

Enriching Multicultural Awareness of Young Children Through Children's Literature and Art Activities

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The Asian Conference on Cultural Studies 2024
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

With the rise of globalization and the age of technology, society has become more diverse. Current literature recognizes awareness of diversity, particularly Multicultural Awareness, as an important asset for an individual to adjust, build relationships, and ultimately thrive in our globalized society. However, despite being identified as a learning competency in the K-12 curriculum of the Department of Education in the Philippines, there appears to be a significant need for more literature regarding implementing or integrating multicultural awareness in the education sector. With this in mind, this capstone project has produced a set of instructional modules to be facilitated by teachers, aiming to develop multicultural awareness among Kindergarten students through a familiar and exciting medium for young children: Children's Literature and Art Activities. This project consists of 10 modules covering children's literature and art activities that aim to instill multicultural awareness among Filipino children. In particular, the modules follow the framework and definition established by the Department of Education as they aim to introduce the different cultural dimensions to Kindergarten students. The children's literature and art activities included in this project would allow young Filipino children to explore and be immersed in different cultures from around the world.

Keywords: Multicultural Awareness, Children's Literature and Art Activities, Instructional Modules

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Introduction

Awareness of diversity has been an important asset in our modern society. Through this awareness, individuals can gain different learning opportunities, achieve personal growth, and enrich their perspectives. While previously impossible due to the limitations of technology and the physical boundaries between countries, diversity in today's world has become relevant to everyday life. Globalization paved the way for multiculturalism, which, in turn, helped establish the importance of taking part and taking advantage of diverse spaces. To navigate such spaces successfully, individuals must be competent in addressing new challenges in integrating with people from various cultures.

Multicultural awareness, which refers to an individual's ability to recognize the differences between their values and beliefs compared to others (Soekarman & Bariyyah, 2016, p. 16), is a term that has gained much attention in recent years because of globalization and diversity. In the 21st century, multicultural awareness and cross-cultural competence are necessary skills that help individuals grab global opportunities, participate in diverse spaces, and interact with various cultures (Klafehn, 2017). This implies that employers have come to expect individuals entering the workforce to be adept at identifying their similarities and differences in culture and perspective (Klafehn, 2017). As such, to prepare individuals for the new requirements of the 21st-century workforce, the education sector must adapt to help children grow and develop multicultural awareness.

From the Philippine context, developing multicultural awareness is a goal that needs more attention, given the global movement toward supporting and promoting diversity and multiculturalism. A recent study found that multicultural awareness in the Philippines needs to be improved in the classroom setting (Munalim, 2019). It was also found that practices that help trigger and enrich the development of multicultural awareness are limited to specific subjects, such as English (Munalim, 2019).

This insufficient approach of the education sector in helping Filipinos become ready for global integration is further heightened by the increasingly diverse society in which the population operates. Based on the 2019 Annual Report of the Bureau of Immigration, there are 148,387 registered foreign nationals living in the country – Chinese nationals topped this list with 56,015, followed by Indians with 26,533, Americans with 10,566, Taiwanese with 8,557, and South Koreans with 8,157 (Ramirez, 2019). In addition, it was also found that children tend to confuse local and foreign cultures because of the increasingly diverse media they are exposed to (National Council for Children's Television (NCCT), 2015, pp. 66-68). This confusion should be considered a sign that Filipino children may struggle as contributors to society due to their lack of multicultural awareness that could help them successfully integrate into both local and global environments.

Objectives of the Project

With this in mind, this capstone project aims to provide an opportunity to enrich multicultural awareness through art activities. It intends for young children to (1) be aware of social issues and differences in culture, (2) develop a positive cultural attitude, and (3) promote a collaborative relationship between different cultures.

Significance of the Project

The implementation of this project will be of great benefit to the following stakeholders:

- a. *School*. This capstone project will enable the school to promote an inclusive environment that showcases diversity. The modules in this project allow the school's administrative team to initiate the development and planning of a more multiculturally aware curriculum.
- b. *Students*. The project will help the students grow into members of society who are fully aware of their own culture, the value of other backgrounds, and the social injustices that result from mishandling these differences. This would help develop their character and enrich their multicultural awareness.
- c. *Teachers*. This capstone project will help enhance teachers' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and perspectives on different cultures. It would also help them with personal growth, character development, and striving for multicultural awareness and acceptance.
- d. *Education*. The modules of this project could provide a platform for the education sector to advocate multicultural awareness actively. This project could help foster innovative approaches to teaching multicultural awareness to young learners.

Conclusions

With the rise of globalization and the age of technology, society has become more diverse. The increased connectivity brought about the rise of the digital age and the movement of the labor sector; current literature has identified the necessity of becoming more culturally aware. The Department of Education here in our country has also identified this as a learning competency. Despite this, there is a significant lack of literature regarding implementing multiculturalism awareness in the education sector in the Philippines.

This capstone project aims to address these implications. In particular, it focuses on using art activities to enrich young learners' multicultural awareness through something they are interested in and familiar with. To achieve this goal, an instructional module on Multicultural Awareness with a 10-part lesson plan has been designed.

Following the Kindergarten Curriculum Framework of the Department of Education, the lesson plans developed were patterned to the Circular Themes. The modules were designed to follow a sequential manner, starting with self-awareness and slowly expanding the scope to family, school, community, Asia, and worldwide. Different kinds of art activities were employed in the module implementation. These art activities aim not only to enrich multicultural awareness but also to develop psychomotor and social skills. Students created different artworks in recognition of the difference of people in terms of cultural backgrounds. Each lesson ended by highlighting respect, kindness, and positive attitude toward people from different cultures.

For this project, modules were designed to focus on kindergarten students. It is limited in terms of the scope of implementation. However, multicultural awareness, like any concept under the socio-emotional development domain, would require a consistent review and enrichment throughout a student's education. Thus, it is recommended that future researchers explore the level of multicultural awareness among primary, intermediate, junior high, and senior high students. Furthermore, with the teacher's perspective and biases as critical factors

in multicultural education, it is also recommended that future researchers look into the possibility of creating a workshop or guide for teachers in teaching multicultural awareness.

This project concludes with one final message: start now. Multicultural Awareness is not often discussed in the classroom, yet our current society is on the brink of a cultural transformation. Social issues and injustices have often been reported, with different people calling out justice for the marginalized. It is important for us, particularly those in the education section, to start enriching multicultural awareness so that our students do not be left behind.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Miriam College and the Integrated School for Young Children for their extensive support in developing this Capstone Project. Their unwavering assistance has been invaluable. I especially thank Mrs. Carol Boenzli for her generous financial support, which made this project possible. Your contributions have been instrumental in bringing this vision to life, and I am profoundly grateful for your encouragement and belief in this endeavor.

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