

Multicultural Education for Young Children-beginning from Children's Picture Books

Ya-Huei, Hsu

*Department of Education, National Chiayi University, Chiayi City, Taiwan
E-mail: yahuei2011@gmail.com*

Abstract

Research has identified young children rapidly develop understanding of gender, ethnicity and disability. Multicultural education should begin in early childhood education rather than in elementary education. Moreover, the teaching of cultural diversity in childhood education helps children develop their identity as well as increase their cultural knowledge and understanding. The purpose of this research is to teach young children (age 5-6) multicultural education by using children's picture books, and identify the improvement of the children in their understanding of cultural diversity. The results indicate children show their sense of equity and justice through the introduction of multicultural picture books, and they are in the stage of developing their awareness of equity and inequity. Due to the authenticity of the stories, the children requested extension of the curriculum. The selection method of multicultural picture books is a key factor in successfully introducing multicultural education to young children. Therefore, it is suggested research should be continued into the use of picture books in children's development for learning further related topics of multicultural education.

Keyword: Multicultural education, children, picture book.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Women from the areas in Southern Asia and China had been proved to be the new immigrants in Taiwan through marital condition, so-called foreign brides, which became the universal phenomenon with each passing day. According to the latest Paper Code: 160-IJEPA

demographic data from the Ministry of Interior indicates that foreign spouses from both Southern Asia and Mainland China had reached to almost 48.3 thousand, which generates more and more children of these new inhabitants became one of the educational party in our country. Consequently, the multicultural education increasingly possesses important roles as the children of new inhabitants has brought different languages (e.g., Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines etc.) and cultures into our educational environment.

In addition, the children of new inhabitants had brought different cultures into our society, with important issues of 21 century, yet. In other words, the children in this century inevitably have to face the world that is more diverse and broad as well as to be taught to recognize, respect and appreciate different cultures. In addition, as being the educators of these children of new inhabitants, teachers have to cultivate children's capabilities of awareness and esteem for multiculturalism to broad their sighs of different cultures. Accordingly, the study aimed to subsume the elements of multiculturalism as the content of courses in kindergarten by using picture books to make a thorough inquiry the progress and effectiveness of multicultural education.

1.2 Statement of Purpose

Based on the background mentioned above, the main reason for establishing this current study's research setting in kindergarten and adopting picture books was to probe the results of such teaching strategies to enhance children's awareness of multiculturalism. Moreover, this study provides the references to teachers those who execute multicultural education with popularizing the conception of multiculturalism by picture books.

2. Review of the Literature

2.1 Significances of Multicultural Education

Culture used to be associated with our faith values, viewpoints of world, interaction with the community and the relationships with others. In generalized, culture comprises languages, foods, festivals, customs, music etc., and contrarily defined it as including the experience of early nature of children, the emphasis on education, the stereotypes of marriage, the influence of family and the ways of communication and problem-solving. However, we used to manifest our understanding of multiculturalism as regarding it as an appreciation of the exotic expression or as a tolerance of cultural differences while living in the environment with pluralistic culture. Nevertheless, the multiculturalism should be mainly explored on the conceptions of race, language, social class, gender, physical and mental disorders and sexual orientation.

Multicultural education has been seen as an idea, concept, philosophical views as well as a process of educational reform, which generally lies in the transformation of social inequalities through education and not only to appease minority groups, but to nation as a whole (Banks, 1993). It, yet, illustrates that the goal of multicultural education aims to create a better place of democratic society. Further, the importance of multicultural education can be seen from three different aspects of population, economy and technology. First of all, foreign marriage complicates and diversifies the

background of people which shown in the demographic trends. Secondly, the global village was formed due to the impact of global economy which shown in the economic trends. Third, the technology had been advanced by leaps and bounds that leads the distances between not only people, but also nations became much closer than before which shown in the micro trend. Yet, each individual cherishes and shares cultural resource which allows them to reflect their commonality to eliminate prejudice and discrimination in order to promote harmony between different groups.

2.2 View of Multiculturalism and Picture Books

Children were considered to be non-readers before they entered school and formal reading instruction (Searfoss, Readence, & Mallette, 2001). The reading behavior of young children before they entered school, where real reading was though to begin, had received inadequate attention. Accordingly, picture books had been believed as getting ready to read, or reading readiness, had its roots in the experiences of children to learn different culture. Moreover, young children used to be taught to learn ways of interacting with different people and methods to conflict solving through picture books (Steiner, 2001). Also, some researchers (e.g., Towell and others, 1997) had indicated that good picture books help children withstand the delimitation of races as well as obtain chances to affirm their identity. Most importantly, good picture books with multiculturalism issues also provide models for children on gender criteria (Narahara, 1998). Accordingly, in reviewing the development multicultural education in childhood literacy, it became clear that many different types of picture books can effectively stimulate children's learning and acceptance of multicultural concepts as it not only lessens the influence of failure of text books, but also enhance the development of young children's literacy (Mendoza & Reese, 2001). Besides, the literacy-enriched environment in children's picture books results in increased amounts of literacy activities during reading and writing. The effect of children's picture books appears to be enhanced when teachers use appropriate forms of scaffolding to encourage children to integrate literacy props into their learning activities of multicultural education. Moreover, the intervention through picture books can facilitate children's literacy development and awareness of multiculturalism and reveal different ways teachers can interact with young children during the activities.

3. Methodology

When considering the participants for this study, it was determined that specific information could be received from 15 children aged from five to six of the top class in a kindergarten with adopting non-participant observation. The researcher made observations and recorded conversations while teacher of the class carried concept of multiculturalism out through picture books. All the data collected were analyzed at the end.

Besides, the activities mainly discussed topics related to the issues of multicultural ethnicity through picture books for a period of four weeks, and two times per week.

4. Results

The results of this study are reported according to concept of multicultural education and young children's picture books. First of all, it found that the children learned that there are variety of people around world, however, they did consider that people with different cultural background still can get along with each other. In other words, young children at this development phrase do not demarcate themselves from diverse groups. Besides, the narration of multiculturalism of young children's picture books and the authenticity of illustrations and contents have great influence of children's cognition and comprehension. In another word, high authenticity of each picture book not only excites children' responses to picture book, but also stimulates them to express their own feelings through ripe language.

5. Conclusion

Supporting diverse culture learning through children's picture books requires teachers to possess an understanding of children's literacy development, which refers to the importance of print-rich environments in learning to read, recognition of the role of picture books in literacy learning, and the crucial importance of reading to young children. No doubt picture books offers children opportunities to practice what they already know about different cultures and refine social and cognitive of different groups since, apparently, a number of characteristics of picture books provide special motivation and opportunities for young children's comprehension of multiculturalism. When the relationships between picture books and multicultural education are recapitulated, based on research studies, attention should be paid to teacher's roles in literacy-aimed activities to make a meaningful connection. As teachers make suggestions, ask open-ended questions, and use elaborated language, young children may stay on task, and solve more problems related to different culture. In sum, young children will prepare for success of multicultural education while being involved in picture books contain diverse cultural issues.

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