Tolerance of Early Childhood Children in Multicultural Group in Yala Province, Thailand: A Development of Literature-Based Teaching Model

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Abstract

To promote the tolerance to early childhood children, the development of an appropriate model of teaching was essential. Therefore, the integration of participatory action research and quantitative research were implemented to discover the quality of teaching models. This research aimed to develop types of teaching to help promote the children’s tolerance. Literature becomes the major basement for the early childhood children in multicultural group in Yala Province Thailand. According to this study, there were 4 steps of developments which were teaching model preparation, teaching model examination via trial and teaching model improvement. The developed teaching model comprised of principles, goals, contents and an assessment. The research covers 2 types of schools. Firstly, the multicultural students of Muslim-Thai, Buddhist-Thai and Chinese-Thai. Secondly, monocular students of Muslim-Thai. There were samples of 127 early childhood children from five schools. The data was analyzed according to characteristic of data by content analysis and qualitative analysis. Meanwhile, the quantitative analysis was used to find out means and standard deviation. The means comparison by t-test was also employed. Thus the literature was appropriate to be employed as the teaching model to help promote tolerance among these children.

1. Introduction

The multicultural early childhood children in Yala province, Thailand come from three main groups: Buddhist-Thai, Chinese-Thai and Muslim-Thai. Each of them goes to school with the background knowledge of history; social attitudes and beliefs which had been implanted by their own groups. When the teaching in a classroom does not put an emphasis on acceptance and value awareness, the conflict of living together occurs. Because of the lack of tolerance between different ethnic groups, human rights are abused leading to the conflict and violence. There are conflicts and violence in every society. The cultural conflict does not appear in the different ethnic groups. People from the same nation also have different dimension of culture. The conflicts are due to differences in age; gender; group; area; ethnic and nation. This incident reflects the violence resulting to the necessity of implanting the concept of peace in the children who have grown in the multicultural society in Yala province to live happily and harmoniously. Therefore, the design of learning how to live harmoniously should be emphasized in children from childhood. Learning management for them should focus on their happiness and the literature can be used for this purpose. Pre-reading and reading childhood enjoy literature. Reading good literature helps them develop and implant good attitudes in their mind. Moreover, reading literature is a source of happiness. However, there is no learning model for enhancing social happiness especially tolerance for early childhood children. It is expected, then, that literature could be used for learning how to live happily. This leads to the development of a teaching model with the objective of enhancing tolerance using literature as a base for early childhood children in a multicultural group in Yala province. The advantage is getting the proper teaching model to enhance tolerance of early childhood children in multicultural group in Yala province as tolerance is one part of social happiness leading to a peaceful society.

2. Literature Review

To live in harmony and happily is one part of learning. According to peace studies, peace is not only developing the peace between persons or the relationship between humans and the environment but also enlightening a human being’s morality. According to this concept, children’s minds; souls and attitudes towards society will be developed properly. This development leads to peace. Nithi Ealsriwong defined the word peace as the prohibition of violence in 3
senses: violence against other people; violence against one’s self and violence against the environment [2]. A deep sense of this concept should be implanted in them from early childhood. It should start with acceptance and realization of one’s self esteem and others [3]. Also, the tolerance for living together should be enhanced. As implanting tolerance in adulthood is difficult to achieve so it is easier to implant this concept during early childhood [4]. Tolerance is an important part of social happiness. The study of happiness does not cover only physical health of children but it includes the new subject of life subjects which is necessary to study for their own happiness and as a member of society. So, it is necessary to introduce an educational innovation to young children to enhance their social happiness by being tolerance. This will help children to gain the knowledge of life skills leading them to understand peace.

Nowadays, learning management leading to a peaceful society is the educational issue in which Thailand and other nations worldwide have been interested. However, the question is how to manage it and at which point should we start first.

The important key leading human beings to live peacefully is tolerance toward different ways of life and belief. Tolerance will be exhibited when people encounter the situation where they cannot compromise. Tolerance is considered morality when it is timeless. In other words, it lasts for good [5].

According to multicultural education, tolerance means the ability to live in harmony with other people. The meaning of “tolerance” shows that if one wants to develop his/her tolerance to reach a certain morality level, he/she has to be open-minded without any conditions and deeply sincere. Tolerance enhancement is the start of learning how to live in harmony commencing from the classroom led by teachers. Students will experience how to live in contact with others in the classroom where the real world is modeled for them in miniature. “The room itself is arranged and decorated to reinforce the message of peace. On one wall, a paper quilt of self-portraits displays each child’s version of what he or she can do as a peacemaker” [4]. Tolerance enhancement has to be implanted since they were young. It is the period when small kids begin to learn about their own story including their friends’ story e.g. physical appearance; names; important days; important places; important persons; favorite food; language they use; unique dressing; resulting in acceptance and appreciation of their own and friends’ values.

Moreover, their learning of changes -both happy and sad- is a good starting point to understand people’s lives and the world so that they can deal with the changes. Of course, conflicts in the classroom inevitably happen. Children encounter unfairness and feel pain when they are bullied or teased about their names and appearance. So teachers and students must learn how to go through this problem. The sample case is Lourders Ballesteros-Barron [4]. She held “The Peace Table” where the children could relax and talk with those who made them sad or angry under the following restrictions: identify the problem; focus on the problem; attack the problem not the person; listen with an open mind; treat a person’s feeling with responsibility for your actions.

According to the aforementioned; rules and disciplines in the classroom are required under the supervision of teachers to create the friendly atmosphere. Finally children have to learn to become self-disciplined in order to be accepted in the society and realize their own values leading to the start of friendship and peace [4].

The integration of learning management for peace and early childhood classroom should be initiated from social development theory and morality including the use of literature to enhance the early childhood children’s tolerance. This was in accordance with Ericson’s social development theory as mentioned by Finazzo and Russell. The concept was about using literature base for enhancing social development. The three stages were the periods of early childhood children. The first stage was trust versus mistrust from a baby to one year and six months old. Parents had to take care of their own kids for developing trust. They would feel someone was protecting them when they were discouraged or frightened. The proper literature, for example, a girl had to make a decision between stealing bread for her sick mother or being hungry to be an honest citizen. Creativity could be obviously found when children are 3-6 years old. For Erikson, this third stage was initiative versus guilt. They learnt to understand and use reasons. They understood the conflict. When they made a wrong decision, they would feel guilty. The proper literature for them was about the pride when making a decision of their own despite being wrong.
Apart from Ericson’s theory, Kohlberg’s theory also talked about the development of human’s morality. He divided the development level of reason and decision into 3 levels. Each stage had 2 periods which were relevant to each other.

The early childhood was in the first stage that was pre moral level. The first stage was punishment and obedience orientation. The children would avoid being punished. The proper literature was a moral literature where a reader had to make his own/her own decision. The second stage was native instrumental hedonism. The children would search for enjoyment. The proper literature was about character whose behavior was not acceptable such as selfishness resulting in a bad consequence.

According to Erikson and Kohlberg’s theory of emotional and moral development, it was seen that literature could enlighten readers. Aside from the development of language, intelligence, emotion, society and morality, it also developed beauty appreciation which was important for human’s lives. That was because children all grow up in different societies resulting in different experiences. They gradually developed the sense of cultural appreciation which was around them. Their intelligence, initiative and imagination had a relation with schema and scaffold. So, the proper literature for enhancing appreciation was songs, poems, fables, tales from different ethnic groups from children’s culture or from others. Painting and art work which appeared in literature also helped to enhance children’s development [6, 7]. All the theories of applying literature exhibited the importance and necessity of using literature for developing children through the integration of literature and theory of development with the application of literature which the teachers and the guardians could employ for developing students both in school and at home.

Finazzo Russell, an academic, gave the meaning of literature as the styles of writing both prose and poem such as book, poetry, manuscript, newsletter, publishing, lecture, and speech and computer program. These reflect the period of the time, culture and people which are special and beautiful. Literature covers tales, poetry and performance. It could be reality and imagination, fact and magic. The style could be short or long consisting of words or no words. The illustration may or may not appear in the literature [6, 7].

Literature reflects human experience. It is conveyed through different form of language. It also includes daily life language which is composed of written printed materials such as newspaper, cooking book, religious book, pet handbook, equipment and internet information. Children could indirectly experience the aforementioned material through parents, teachers or adults who used these materials. Literature also includes songs, essays which are broadcast through radio, T.V. programs, light signal and traffic signs which convey language and symbol but not necessarily written [1]. The use of literature as a base of learning is found in research abroad. Children can learn language through what they hear and read from their community [8]. There is also a report of the teaching model to enhance children’s language development through the use of literature for early childhood children in the three southernmost provinces. This exhibits the proper use of literature for early childhood children in the three southernmost provinces [1].

3. Analysis of Finding

The results of the study of “Literature-Based Teaching Model for Enhancing Tolerance of Early Childhood Children in Multicultural Group in Yala Province Thailand” are as follows:

This research resulted in the development of a teaching model to enhance tolerance through the use of literature base for the early childhood children in the multicultural group in Yala. It comprised the concept of a teaching model which focused on the acceptance and value awareness of their culture and other cultures for living happily together, how to manage language experience from the meaningful things for children and how to help them accept the value of various literatures on children’s way of life.

The above concept led to the main principle of the teaching model: respecting to individual values and differences. Local and national literature was used for learning and experiencing. It was widely opened and flexible for learners so that they were successful in studying. They also enjoyed themselves and helped each other while studying. This put an emphasis on the guardians and the community to take part in the learning management and enhance their living together in order to accept and be aware of each other’s value by learning how to control their tolerance. The objective of the teaching model was to enhance tolerance through literature base of early childhood children in the multicultural group in Yala.

According to the concepts; principles and objectives of the teaching model, it led to the development of a process of teaching model. The contents were as follows:
3.1 Contents of teaching model

3.1.1 Process of learning for enhancing tolerance consisted of 3 stages as follows:

i. Before using the literature, activities were as follows: define the topic; plan a mind map and assign activities.

ii. Using literature, activities were as follows: choose literature; the teacher reads a literature for them; each reads his / her own books and enjoy themselves with friends and the final step is response to literature. All activities must be supported from teachers and parents.

iii. Assessment of literature, activities were as follows: give feedback after using literature and hold an exhibition reflecting the knowledge gained after reading literature.

3.1.2 The topic and concept of managing learning for enhancing tolerance of early childhood children.

The main concepts consisted of 3 parts as follows: the first concept was about understanding and realizing the values of their own nations and other people’s nations. The topic for learning was “We are important”. The sub topics were “My identity”, “My family” and “Good people I admire”; the second concept was about understanding and accepting the changes. The topic for learning was “Grief”. The sub topic was “When our beloved is far away”. It was about learning the loss, the evacuation and the death. The third concept was about the realization of friendship. The topic for learning was “Social classroom”. The sub topics were “Rules and regulations”, “Our best friend” and “Our happy classroom”. All knowledge management was under the main topic of “Our story”. This concept provides a chance for all children to learn about themselves, their friends and other people so that they can accept one another and appreciate each other’s values through various kinds of literature e.g. books for children, local literature, poetry, magic story, biography and history, reference, computer program and daily literature. For the early childhood students, using literature in the classroom is one way to intensify their language development, prepare them for reading and implant the reading habit into them so that they can communicate and express their feelings. Children love writing for communication.

i. “We are important” Concept: Each student has his/her own identity. To understand the questions who are we or who are we not is difficult. It should be implanted in their early childhood period as it is the proper time to guide children to understand their own physical appearance and culture including other people’s such as their name, their appearance, language, religion, dressing and food. The basic belief is that every family is ready to provide love and health promotion for their children including enhancing their children’s every development. Besides, the early childhood children learn to appreciate and imitate the important and distinguished persons around them such as superheroes in their imagination, movie stars, singers and athletes/sport players. The story of distinguished persons or superheroes influence them to eagerly be a winner in real life. So, it is necessary to encourage them to become a good and clever person to take care of themselves and help other people in real life starting from their early childhood period.

ii. “Grief” Concept: The grief of children can result from several causes especially when they are deprived of their beloved things, pets or meaningful persons in their life. Their sorrow can come from evacuation, loss or death. They can experience sadness from a book, a play, television drama, tales, stories or even the changes in their lives or their friends lives. Their sadness is beyond the control of parents and teachers. However, they can prepare themselves to cope with this crisis by using appropriate literature. When it happens, parents and teachers can help their children to survive this difficult time and face the grief and sadness so that they could understand and accept the reality. Therefore, this literature is necessary for them on one hand as the vaccine to prepare themselves for the sorrow they are going to face. On the other hand, it can be a pill for curing their mourning.

iii. “Social classroom” Concept: A classroom is a community and miniature world for children where they could learn their roles, friendship and how to live with others. Children need friends and choose their friends from those who could attract them. In their mind, friends are persons who treat them well and exchange toys, secret, promise to one another. They learn how to maintain the relationship as long as possible. Moreover, they have to learn rules to live together in a social classroom. It is a place where they learn how to build a happy society. They help one another build the warm, safe and convenient classroom.

It is a psychological reaction. So it is an important place which connects home and school together under the atmosphere of warmth, happiness and safety.

3.2. Process of teaching model

The 3 processes used were as follows:

i. Teaching model preparation consisted of creating an atmosphere in class and preparing various kinds of literature in accordance with literature criteria.

ii. Teaching model approach consisted of enhancing understanding and value awareness of one’s self and other, enhancing understanding and appreciation of friendship.

iii. Literature appreciation in accordance with each child’s interest consisted of encouraging teachers and parents to learn and find out answers from literature.
Teacher and parents choose literature for students in accordance with literature criteria.

3.3 Grouping

The students were classified into 3 groups: a big group for doing activities together such as literature discussion; a small group for reading literature together and individual learning for reading independently, reviewing and reflecting through expressing ideas and creating the work in various forms. Giving the feedback after reading the literature was encouraged.

3.4. Learning atmosphere

The learning atmosphere emphasized on the realization, acceptance and value awareness of social culture of learners and enhanced the value awareness of all types of books.

3.5. Environment

For the management of learning environment and learning materials, the materials for decorating the room must be the ones enhancing the love and value awareness of reading all types of books. Also, they exhibited the diversity of culture. The literature media must be both local and international literature.

3.6. Period of learning

The period of learning could be flexible in accordance with the students’ interest. The learning process took place in the afternoon after a rest break. It was divided into 2 stages: the big group activity for 20 minutes and the small group and individual activity for 60 minutes. The period of time was flexible.

3.7 Assessment

The assessment of tolerance in children according to the plural cultural study was based on authentic assessment through using portfolios. Each student’s data was collected according to indicator and portfolio system. The summary of individual students and the whole class was analyzed.

The quantitative analysis was used to find out means and standard deviation. The means comparison by t-test was also employed. According to the exposure competency scores of children’s tolerance, the satisfaction and suggestions of the parents and administrators, it was found out that the developed teaching model is able to promote tolerance among the early childhood children.

4. Contribution to knowledge about multicultural societies

From the research, it was found that the discipline of the teaching model was based on the enhancement of staying happily by understanding each other and value awareness which was in accordance with a multicultural study. It was an important teaching method for cross-culture learning which was a process that each student would learn from his/her own culture and others. The children would have a chance to study conversation and communication to establish understanding among people. They could then live together and join the democratic activities which required their decision [9]. Moreover, cultural integration was the acceptance of cultural diversity. This did not mean to be preoccupied with other cultures but to respect them. Sometimes it was called cultural pluralism. This teaching model was not meant to put an influence over other cultures. On the contrary, it focused on the value awareness and acceptance of both one’s own culture and others. The teaching model assigned the early childhood children to learn tolerance for studying together through studying the topic “Our story”. The sub topics were composed of “We are important” “Grief” and “Classroom society”. This exhibited that implanting the concept of staying together started from acceptance and self awareness and having courage to encounter changes. The classroom could be a starting point to establish a small peaceful society. From the two types of schools: the bicultural and the monocultural schools, students from both schools could learn how to stay together.

This research was successful in applying various kinds of literature to enhance tolerance of early childhood children. It was in accordance with the result of the research in that literature was valuable to children’s learning. They acquired the knowledge and appreciation of literature from their family and society which were different especially the areas of the three southernmost provinces where there are diversities of culture [1]. It was obvious therefore that the value of literature depended on how the teachers and parents applied it to their children. The value meant longer-lasting understanding of literature more than studying in the class. Besides assigning students to read or write simple stories slowly and think of new things while studying the literature, the children were required to imagine a better world [10]. So, that was the application of literature for managing children’s learning leading to living happily.
5. Conclusion

The teaching model to enhance early childhood children’s tolerance through the use of literature base in the multicultural group in Yala province, Thailand had a principle as follows: we had to respect the differences between individuals through the use of local and national literature for them. The course should be widely open and flexible to enable students to be successful. Students feel enjoyable in searching and studying with their friends. The parents and community take part in the learning organization resulting in the enhancement of studying together and value awareness from tolerance.

6. Future Work

The teaching model should be properly applied in accordance with each school’s interest because of different pluralism. To promote the teaching model to become well known, the teachers of early childhood children in Yala province and other two southernmost provinces of Thailand (Pattani and Narathiwat) should be trained under the concept of the teaching model and follow up. Also the parents should know about literature to enhance the tolerance of early childhood children. More importantly, those who apply the teaching model to their class must not be culturally biased. They should understand culture, language, mentality system, beliefs and values of each society. The application of the teaching model was then successful. The result of this research leads to the following research questions. The first one is the research for developing a series of literature media to enhance tolerance for early childhood children. The second one is the study on how to use the teaching model at the junction between the early childhood level and the primary level. This is because it is the way to implant the concept of staying happily together for the early childhood level and primary level children.

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8. References


