

Improving Early Childhood Education Students' Knowledge About Culture As the Local Wisdom

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Abstract

Indonesia is a big country with many cultures; therefore, Indonesian children have to learn their local wisdom since their early years. Young children are in their golden years, so they have to be helped acquire all the knowledge they need. Thus, parents and teachers should be aware of the children's needs. This study was an effort to increase early childhood teachers to be aware of their own culture. Teachers have to develop some activities for kindergarten children to learn and embrace their own local wisdom such as learning the Indonesian traditional dresses and languages. The children and teachers were asked about what they experienced in learning the Indonesian culture. The results show that both the teachers and their students were not really aware of their local wisdom but after participating in the researchers' study, the early childhood education students and the teachers like the experiences.

Keywords; local wisdom, Indonesian culture, learning activities

Introduction

Indonesia is a country located in South East Asia. Indonesia has so many islands around 15,000 islands spreading from the east to the west. Indonesia has also a lot of population, more than 200 million people living in Indonesia even though 70% of them live in Java Island. Since there are 15.000 islands, Indonesia has many dialects and culture. Even though Indonesia has many people, islands, dialects and culture, Indonesia has its national motto, i.e. “*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*” –meaning, “unity in diversity (<http://indonesiad.com/all-about-indonesia-indonesia-fast-facts/>). However, nowadays, Indonesian culture is not really known or understood by Indonesian people, especially the young generation. Not many Indonesians care and try to learn about their own culture. Instead, foreigners are more interested in learning Indonesian culture than the Indonesian people itself (<http://health.liputan6.com/read/833096/ini-alasan-orang-asing-tertarik-budaya-indonesia> & <https://www.dictio.id/t/bagaimana-pandangan-orang-orang-terhadap-budaya-indonesia/1098>).

Not knowing their own culture makes the Indonesians lose their own identity, their own ethics and many good qualities that should be inherited from older or elderly people. Therefore, it is our duty as the Indonesian teachers or the educators to teach our students or children about Indonesian culture since learning the culture can also mean learning their local wisdom. In addition, there is still few teachers in this country who have vision and mission in maintaining the nation's artistic culture. It became one of the causes of Indonesia's young people are not so concerned about traditional culture (<http://www.republika.co.id/berita/koran/urbana/14/11/28/nfqds96-belajar-mencintai-budaya-sendiri-sejak-dini>).

These facts become the background of the study. In this study, the researcher tried to emphasize the kindergarten teachers to introduce, to teach and to familiarize their early students to know, to learn and to understand their own culture.

Literature review

The [Center for Advance Research on Language Acquisition](https://www.livescience.com/21478-what-is-culture-definition-of-culture.html) (in <https://www.livescience.com/21478-what-is-culture-definition-of-culture.html>) defines culture as the patterns of behaviors and interactions, cognitive constructs and understanding that used by a community such as culture include religion, food, clothes, language, marriage, music, religion, people way of life, manner, ethics, and the way people communicate.

To learn about Indonesian culture, we have to introduce and teach Indonesian children since their early years. This reason is based on a research by an expert on the development and behavior of an American boy named Brazelton. The researcher concluded that the experience of the children in their first months and years of life determines whether the children will be able to face the challenges in their life and whether they will have the passion to learn and succeed in their works. This shows that children in their 0-6 years are in an important level of human development and growth. Then, the desired character can be formed from their early years (<http://ibufoundation.or.id/index.php/2015/12/18/penerapan-nilai-budaya-untuk-anak-usia-dini/>).

Students in Indonesia rarely learn about their own culture while the western or foreign cultures, especially from the West, succeed in influencing Indonesian students. It is seen from private rooms to their privacy spaces that are seized with foreign culture. The foreign culture is finally able to replace the traditional culture that should be held by the students (<http://www.republika.co.id/berita/koran/urbana/14/11/28/nfqds96-belajar-mencintai-budaya-sendiri-sejak-dini>). If culture could be learned since students are in their early years, it is hoped that the successors of this nation are expected to fortify themselves to love and embrace their traditional arts and culture (<http://www.republika.co.id/berita/koran/urbana/14/11/28/nfqds96-belajar-mencintai-budaya-sendiri-sejak-dini>).

One way to apply the art of culture to the successors of the nation is to reproduce lessons on this subject at school since the Indonesian common curriculum lacks the value of traditional arts and culture. More consuming portion of theory than practice has not yielded maximum result (<http://www.republika.co.id/berita/koran/urbana/14/11/28/nfqds96-belajar-mencintai-budaya-sendiri-sejak-dini>).

Sunaryo and Laxman (2003 in Saputri, 2017) said that local wisdom is the local knowledge that is fused with a system of beliefs, norms and culture and expressed in tradition and myth embraced in a long time. The traditional values can make human life rich and complete by respecting, maintaining and preserving the natural environment. The characteristic of local wisdom is able to withstand foreign cultures, accommodate foreign cultures, control, and integrate elements of foreign culture into the native culture, develop the culture.

Early childhood education (ECE) is known as education for the first eight years in the life of children. Learning culture since the early years will help the young children understand more comprehensively about their own culture since the first eight years of a child is his or her golden

age. It means children can learn to understand the culture easily, happily and the knowledge can stay longer in their mind.

There are some important concerns about the importance to learn culture and the local wisdom for ECE. Children during this phase have a vital phase of life in terms of their intellectual, emotional and social development. Certainly, early childhood education is the key element that helps build a good foundation for child's educational success. Every child learns habit and form patterns that are not easily changed in later years. If parents and educators can develop productive early education patterns for the children in their age, those children will be on their way to achieve great educational success (<http://ezinearticles.com/?Importance-of-Early-Childhood-Education&id=2672450>).

In Indonesia, ECE is a field where people are involved in helping young children from 0 to 6 years old (Indonesian definition of ECE). ECE teachers should always improve their knowledge and skills since they will help those young children develop their cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills. To help early children know and learn about their own culture, the ECE teachers should understand that children are not born knowing many things, a lot of knowledge or even the difference between red and green, sweet and sour, rough and smooth. There is no way a young child can learn the difference between sweet and sour, rough and smooth, hot and cold without tasting, touching, or feeling something. Vygotsky suggested that children cannot fully realize their abilities without the help of adults. Vygotsky argued that there is a zone of proximate development that could be attained only with guidance and modeling by adults (Elkind, in <http://educationnext.org/much-too-early/>).

In conducting the research, the early students were introduced to some examples of cultures which were learned under some basic themes such as my country, house, food, clothes, or places.

Method

This study used qualitative approach. In applying the qualitative approach, the researcher decided to use the case study research method because the research was conducted in a certain time, in a certain program, and with a certain group of people. Rossman and Rallis (2011 in Chandrawati, 2015) explain that in conducting case studies, the researchers try to understand the larger phenomenon through close examination of a specific case and focus on the particular case. This qualitative was used since the researchers tried to know and to understand the respondents deeper. Moreover, the researchers also tried to help the kindergarten teachers and their early students learn about what culture and what local wisdom are.

This study was conducted at TK Ananda Pondok Cabe in September 2016. Since the researcher knew the kindergarten, the teachers were asked to help implement the study.

Research questions

1. Why should we teach and introduce ECE children about some Indonesian culture that can be understood as some local wisdom?

2. How can we teach and introduce ECE children about some Indonesian culture that can be understood as some local wisdom?

Results and discussion

1. ECE teachers should teach and introduce ECE children about Indonesian local wisdom, given that a lot of ECE children firstly learn about Indonesian culture in their classrooms under their teacher guidance. It is expected that the successors of this nation fortify themselves to revive traditional arts and culture

2. To teach and introduce ECE children about some Indonesian culture that can be understood as some local wisdom, the ECE teacher can do some activities such as making Indonesian traditional food, learning about Indonesian clothes or dresses, and learning about some Indonesian dialects.

Conclusion

From the study, the researcher can conclude that culture could be learned by early students by playing and learning about traditional food, traditional games, traditional clothes and traditional houses in Indonesia.

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