

# TEACHING SOCIAL ISSUES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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## Abstract

*In this paper aims to explain teaching social issues in early childhood education. Social issues necessarily become abstract learning for children, but the development of children learning from surrounding environment can support that the child can also learn something abstract. Especially in the context of Indonesia which is a multicultural country, so teaching social issues in children from an early age is expected to give early understanding of the diversity that often this diversity will lead to conflict in the future. In his paper recommends strategies in teaching social issues in early childhood that can be done in school.*

**Keywords:** education, early childhood, teaching, multicultural, social issues

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one country that has many backgrounds about cultural, ethnic, linguistic, economic and religious differences. Education is a strategic area to provide an understanding of the socio-cultural differences that exist between communities in order to live peacefully and coexist with differences (Saenz, Embrick, &Rodriguez, 2015). Because the difference with no good understanding will lead to conflict, injustice, racism, and even oppression. Besides easy access to information, people need to adapt to changes in social life (Bassiouni& Hackley, 2005; Turner, 2013).

Changes in social life that are so rapid at this time need adjustment for all parties. Early childhood positions that still grow and develop become strategic in learning social issues because they are part of their family, learners in their schools, as well as the community as a whole both citizens and citizens of the world (Fortin, 2009). Gradually the child will meet with various differences and in touch with the social issues closest and the world both when socializing and media information that can be accessed easily by children.

Through education becomes a strategic area in giving children the

opportunity to be guided to be part of intelligent citizens in their social relations. As Brooks (2002) has pointed out that educating should be a process aimed at children to be more than smart at school but also to be wise in dealing with existing issues related to real life situations, including social issues. So in this paper try to explain how important social issues in early childhood, and how the strategy in teaching social issues in early childhood. Learning social issues in early childhood is certainly a challenge for school and early childhood education teachers.

## 2 THE IMPORTANT THE SOCIAL ISSUES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

The learning of social issues for early childhood can be viewed as abstract learning material so that it is less applied in early childhood. Early childhood is often seen as an irrational being (Devine in Adriany, 2013) and has not been able to think abstractly (Piaget in Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2013). Another opinion is also expressed by Locke (Morrison, 2012: 63) whose theory of children born like white paper, that the child's mind is strongly influenced by the surrounding environment and experience. So the child must be guarded and protected and his world is playing, Because social issues

are phenomena that can not be understood child. Hawkins, (2014) in his research reveals the assumption that children have not been able to receive learning related to social issues.

In early childhood growth the role of the environment certainly can not be separated from the parts that greatly affect children, as expressed by Vygotsky (Ingleby & Oliver, 2008) and Bronfenbrenner (Ornstein & Levine, 2008; Penn, 2005) which states that the development of children is very influenced by the environment. Erikson (Morrison., 2012: 82) himself argues that social and cognitive development occurs simultaneously and can not be separated. The child has characteristics as an active learner from his immediate environment to understand the existing world (Green, 2015).

Early childhood and the environment are an inseparable unity where the social cultural environment shapes the child's identity and the identity of the other person (Robinson & Diaz, 2006). The existence of early childhood in the environment of his family, the environment around his residence, and to the place of school sooner or later will definitely meet with differences. The role of the social environment shapes how children behave toward racial differences influenced by parents and their friendships, especially in knowing differences (Aboud, 1996). So to be reasonable social issues become an important part in the process of growing children in terms of attachment itself as one part of society.

### **3 STRATEGY TEACHING SOCIAL ISSUES IN EDUCATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

Schools play an important role in strategies to promote economic and social development of the community (UNICEF, 2012). In an effort to give children meaning to be part of a diverse society, education can be one of the efforts to equip children with good values and sensitive to social issues (Boler&Zemblylas, 2003). As children enter the school environment, children bring with

them diverse cultural backgrounds and identities. Meeting a child with another child from a social, economic, cultural and religious background if not accompanied by an understanding of how to act appropriately in dealing with conflict will create a problem in the care and education process at school. Even a survey results show that the way early childhood conflicts are still tend to be aggressive (Setiawati, Eka, Ayriza, & Seritati, 2012), therefore teaching children to address social issues becomes necessary in the context of early childhood. So early childhood education is an ideal position to make a positive difference in the lives of children and their families (Robinson & Diaz, 2006).

Early childhood education teachers help children begin to understand the general concept of schooling toward a wider society (Epstein, 2014). Because basically the school is a miniature form of a wider society. Schools for children is an environment that also gives influence to the development of children in addition to family, surrounding communities and the wider community. Teachers are expected to be more sensitive to the growing social issues and not discriminating against groups of children with backgrounds as part of minority community groups, as teachers are role models for their children. Classes in early childhood education often provide the first social experience and how they feel appropriate in the community (Neill, 2015). In addition teachers should create a sense of comfort for children so that learning can happen more conducive.

Early childhood curriculum certainly can support children to solve class problems and social issues in their environment well (Neill, 2015). The curriculum plays a role related to learning social issues for early childhood. besides Indonesia has the objectives of education to be achieved as stated in the constitution number 20 of 2003 that the goal of national education is to develop the potential of learners to become human beings who believe and piety to God Almighty, noble, healthy, knowledgeable,

capable, creative, independent, and become a democratic and responsible citizen. The curriculum of social issues aims to make children citizens who are proud of their identity and respect the differences of other people and responsible citizens.

It is a challenge to teach social issues in early childhood. The learning of social issues in early childhood can certainly start from what is in the immediate environment of the child and from simple things (Weaver, 1965). From this social learning children can build and develop information and awareness of cultural differences that exist. The topic of sensitivity to social issues in early childhood education is the concern of preparing teacher candidates who are responsive to the issue of racism, the practice of pedagogy that is aware of diversity, and how approaches to social justice in school settings are given to children in research (Boutte, 2008; Han & Thomas, 2010; Hyland, 2010; Jackson, 2015). These studies provide insights into how teachers have of their internal values as educators on social issues play an important role in upholding social justice as the value it uses and taught to young children with a diversity-aware and critical approach to injustice. Because the educator's perspective on social issues reflects how he treats his students. Educators who provide an insensitive role model for social issues are feared to create a discriminatory learning environment for children from minority backgrounds that result in stunted child development due to the stress it receives from unfair treatment by teachers or friends (Bush, Stamperdahl, Adler, & Boyce, 2011; Shonkoff, 2010).

A pedagogical approach that is conscious of diversity and helps children to think critically about social issues is a way to teach children to be sensitive to social justice issues (Boutte, 2008, Hawkins, 2014). Moving from the capital of the child's cultural identity, educators can further develop the dynamic curriculum practice lifting the cultural background of each child to be represented in the learning process. Support children to think critically by giving

them the opportunity to discuss and discuss social issues that teachers convey from stories or interactions between children daily in school.

Giving children opportunities in building awareness of social issues can also be another approach in helping children to be aware of the issue. The approach taken by Serriere (2010) by giving the camera to early childhood to document its own interactions and discuss it seems to be an alternative to give the child an opportunity to expose his point of view on the relationship. So the assumption of the child's inability to accept learning about social issues because of the assumption that children have not been able to accept it can be further explained by other learning approaches (Hawkins, 2014).

#### 4 CONCLUSION

The learning of social issues becomes important for the Indonesian context that has a diversity of cultural backgrounds, where issues of racism, injustice, discrimination, and even oppression are easy to find in Indonesia. Not just taught, the presence of diversity of represented children can be the basic capital to develop a curriculum that is responsive to relevant social issues around the child. Teaching social issues to children is certainly not a guarantee that injustice, oppression, and racism will cease to occur on a daily basis. However, teaching children to these issues should provide a foundation that children can use as their capital to understand the problems in their social interactions with others so as to assist in determining the child's attitude to deal with the surrounding social phenomena.

The educational process that provides social issues as content in it provides an opportunity for children to develop more meaningful social skills as they are wrapped up by values based on their identity background and respect for the surrounding differences. The child has a pride in his identity and can respect the identity of others without any conflict or unfair treatment of identity differences. Strategies in shaping the

identity of the children themselves can be done with school teachers who become role models and role models and curricula that can be dynamic and relevant to the development of social issues. In learning these social issues certainly have a good impact on aspects of social development of children. Therefore, social issues should be taught and become an internal value in every aspect of learning in early childhood.

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