Promoting Self-Esteem Among Culturally Diverse Kinder Children by Exploring the Background of their Names

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Abstract
Aim
This Names Project aimed to promote social interaction and positive self-identity, through sharing the background of names of culturally diverse children.

Methods
Parents were engaged to provide an account on the background of their child's name, including why they gave the child that particular name. They were encouraged to divulge details on what the name linguistically means and what it means to them in a personal sense. This included details on any relatives or historical characters that they considered when selecting the name for their child.

Their contribution was included in the curriculum, as a book shared with the children during the group time that is part of their daily routine. Each day, we explored the name of one child and shared his/her parent's account among all children.

Results
The parents of all 42 children in Kinder Room 9 submitted their contributions within weeks. Children were excited, and summoned each other to participate by drawing/writing their names on the entry their parents made. There were a lot of discussions and interaction among children regarding their names. Many children had non-English names, and some had asked to be called by these names, after having developed self-esteem through sharing the proud background of their name.

Conclusion
Sharing the background of a child's name is a positive experience that highlights cultural diversity and enhances self-esteem among children. This is evident by the level of participation and their pride to be called by their traditional non-English names.

Keywords: cultural diversity, names, self-esteem, participation, curriculum, children

Background

The success of the Names Book Project depended on engaging families and the participation of kinder children. The project aimed to:

* Highlight every child's right to be called by a name they like and value.
* Build every child's self-esteem by exploring and sharing the meaning of their name.
* Present cultural diversity, encourage children's self-identity and their sense of belonging to their ethnic and family background, while offering positive experiences that are a source of social interaction, exploring cultural diversity, and developing communication skills.
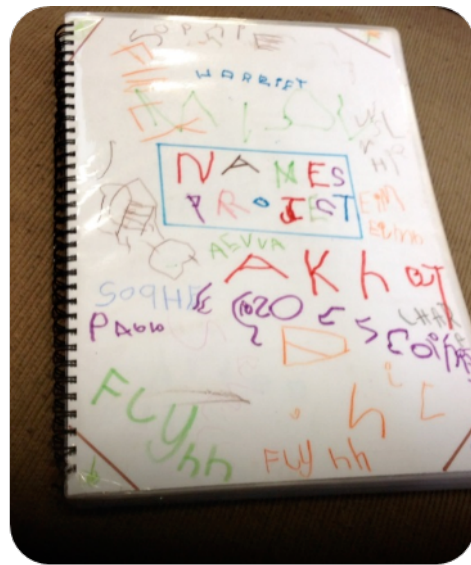
Methods

Parents were engaged to provide an account on the background of their child's name, including why they gave the child that particular name. They were encouraged to divulge details on what the name linguistically means and what it means to them in a personal sense. This included details on any relatives or historical characters that they considered when selecting the name for their child.

Parents' and children's contributions were included in the curriculum, as a book shared with the children during the group time that is part of their daily routine. Each day, we explored the name of one child and shared his/her parent's account among all children.

Results

Parents of all 42 children in the kinder room submitted their contributions within weeks. About 25 families made their contribution within the first 10 days.

Children were excited, and summoned each other to participate by drawing/writing their names on the entry their parents made.

There were a lot of discussions and interaction among children regarding their names. Many children had non-English names, and some had asked to be called by these names, after having developed self-esteem through sharing the proud background of their name.

Parents demonstrated a great level of satisfaction and joy with the project. Entries were collected and made into a book that included children's photographs, drawings and notes on their name.

"Thanks Mariana. We think your book is a great idea"
"what a great project!"
"Its a lovely idea and important to my family. Thank you!"
"Thanks for your email, this is really a good start of understanding self identity."
"Sounds like a great project! Here's some information re Seth…"

Discussion

This names project involved families, children and educators. It was a real success, and indeed a valuable addition to the curriculum. Its use during the group time was effective and appropriate. With the support of educators, components of the curriculum can reflect children's cultures and beliefs, making it more relevant to children who would then find it more interesting and engaging (Lauren & Denis, 2001). Furthermore, the project reflects Article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). However, it does not only highlight the right of the child to be called by a name, but also to be appreciated for that name and esteemed by peers.

Children's social skills need to be viewed not in isolation but within the context of the social and cultural world in which children are raised. As per the socio-cultural theory, educators need to understand the development of children in the context of their own communities.

Vygotsky saw the social environment as being involved in a child's learning (McDevitt, Ormrod, Cupit, Chandler & Aloa, 2013). The role of culture is so fundamental that educators need to ensure they are well educated on children's cultures and beliefs. This informs our awareness of children's social skills level, and thus enable us to implement different activities and resources suitable for every child's developmental needs (McDevitt *et al.*, 2013).

The project emphasized children's right to be called by the name they like. This, together with social interactions and being appreciated by peers, built children's self-esteem. This was further promoted by the friendships their established and the cultural diversity they experienced.

The Names Book further built strong relationships with families, and enhanced collaboration between kinder and home. Relationships and participation are essential to learning, as well as encouraging children of varying abilities to work together collaboratively through the sharing of ideas and skills. (Zakrzewski, 2014).
This book was an interesting open ended topic for children and parents. Children spent good times exploring the entries of everyone, sharing thoughts and laughs.
Each day, children kept asking for their name's turn during the group time. Parents were also impressed with the Names Book, and every day they would read the day's entry, which we followed on an alphabetic order.

Summary

The Names Book Project engaged children and made them happy and interested in others. It highlighted cultural diversity and promoted children's self -esteem, as their names were discussed and appreciated by peers, families and educators.

The Book generated much discussion and interactions, further developing children's social and communication skills, and promoted friendships and wellbeing.

Children participated in many tasks that fostered their skills and developed their literacy, through play-based curriculum and the inclusion of the Names Book in their daily curriculum.

References

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