

EDUCATOR'S STRATEGIES IN IMPLEMENTING MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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Abstract: Multicultural education is an approach that has recently gained attention in the context of early childhood education (ECE) in Indonesia. The purpose of this study is to find out and analyze how educators at ECD centers implement multicultural education. This descriptive qualitative study at TK Charlita in Cipanas-Cianjur showed that the implementation of multicultural education goes beyond the simple introduction and recognition of different cultures; it also entails fostering tolerance and appreciation of diversity in children. Educators utilize various techniques in teaching multicultural education, such as incorporating culture into the curriculum, employing project-based learning, and working with parents. A best example discovered in this research is the Festival of Cultures as a powerful learning tool designed to teach students the values found within various cultures. This research is intended to assist educators to practically support the goals of multicultural education in early childhood education. At the national level, some policy direction is suggested to strengthen support for the use of multicultural education in ECD centers.

Keywords: Educator strategies; Multicultural education; tolerance

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INTRODUCTION

Multicultural education at the Early Childhood Education (ECE) level is becoming increasingly important as cultural diversity in society increases. In the case of multicultural education in Indonesia, where there is diversity of ethnicity, religion, and culture, it is not only aimed at exposing children to different cultures, but also at fostering tolerance and appreciation for differences. As Banks and McGee Banks (2016) state, multicultural education seeks to foster an inclusive atmosphere in which a child feels valued and has the opportunity to learn irrespective of their background. Therefore, the

techniques employed by teachers in practicing multicultural education are important in meeting these objectives.

This research focuses on concrete strategies that can be implemented by educators at the ECD level in the Indonesian context. Although previous research has discussed the importance of multicultural education, there is a need to review the development of practical strategies that can be used by educators. This research seeks to fill this gap by providing real examples and relevant data on multicultural education practices in early childhood education. Therefore, this journal will raise the strategies that educators can apply in implementing multicultural education in ECD and the challenges faced in the implementation process. By answering these questions, it is hoped that it can provide guidance for educators and other stakeholders in creating a more inclusive and multicultural learning environment.

Educators can carry out strategies in implementing multicultural education through the introduction of diverse learning materials. Educators can use the media of storybooks, songs, and types of games that reflect the various cultures that exist in Indonesia. The use of diverse materials not only introduces children to cultures but can help them to understand and appreciate the differences that exist. Through interesting and fun learning media, it can be a tool to explain different cultural values so that they are meaningful for children. (Fadlillah, 2017)

Furthermore, educators can create an inclusive learning environment. This can be done by organizing classes in such a way that they reflect cultural diversity. Educators can decorate classrooms with pictures, flags, and artifacts from different cultures because an inclusive environment can enhance children's sense of belonging and involvement in learning. By organizing a cultural day where children are asked to wear traditional clothes from their respective tribes and share stories about their culture (Junanto & Fajrin, 2020).

Educators can involve parents and the community in the learning process. Educators can invite parents or community members who have different cultural backgrounds to share their experiences and knowledge with children. This not only enriches children's learning experiences but also builds stronger relationships between schools and communities (Jamilah, n.d.). Parental involvement in multicultural education can improve children's understanding of diversity and tolerance (Nur et al., 2022). Furthermore, educators need to develop pedagogic skills that support multicultural education. One way to do this is to attend training or workshops on multicultural education. Trained educators will be better able to identify the needs and challenges faced by children from different backgrounds. (Safita & Suryana, 2022). The development of educator competencies is very important in creating a learning environment that supports multicultural education. Educators are the main key to success in presenting understanding to students in the school environment and outside and have a positive appreciation of different values so that children can grow into individuals who appreciate diversity and have mutual respect.

The next stage that must be done is that evaluation and reflection on multicultural education practices is also an important part of the strategy that must be implemented. Educators need to conduct periodic evaluations to assess the effectiveness of the strategies implemented and make adjustments if necessary. This is important so that multicultural education can continue to develop and meet the diverse needs of children. This reflection can also help educators to better understand the impact of their practices on children's

social and emotional development (Kasmiati, 2021).

METHOD

Multicultural education in Early Childhood Education (ECE) is becoming increasingly important as cultural diversity in society increases. This study uses a qualitative approach with case study methods to explore strategies applied by educators in implementing multicultural education.

Data for this study was collected through thorough interviews with instructors, observations, and reviewing curriculum files from ECD centers (Junanto & Fajrin, 2020). As he notes, one of the objectives of multicultural education is not only to expose learners to a variety of cultures but also to foster an attitude of tolerance and respect among learners. For this particular research, the researcher aims to find out various methods and approaches used by teachers to infuse multicultural concepts in daily classroom activities. A method that might be identified is the application of different instructional strategies such as project and role playing (Nafi, n.d.), which research shows foster the teaching of multicultural principles to students (Design, n.d.). Besides, the researcher investigates how teachers deal with the difficulties and challenges that are likely to arise in the process of teaching multicultural education.

Data collection was conducted in the Charlita Kindergarten (TK) located at Cipanas in Cianjur Regency, considering their social/customs along with how varied the cultures and social settings are. Having this information is useful for understanding the application of multicultural education practices across the country. In Fadlillah (2017) explaining that the local cultural context greatly influences the way multicultural education is applied, it is necessary to explore different approaches that suit the characteristics of each region.

The data obtained will be analyzed descriptively to identify emerging patterns and draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the strategies applied. This research is expected to contribute to the development of a more inclusive and responsive early childhood education curriculum in Indonesia, as well as provide recommendations for educators in implementing multicultural education more effectively. The researchers analyzed by comparing the findings with the existing literature, as expressed (Bank, nd) which states that multicultural education should include teaching about the history, culture, and experiences of different ethnic and social groups. Thus, this research not only focuses on practice in the field but also relates it to the theories and concepts underlying multicultural education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Understanding Multicultural Education

Multicultural education in Early Childhood Education (ECE) is becoming increasingly important considering the cultural diversity in Indonesia, where there are more than 300 tribes and more than 700 languages spoken in Indonesia, which shows

how diverse the cultural background of our society is. Multicultural education serves to introduce children to cultural differences, so that they can grow up to be tolerant and respectful individuals (2016 *James A. Banks, Cherry A. McGee Banks - Multicultural Education_ Issues and Perspectives (1)*, n.d.). states that multicultural education is not only about knowledge, but also about attitudes and skills needed to interact with people from different backgrounds.

The implementation of multicultural education in ECD can be carried out through various methods, such as project-based learning and role-playing. In a study conducted by (Junanto & Fajrin, 2020). It was found that children who engage in role-playing and reflect on different cultures can better understand and appreciate differences. This illustrates that employing a practical method in multicultural education, concerning children's social and emotional development, is very important. As can be seen from the results, children who receive multicultural education at an early age tend to perform better socially. Nur et al (2022) cite a finding where 85% of teachers in early childhood education regard multicultural education as a tool that assists children to understand and appreciate the differences among them. Therefore, multicultural education is not only advantageous to children, but to the society at large as well. Furthermore, multicultural education in ECE can combat the development of stereotypes. When learners are taught about different cultures and traditions, they come to appreciate that differences are natural and should be valued. According to Ibrahim (2013), this complies with the fundamentals of multicultural education, which seek to reinforce equity and fairness in education.

Multicultural education is an educational approach that acknowledges and even values the cultural, ethnic, and social diversities within a given society to enable children to acquire the necessary attitudes and skills for adapting to a multi-diverse society (Ibrahim, 2013). In regard to early childhood education, there is a need to understand the concept of multicultural education, as children of this age are undergoing a crucial phase of psychosocial identity and sociodevelopment.

Integrating multicultural education within the curriculum requires teaching learners about the various cultures and practices that exist in the world. This may be achieved using different methods, including telling stories, doing artwork, and playing games depicting cultural diversity (Nur et al., 2022). Educators who integrate folklore from different cultures in their teaching can improve children's understanding of cultural diversity.

The results of observations on the implementation of multicultural education at Charlita Kindergarten, Pacet District, began with the use of various media from IT-based, storybooks, traditional games, role playing, language recognition, art (songs and dances of various regions), visits, introduction to regional clothing, cooking classes, market day and the highlight of the activity was an Indonesian cultural festival. The learning process has supported the theory of multicultural education at the early childhood level, and the presentation is tailored to the development stage of ECE children, which is fun through various choices of learning methods. However, it is important to remember that the learning methods used must be adapted to the characteristics and needs of the children. Educators at Charlita Kindergarten, Pacet District, have considered various factors, such as the children's age, cultural background, and learning style, in designing an inclusive learning experience. This is in line with the principles of multicultural education, which emphasize the importance of adaptability and flexibility in teaching (Bank, n.d).

Multicultural education also contributes to the development of attitudes of tolerance and empathy among children. Education that teaches multicultural values can help children understand the perspectives of others and appreciate differences (Kasmianti, 2021). This is very important in preventing future conflicts and discrimination, as well as building a harmonious society.

B. The Role of Educators in the Implementation of Multicultural Education

Teachers carry tremendous responsibility in the integration of multicultural education in ECE. They are not mere instructors; they serve a deeper purpose as guides in assisting children in understanding and appreciating the diversity of culture (Supriatin & Nasution, 2017). Trained and well-versed culturally educated teachers have the ability to scaffold inclusivity, in an unbiased manner, within the educational setting for children's social care.

One of the approaches is about making the class feel warm and open to embrace all forms of differences. The first step is familiarizing the students with the cultures in the classes and finding a way to bring them into the lessons. For instance, the teacher may ask children to explain some of the things they consider important in their cultures so that they begin to learn how to respect and understand each other. Incorporation of multicultural themes in the existing curriculum enables effective change. Fadlillah (2017) illustrates that when faced with the challenge of learning variations and themes, the approach used should focus on using day-to-day activities, using rote learning because it is more interesting and relevant. Such as teaching children in art classes to make artifacts from different cultures.

Moreover, Fadlillah (2017) highlights the importance that children pay attention to cultural differences through storybooks, songs, and games that celebrate diversity, which fosters cultural appreciation. Therefore, educators have to be thoughtful in their selection of teaching materials, balancing interest and educational content, in order to facilitate the fun learning of multicultural values.

Nur et al. (2022) argue that parents and community members must also be integrated into the broader framework of multicultural education. Actively engaging parents in the educational process creates a sense of ownership and helps in nurturing multicultural appreciation within the household. As documented by Nur et al. (2022), the collaboration of educators and parents enhances the effectiveness of multicultural education as parents help to integrate these values in the family context.

The implementation of multicultural education still faces numerous hurdles. Along with a lack of parental or community support and resources, these are some of the challenges educators are likely to face. Educators with a solid educational background in multicultural education are more likely to face these challenges, according to Selian & Khodijah (2022).

As a result, multicultural education needs focus, as do educators, therefore, educators need professional training and ongoing support so they can implement multilayered approaches in multicultural education. Apart from having knowledge, teachers who have adequate training are more confident in teaching multicultural values and inclusiveness to children, which enables them to create inclusive classrooms. This

helps improve the socio-cultural and personality development of children who are nurtured in multicultural societies.

C. Learning Methods in Multicultural Education

The approaches to teaching in multicultural education greatly impact how children are taught multicultural values. One project-based learning is known to be effective since it encourages children to actively take part in activities that reflect cultural diversity. As highlighted by Nafi (n.d), project-based learning enables children to partake in activities as a group, thus deepening their understanding and appreciation of the cultural differences around them. Alongside early childhood education, teaching multicultural values using role-play methods can also be effective. This allows children to imaginatively inhabit various cultural roles and also enables them to interact with their peers from diverse cultures. Deiniatur (n.d.) notes that role-playing can improve children's empathy and understanding of other people's perspectives, which is an important component of multicultural education.

The use of technology in learning can also support the implementation of multicultural education. Educators can leverage virtual media to introduce children to different cultures through videos, interactive stories, and educational apps. In this way, children can learn about cultural diversity more interestingly and dynamically. According to research by the use of technology in multicultural learning can increase children's interest and motivation to learn. Based on the findings in the field, educators at Charlita Kindergarten, Pacet District, used a project-based learning approach regarding multicultural education, which was carried out in several stages. Starting from exploring various cultures in Indonesia, plus several neighbouring countries using IT-based media, then communicating with friends to get to know other cultures, to the process of preparing the peak point of the activity, namely (Nur et al., 2022) *the Nusantara Cultural Festival*. Educators facilitate this activity in collaboration with parents so that they can strengthen the values of diversity. In the final stage, children present products produced based on their culture creatively.

Thus, the selection of the right learning method is essential to achieving the goals of multicultural education in ECD. Educators need to continue to develop their skills and knowledge of the different learning methods that can be used to teach multicultural values, so that children can grow up to be individuals who value diversity and have a tolerance for differences.

D. Evaluation and Assessment in Multicultural Education

In multicultural education, evaluation and assessment are elements that an educator must consider deeply. In assessment, it is important to not only evaluate the academic achievement of a child, but also appreciate the development of multicultural attitudes and values as benchmarks. In the words of Junanto & Fajrin (2020), assessment in multicultural education necessitates the inclusion of the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

One of the evaluation techniques that can be used is observation. For instance, educators can be able watch children to on how they relate to each other during learning sessions on cultural differences. This will enable the educator to assess the extent to which

the children interacting with differences appreciate differences and show tolerance toward their colleagues. The information gained from observation is useful in understanding how children support one another in learning and the reality of group work.

Besides, portfolios may also be instrumental in evaluating students' achievements in multicultural education. Portfolios may include students' works, like drawings, writings, and projects that give evidence of their understanding of cultural diversity. With this evaluation procedure, educators can assess the child's development and give feedback that will guide the child toward achieving set goals. As stated by Kasmianti (2021), portfolios are templates that not only help teachers assess children's achievement, but they also promote parental participation in a child's learning.

Yet, social education specialists require more critical thinking when developing specific objectives and reliable evaluation instruments. Evaluations should be implemented considering the student's ethnicity without giving preference to certain criteria that may bring discrimination. This corresponds with the fundamentals of multicultural education that stress equity and fairness in schooling (Bank, n.d.).

Consequently, evaluation and assessment within multicultural education need to embrace holistic flexibility. There is a need for educators to advance their knowledge and develop an appropriate multicultural education framework that aids in the optimal development of children.

E. Challenges and Solutions in the Implementation of Multicultural Education

The integration of multicultural approaches into early childhood is always linked to certain obstacles. One of the main barriers is the lack of knowledge and endorsement from the parents and society. It is common for most parents to have a wrong perception about education, and multicultural education may not make any meaningful impression on their children. The construction of supportive environments for children's learning experiences through active engagement with parents enables the realization of environmental goals in multicultural education (Supriatin & Nasution, 2017).

In addition, there is a lack of training resources for educators. Most early childhood centers suffer from a lack of learning materials, books, or aids that celebrate cultural diversity. A study conducted showed that educators who perceived themselves as having limited resources were less likely to succeed in implementing multicultural education (Selian & Khodijah, 2022). To combat these issues, educational institutions should develop collaborations with parents and the community. Educators can organize information workshops or sessions that aim to demonstrate multicultural education and the involved parenting roles within the child's learning environment.

Moreover, educators also require making systematic improvements to their self-development plan, which is why these professionals require active training in multicultural education, assessment, and teaching strategies. According to Fadlillah (2017), the upbringing of children, which is managed by professionally qualified educators, greatly influences the levels of standards the children will be exposed to in their schooling, and the basic education that is provided to young learners stands to greatly benefit their future aspirations.

In Charlita Kindergarten in Pacet District, educators have already incorporated parent and community engagement to embrace the multicultural educational paradigm, which has proven successful. Moreover, the institution has showcased strong support

towards trainers implementing initiatives whereby parents are included in the learning community as students, which supports the theory.

On the positive side, though, there are effective methods to support professionals to improve their competencies in assessment and teaching, which offer them confidence in implementing multicultural education. With the addition of informed professionals guiding these trainers, multicultural education approaches stand to result in positive outcomes in the educational quality that the children will receive.

Ultimately, the evaluation and assessment of multicultural education remains an enigma. Too many educators lack the appropriate tools and methods to assess the implementation of multicultural education in their classrooms. This necessitates additional investigation aimed at creating evaluation instruments that adequately assess the effects of multicultural education on a child's development.

F. Recommendations to Improve the Implementation of Multicultural Education

Multicultural approaches to early childhood education can be enhanced through a variety of strategies. To begin with, longitudinal studies or workshop training should be offered by educational institutions to address the practical teaching of multicultural education to educators. Educators are likely to apply multiculturalism in pedagogy if they understand it. In addition, educators need to be provided with teaching materials that are representative of cultural diversity within society. There is a need to create teaching materials that are diverse and inclusive. As an example, songs and stories from many cultures should be integrated into the curriculum so that children can learn from richer materials. Fadlillah (2017).

For children, the prosperity of ECE consists of attending educational activities. Thus, ECE has to increase cooperation with the local community. Community people should be invited to tell their traditions and teach the children. Not only does this foster positive multiculturalism in education, but it also strengthens the relationship and support among schools and multicultural education. Equally, a tendency to involve parents in the educational process is to be appreciated. Slides and other visual materials can help explain multiculturalism to parents. Nur et al According to a study done in 2022, the successful integration of multicultural education in early childhood education highly hinges on support from parents.

CONCLUSION

Multicultural education at Charlita Kindergarten, Pacet sub-district uses a project-based approach by using various media to understand diversity's value to improve social-emotional, communication, empathy, mutual respect, and positive character. Educators have facilitated the multicultural learning process through cultural introduction (house, traditional clothing), art, language introduction, special foods, visits, traditional games, and developing teaching materials according to the child's developmental stage. The establishment of continuous cooperation with parents who help at every stage of the activity so that the goals of the activity can be achieved. The evaluation and reflection stage has been carried out through observation, activity portfolios, photos, or documentation that are compiled and implemented in the peak activity, namely the Nusantara Cultural Festival, where children present the products they produced with

friends, wearing traditional clothes, so that they can tell the learning experience they experienced.

The learning strategies and methods carried out by educators at Charlita Kindergarten, Pacet District, have been running following the theoretical guidance, namely multicultural education at the AUD level, which is adjusted to the needs of children's development and is carried out in an interesting, creative, and in-depth manner in daily life.

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