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**The Study of Pre-school Learning Management Guidelines in the Culturally Diverse Area; a Case Study of Ratchaburi**

**1Chaowalit Phanthong.** Department of Technology and mathematics Education,

Faculty of Education, Muban Chombueng Rajabhat University, Ratchaburi, Thailand,   
Email: Chao-kmutt@hotmail.com

**2Noppadol Thumchuea,** Department of Technology and mathematics, Faculty of Education,

Muban Chombueng Rajabhat University. Ratchaburi, Thailand,

Email: Tanakit1479@gmail.com

**3Wijitra Ngoenbat,** Department of Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Education,

Muban Chombueng Rajabhat University. Ratchaburi, Thailand,

Email: Jim2092510@gmail.com

**4Raktawan Sirithaporn,** Department of Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Education,

Muban Chombueng Rajabhat University. Ratchaburi, Thailand,

Email: Raktawanbee@hotmail.com

**5Yot-a-nan Chantaramard,** Department of English Education, Faculty of Education,

Muban Chombueng Rajabhat University. Ratchaburi, Thailand,

Email: Yotanancha@mcru.ac.th

**Abstract**

This research aims to study pre-school learning management guidelines in the cultural diversity area through a case study of Ratchaburi. The educational areas are kindergartens in Suan Phung, Ratchaburi. The research tools used in this study were pre-school learning activity plans, group discussion, and data analysis by using content analysis.

The result found that 1) there are 8 diverse race groups of pre-school learners, which were Local Thai, Thai Chinese, Thai Yuan, Thai Khmer, Thai Song Dam, Thai Mon, Thai Karen, and Thai Lao Wiang, study with Thai students, 2) multi-cultural learning activities for preschool students consist of learning management through folk tales, folk play, folk art, folk cooking, and folk music, and 3) guidelines for pre-school learning in multicultural areas should aim for children to learn on their own by engaging them in activities and interacting with teachers and peers in ethnically diverse learning situations. Activities and learning materials should be age appropriate as they foster an emphasis on thinking, reasoning, awareness of cultural differences, and learning to accept multiple cultural values ​​and identities. Moreover, the management of pre-school learning in multicultural areas should develop multicultural competence for preschool children in age-related knowledge in order to have behaviors in respect of accepting and coexisting with diverse cultures, including those with attitudes toward cultural differences.

**Key words:** The pre-school learning management/ Cultural diversity/ Kindergarten student

**Introduction**

Thailand has a population of diverse ethnicities, languages, religions, traditions, cultures, and lifestyles. Since 2012, there have been talks about joining the ASEAN Community. That makes Thai society very alert about the ASEAN community. In particular, the areas along the border seams with borders with neighboring countries are also alert, for example, provinces in the upper north, where the population is mainly composed of Thai Lanna people and hill tribe people, Northeastern region, some provinces, in some sub-districts, there will be tribes with Khmer descent and tribute living with Thai people in the Northeast, the lower southern region includes Songkhla, Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Satun, who are Thais of Malay descent who live with southern Thais and Thais of Chinese descent, and in the central region such as Samut Sakhon, Samut Songkhram and the western region bordering Burma such as Kanchanaburi, Phetchaburi and Ratchaburi. In the past, Ratchaburi had a population of 8 ethnic groups, which are distributed in various districts including Local Thai, Thai Chinese, Thai Yuan, Thai Khmer, Thai Song Dam, Thai Mon, Thai Karen and Thai Lao Wiang. These people live, do activities, work, and learn from each other. Every tribe has its own cultural identity such as traditions, rituals, food, folk songs and handicrafts. But at present, there are many migrant workers from Burma, Cambodia and Laos living in large numbers, forcing them to evacuate their families as well. Immigrants send their children to study in schools, causing many ethnic groups to join Thai students. From the ethnic diversity in Ratchaburi, there are both indigenous groups and the result of immigration from neighboring countries causes ethnic diversity and results in the change in the ratio of Thai students to ethnic groups in schools in Ratchaburi Province. In addition, the number of students from different ethnic groups studying together with Thai students has increased more than ever. It causes differences and diversity in races, languages, religions, traditions, and way of life, causing schools and teachers to change their roles in educational management.

At present, communities with diverse ethnic populations face communication problems. Especially when preschool children use their own language to communicate, it creates problems in managing learning with non-local teachers. Children will not dare to communicate because they do not understand the teachers’ words or even those of friends, which results in problems in adjusting and dissatisfaction with learning and it will also affect the child's development. For the reasons and importance of multicultural education for preschool children above, the researchers intend to explore approaches to preschool learning in multicultural areas based on the concept that the effective multicultural education must address the learning needs and methods of preschoolers in multicultural areas by using guidelines for the multicultural learning management in 5 dimensions of educational institutions (Banks, 2001). This consists of integrating racial content culture in daily activities, new knowledge generation, reduction of bias, fair-based learning management, social and cultural restructuring in schools, in order to foster respect for human dignity and accepting cultural diversity to learners.

**Objectives**

1. To study the guidelines for pre-school learning management in culturally diverse areas; a case study of Ratchaburi.

**Methodology**

**Target population**

1) The target group used in the analysis of basic data to develop a pre-school learning management approach in culturally diverse areas; a case study in Ratchaburi Province, consists of 4 community leaders, 2 religious’ leaders, 4 primary school teachers, 4 of students' parents, and 10 people in ethnic groups; a total of 24 people.

2) Research area was schools that organize preschool education in Suan Phueng district, Ratchaburi, under Ratchaburi Primary Educational Service Area Office 1, which is a school located along the Thai-Myanmar border. It consists of people of Burmese, Mon, Karen descent, living with Thai people who are ethnically and culturally diverse

**Research tools**

1. Focus group interview
2. 5 pre-school multicultural learning activities

**Procedure and data analysis**

There were 2 steps of guideline for pre-school learning management in culturally diverse areas; a case study of Ratchaburi;

Step 1 Fundamental data analysis

1. Community Context Studies of Suan Phueng district, Ratchaburi by studying basic demographic, economic, social, and local culture information and the current state of preschool education
2. The study of basic information on preschool learning management from the target group used in the analysis by group discussion
3. Analyze the data by using the data obtained from the community context study and focus group interviews to analyze by summarizing the data, interpreting, categorizing and comparing the responses of each respondent by content analysis.

Step 2 Designing multicultural learning activities for preschoolers

1. Concept of designing a model for preschool multicultural learning activities, the researcher uses Banks, 2001 to approach the management of 5 dimensions of multicultural learning which includes the integration of cultural content, new knowledge generation, bias reduction, fair learning management including social and cultural restructuring in schools.
2. Develop multicultural learning activities for preschoolers to be used as a guideline for preparing early childhood children to have multicultural competence by focusing on learning through activities such as folk tales, folk games, folk art, folk cooking, and folk music, etc.
3. Prepare a manual for pre-school multicultural learning activities.
4. Verify the accuracy and validity of preschool multicultural learning activities. including a manual by inviting qualified and local philosophers to consider both content and language that uses a guideline for 5 dimensions of multicultural learning management of Banks, 2001, and based on developmental psychology, early childhood media theory and early childhood education theorists' ideas.
5. Actions to improve multicultural learning activities for preschoolers including a manual according to the recommendations of experts.
6. Organize learning activities as designed by teachers in targeted schools.
7. The researcher observed the activities in the school in the target area.
8. Summarize and analyze data from focus group interview with target group to summarize guidelines for pre-school learning management in culturally diverse areas.

**Findings**

1. The results of a study of basic information on preschool learning management found that research areas on the border of Burma such as Kanchanaburi, Phetchaburi, Ratchaburi, that in the past, Ratchaburi had a population of 8 ethnic groups which were Local Thai, Thai Chinese, Thai Yuan, Thai Khmer, Thai Song Dam, Thai Mon, Thai Karen and Thai Lao Wiang, scattered in different districts. These people live together, do activities, work and learn from each other. Every tribe has its own cultural identity such as traditions, rituals, food, folk songs, handicrafts, etc. But at present, there are many migrant workers from Burma, Cambodia, Laos living in large numbers and these people evacuate their families as well. There are also immigrant populations from neighboring countries in the upper north where the population is mainly composed of Lanna Thais and hill tribes. In the Northeast, some provinces and sub-districts have Khmer and Suay ethnic groups living with Thai people in the Northeast. The lower southern region includes Songkhla, Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Satun, who are Thais of Malay descent who live with southern Thais and Thais of Chinese descent. And in the central region such as Samut Sakhon, Samut Songkhram and the western region, they send their children to study in schools causing many ethnic students to study together with Thai students. In addition, ethnic diversity in Ratchaburi already has a group that was indigenous.
2. Designing multicultural learning activities for preschoolers used as a guideline for preparing early childhood children to have multicultural competence has been developed in collaboration with pre-school teachers in research area schools which consist of folk tales, folk plays, folk arts, folk cooking, and folk music.
3. Multicultural preschool activities are aligned with diverse cultural contexts, enabling learners to learn meaningfully, learn culturally, and learn together happily.
4. Learning situations are diverse according to ethnic groups, activities and learning materials are age appropriate with an emphasis on rational thinking to foster awareness of cultural differences, and learning to accept the values ​​and diverse cultural identity.

**Summary**

1. The results of a study of basic information on preschool learning management, 8 ethnic groups of diversity population namely indigenous Thai, Thai Chinese, Thai Yuan, Thai Khmer, Thai Song Dam, Thai Mon, Thai Karen and Thai Lao Wiang, cause students of many ethnicities study together with Thai students.
2. Multicultural learning activities for preschoolers consist of learning through folk tales, folk games, folk art, folk cooking, folk music.
3. Guidelines for pre-school learning in multicultural areas should aim for children to learn on their own by participating in activities and interacting with teachers and peers in diverse ethnic learning situations. Activities and learning materials should be age-appropriate to emphasize thinking, reasoning, with a focus on cultural differences and learning to embrace diverse cultural values ​​and identities. Moreover, the management of pre-school learning in multicultural areas should develop multicultural competence for preschool children in age-based knowledge in order to behave in respect of acceptance and coexistence with diverse cultures and to be aware of cultural differences.

**Discussion**

Conducting research on pre-school learning management guidelines in the cultural diversity area through a case study of Ratchaburi was taken only important and interesting points from the findings to discuss the following results.

1. Guidelines for pre-school learning management in multicultural areas

It found Multicultural activities and learning materials at the early childhood level are highly effective because the activities are designed to encourage children to learn on their own through participation and interaction with teachers and peers. Learning situations vary by ethnic group. Activities and learning materials are age appropriate and focus on reasoning. It aims to raise awareness of cultural differences and learning to accept diverse cultural values ​​and identities. These findings may be due to the learning management plan developed as part of the school curriculum or the community curriculum that is suitable for the conditions of the community, society and local wisdom, including desirable attributes to be a good member of the family, community, society, and nation in order to maintain the traditional customs of the ethnic group. Therefore, this learning management plan plays a role in transferring this wisdom to the future of the community. The community accepts the role of schools and teachers in learning to be equal. In addition, the learning activities are designed in part from the study of the social and cultural conditions of the community so that they are in line with the needs of the majority of the people in the community. And the design of learning media that encourages the community to participate is to bring local wisdom and local scholars into the educational institution, so the community is a learning center for children and makes children understand, love, cherish, appreciate and appreciate their local wisdom more. This is consistent with the study results of Umaporn Pattaravanich and her team (2007: 30). That discussed the role of the community and the preservation of the community's way of life; bringing the community to participate in multicultural learning management by using the method of creating channels to bring knowledge or local wisdom to be transmitted to learners, this will make them love and appreciate local wisdom. This idea is consistent with the results of a study by Brown and Medway, 2007 claimed that atmosphere is important to learning and teaching; if parents are involved in higher school, it can greatly contribute to the success of multicultural learning arrangements.

1. Designing multicultural activities and learning materials

It found that activities and learning materials are appropriate for early childhood children because This allows them to think, reason, recognize cultural differences, learn to embrace diverse cultural values ​​and identities. These findings may be due to the fact that the researchers designed multicultural learning activities and materials with an emphasis on ethnic group interactions, media learning, factual learning, role play, questioning, singing, participating in activities, which are the platforms of cultural expression. These can help understanding, and provide opportunities for teachers and children of all ethnic groups to share cultures and traditions, so the classroom is a multicultural society where children have the opportunity to learn habits, share and help each other. It can help instill and create greater acceptance of racial, linguistic and cultural differences. Therefore, multicultural classrooms driven by these learning programs and cultural materials act as extra-curricular activities for children to develop essential multicultural skills. In addition to learning according to the Early Childhood Education Curriculum 2008 (in 2018, will start using the Early Childhood Education Curriculum 2017), the learning design also provides confidence in the children's abilities, fostering collaboration and appreciating what they present, for example, group activities, learning from controversy, sharing, and helping. These are very close to the multicultural environment. It enables children to develop an attitude of acceptance of differences, self-satisfaction and coexistence with others in society by accepting differences in happiness (Bredekamp: 2011).These findings are consistent with the findings of Lopez's study (Lopez: 2001), the teaching method that teachers use as a guideline for multicultural education is to promote and develop students to have acceptance or pride in their culture and ideas for themselves. In addition, the design of activities in the plan of the multicultural integration learning activities in this time is also consistent with the requirements of early childhood education programs for children aged 3-6 years. This should be flexible according to the abilities of each child. The focus is on children's active learning through action with integration through play and participation. The goal is for children to learn through perceptual play, questioning and interaction in order to create a school environment full of equality, justice and a democratic society. This will result in students being able to live together happily and gain mutual acceptance. Such results are consistent with Bangorn's (2010: 306); concept of multicultural education management, the educational management approach should be based on fostering multicultural traits that accept cultural diversity and building friendships in humans include with interactions foster cultural understanding and positive relationships between different groups of students. In addition, the role of the teacher is a key factor in the success of building multicultural competence. For example, Primary school teachers in Ban Tako Lang school accept the concept of cultural differences, and coexistence in a diverse society. Teachers have attitudes and communication skills in the classroom, create a classroom atmosphere and organize activities in lessons to enable students to understand and accept cultural differences and diversity.

Moreover, there was no prejudice or bias towards students who were different from their own. Teachers have communication skills and organize learning activities that promote mutual acceptance. Early childhood teachers or educators are important mechanisms for implementing the multicultural learning management plan into concrete practice. As they play a direct role in the management of learning based on the developed learning plans, the key factors contributing to teachers' learning management success are as follows. The effectiveness of the implementation of this plan of multicultural integration learning activities at the preschool level is due to the teacher's understanding of the content and the implementation process. Because early childhood teachers are involved in planning and writing a learning management plan together, it is also in an area where the social and cultural context of the community is well understood, consistent with the results of the Gorham study: 2001. That teachers with teaching behaviors that reflect the promotion of multicultural acceptance are older teachers who have more experience or length of time teaching multicultural classroom. Teachers with teaching behaviors that reflect the promotion of multicultural acceptance were older teachers with greater experience or length of time teaching multicultural classrooms than teachers in semi-urban schools and Semi-rural and more than teachers who had experience learning in multicultural classrooms as a teacher internship. From further group discussions, it was found that teachers from multiethnic families and teachers with peers who are culturally diverse, perceive themselves to have better teaching competencies that emphasize multicultural acceptance

**Suggestion**

1. Teachers may consider modifying or expanding multicultural knowledge based on children's prior experiences, such as adding family vocabulary as some children may not be with their parents, moreover, teachers may modify activities to encourage them the interest, and create more learning opportunities.
2. Plans for activities and multicultural learning materials should be used to create and develop learning throughout the school year.
3. Using a learning activity plan to manage curriculum-based learning, teachers can apply it in an integrated manner. It may be the content integration, the integration of various teaching methods such as conversation, discussion, questioning, lectures, research and group work, study outside the classroom, information presentation, including integration of knowledge, thoughts, and virtue.
4. The multicultural learning management plan is designed to emphasize active learning- that is, children are at the center of learning. Teachers should plan activities to suit their interests and fundamentals by utilizing a variety of learning activities, fostering collaboration, and adding activities that integrate school knowledge with real life in order to learn to gain meaning in everyday life.
5. Some activities involve the use of physical skills, such as crafting, teachers may shift from observation to experimentation with the help of the teacher providing guidance. And it is to reduce confusion in the process and increase the interest in learning.
6. Because this learning activity plan aims to build multicultural competence, Teachers must include multicultural meaning and awareness in all activities. This requires considerable time for reflection activities in which teachers should assist children in connecting knowledge and attitudes to everyday behaviors.
7. Teachers can use children's work to be part of the multicultural environment in the classroom. Because reinforcing children's achievements in their own learning, it also creates an atmosphere of multicultural learning from the physical environment. This is in line with the concept of Skinner, who believes that if children are complimented and was successful in doing activities, they will be interested in doing further. Usually, each child is different or unique, teachers should reinforce positive reinforcements, such as commendation- when their activity is successful. Another thing is not to compare children with each other.

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