aziziyan Saili (2012) have identified the important roles of inter-religious dialogue such as the platform to cultivate mutual understanding, mutual correspondence, a way to inculcate cooperation in general affairs, to encourage unity and integration, breaking the distrust of one another and a way to form harmony. In a nutshell, dialogue will resolve all conflicts and misunderstanding and this subsequently will lead to a united and developed nation.

These goals of dialogue seem promising and consistent with the outcomes of Inter-group Dialogue as aforementioned. However, does current design of inter-religious dialogue in Malaysia conform to the Inter-group Dialogue framework which includes contact theory in its model? The subsequent discussion will analyse three inter-religious dialogue models based on the four contact conditions as proposed by Allport.

**ANALYSIS OF INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE MODELS BASED ON CONTACT THEORY**

Two inter-religious dialogue models from two organizations are selected to be analysed with the Contact Theory. These two organizations are: Centre for Civilizational Dialogue (University of Malaya); and Student Affairs Division (Multimedia University, Malacca Campus). These two organizations are selected based on their experiences and reputations in organizing inter-religious dialogue.

Center for Civilizational Dialogue for instance has been involved in numerous types of inter-religious dialogue ranging from collective inquiry type of dialogue, for instance “Gap between Islam and the West,” critical-dialogic education type for example “Muslim-Chinese Civilizational Dialogue,” and conflict resolution type of dialogue such as “Dialog antara Penganut Agama Mengenai Isu-isu Semasa” (Dialogue among Religious Adherents on Current Issues).

Multimedia University also has organized consistently inter-religious dialogue programs with the critical-dialogic education type. Up to 2011, MMU has already implemented 20 series of inter-religious dialogue at its main campus in Malacca. Among the topic that was discussed in its inter-religious dialogue were: “Religious Scriptures and Science: Conflict or Conciliation?” “The core of faiths”, “Authenticity of scriptures” and “Religion & Everyday Life, Practical or Outdated?”

**Center for Civilizational Dialogue (CCD) Model**

CCD’s inter-religious dialogue model is analyzed based on one of it inter-religious program entitled “Dialog antara Penganut Agama Mengenai Isu-isu Semasa.” This roundtable dialogue was organized in 2008 with the goal to finding possible solutions for some issues that affected inter-religious community in this country for instance the issue of murtaḍ, the effect of conversion to Islamic faith on marriage of the converted spouse; and also the issue of daʿwah.

**Common goals**

This contact condition was guaranteed whenever individuals, organizations and stakeholders met in this dialogue platform were all focusing on one ultimate goal that is to clarify and to find solution to religious issues that potentially become source of inter-religious conflict.

**Cooperative Interaction/Inter-group cooperation**

This condition could not be identified in this model of inter-religious dialogue since some of the participants only met one another for the first time during the dialogue program. Moreover, this
dialogue model did not provide the participants with opportunities to cooperate since this dialogue only focused on presentation and discussion.

**Equal Status**
The presence of speakers and participants with equal status in terms of expertise in particular field, knowledge, positions and many more had guaranteed the condition for equal status. Among the participants that were invited by CCD for this inter-religious dialogue program were representatives from organizations like Jabatan Peguam Negara (Attorney General Chambers) Kementerian Perumahan dan Kerajaan Tempatan (Ministry of Housing and Local Government), Cowangan Khas Polis Diraja Malaysia (Special Branch of Royal Malaysia Police), Yayasan Da’wah Islamiah Malaysia (Islamic Da’wah Foundation Malaysia) (YADIM), MCCBCHST, Persatuan Siam Malaysia (Malaysian Siamese Association), Allied Coordinating Committee of Islamic NGO’s (ACCN) and Buddhist, Christian, Sikh and Taoist representatives. The program also invited and few experts and consultants like Abdul Aziz Bari from IIUM, Mohd. Kamil Majid from UM and Mohamed Azam bin Mohamed Adil from UiTM.

**Support from authorities**
Support of the government for this inter-religious dialogue program was evident when the Department of National Unity and Integration (under the Prime Minister Department) involved as co-organizer of this dialogue.

**Student Affairs Division (Multimedia University Malaysia)**

One of MMU’s inter-religious dialogue model chosen to be analysed with the four contact conditions was an inter-religious dialogue program entitled “Religion & Everyday Life, Practical or Outdated?” held on 26th May 2004. This inter-religious dialogue program (that was organized in the format of a forum) aimed to create awareness among students about the need to practice religion in everyday life and to create understanding about other religions among students. This awareness and understanding accordingly will enhance the culture of mutual respect and tolerance in MMU campus ambiance (N.S. Razali and M.L. Bakar, personal communication, June 9, 2011).

**Common goals**
The common goal that had been identified in this inter-religious dialogue program was the goal to learn about different religious perspectives on certain religious issues shared by the participants. As an example they would like to learn the Islamic standpoints on the significance of religious practices in the modern time.

**Cooperative Interaction/Inter-group cooperation**
Since this inter-religious dialogue program was organized in the form of a forum, there was no specific session for the students (who constitutes majority of the dialogue participants), to interact with each other let alone to cooperate. This condition therefore failed to be fulfilled.

**Equal Status**
Since this inter-religious dialogue targeting MMU student’s population, the equal status condition therefore had been assured.
Support from authorities
The sanction of authorities in this inter-religious dialogue program was evident when it was organized and monitored by one of MMU’s administration department (i.e. Student Affairs Division).

Inter-religious Dialogue Models with Impaired Contact Conditions

Based on the analysis, it is found that, these two inter-religious dialogue models (i.e. CCD and STAD (MMU) models) only conform to three contact conditions namely common goals, equal status and support from authorities while both models neglect the ‘cooperative interaction’ prerequisite as outlined by Allport.

The insertion of element of ‘cooperation’ was impossible for both models since both of them were conducted in the format of roundtable dialogue (CCD model) and forum (STAD (MMU) model). These two formats only allowed formal discussion or presentation to take place and there was no session that can create interaction and cooperation among the participants.

If both models failed to meet this one condition, it means that they failed to achieve the same outcome as assured by Allport (i.e. reduced level of prejudice) since as mentioned above, all four contact conditions must exist simultaneously. The extent to which these two inter-religious dialogue models were effective in achieving the desired goals therefore is ambiguous.

CONCLUSION

Prejudicial attitude even it seems harmless and implicit, it can result in conflict and communal clashes. Therefore, prejudice in a multi-religious and multi-ethnic country like Malaysia, is a serious threat. May13, 1969 tragic episode was an evident where prejudicial attitude among diverse Malaysian society came to boil and became unruly. Economic disparities among different ethnics in Malaysia have been attributed to this conflict which leads to the execution of the New Economic Policy.

This measure somehow still unable to address this negative attitude since number of issues which reflect the discontent are still raised either by the non-Muslims or the Muslims community in this country. Some researchers in the field of prejudice reduction have proposed that dialogue as one of the promising method in reducing prejudice.

Dialogue potentially can reduce prejudice when it is structured to incorporate one of ‘prejudice reduction’ tools proposed by Gordon Allport (1954) namely the Contact Theory. There are four intertwining conditions that must exist during any interaction (e.g. dialogue) in order for the contact theory to produce positive effects (i.e. equal status, common goals, cooperative interactions and support from authorities). Lack one of these four conditions will affect the efficacy of this theory in reducing prejudice.

Inter-group Dialogue models that adopted this strategy have already demonstrated the positive effects. Hypothetically, if inter-religious dialogue in Malaysia also applies the same framework as Inter-group Dialogue, it also can produce the same effects.

Based on the analysis of two inter-religious dialogue models (i.e. Centre for Civilizational Dialogue and Student Affairs Division (MMU)) models) it is found that these two models failed to meet all four contact prerequisites. Even though they have successfully conform to three other conditions (i.e. equal status, common goals, and support from authorities), these inter-religious dialogue models however set aside the ‘cooperative interaction’ condition.

The analysis revealed that the two inter-religious dialogue models applied roundtable dialogue (CCD) and forum (STAD (MMU)) formats. These formats which relied on discussion and presentation
sessions, did not allow any interaction that can lead to cooperation among participants. This deficiency ultimately undermined the understanding process. Without proper understanding, prejudice is hard to discard.

This raises questions of to what extent do current models of inter-religious dialogue in Malaysia are structured according to specific theories or a systematic dialogue designs? Without a well-established design, the effectiveness of a dialogue programs in achieving their desired goals such as reducing prejudice are doubtful and all efforts will be futile.

In order to guarantee that inter-religious dialogue is able to achieve the desired goals such as reducing prejudice, inter-religious dialogue practitioners and organizations that involve in inter-religious dialogue should consider developing a systematic inter-religious dialogue design that is grounded on specific theories such as Contact Theory in the future.

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