

Using Philosophical Discussion in Exploring Kindergarten Teachers' Perceptions on the Application of Intercultural Education

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Abstract

This study aims to conduct philosophical discussions with kindergarten teachers to understand their perceptions regarding the adoption of intercultural education through. To this end, eight kindergarten teachers' perceptions of intercultural education were grasped, initially through individual face-to-face interviews and additionally-after dividing the teachers into two groups of four-through philosophical discussions. First, through repeated questioning and grounds suggestions on philosophical questions during the active discussion, the kindergarten teachers were found to engage in reconceptualization toward mutual agreement. Secondly, the teachers were found to have different perceptions of how intercultural education affects early childhood teachers versus how it affects children. They suggested that philosophical discussions may be effective in intercultural education for teachers, while a democratic class climate should be formed within the current framework of education in advance to allow children to practice intercultural education. Ultimately, it was suggested that the highlighted topics and cases that make intercultural education possible should be developed for early childhood teachers and children.

Key words: intercultural education, philosophical discussions, early childhood teachers, children

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Introduction

Objectives of Study

Intercultural education aims to teach the values and attitudes necessary to live with other people from diverse cultural backgrounds, thereby extending beyond the simple absorption of knowledge about other cultures (Lee 2011). Therefore, contemplating the way in which one views others or interacts with other people is a necessary part of intercultural education. UNESCO (2007) states that the term ‘intercultural’ assumes the “potential to create cultural expressions to be shared via co-existing diverse cultures, fair interactions and conversations, and mutual respects” (p. 17) and specifies that “intercultural education is carried out based on understanding, respect, and conversation between different culture groups beyond passive con-existence” (Jang, 2016, p. 18). Similarly, intercultural capacity is the intercultural communication capacity to appropriately interact with other cultures (Chung, 2011; Joo, 2016; Lee & Lee, 2017). Further, the Council of Europe (2008) suggests that intercultural conversation, which can be learned and practiced in daily life, is necessary to develop intercultural capacity in teachers (Santos, Araújo, & Simões, 2014). This means that conversation plays an important role as both the objective and method of intercultural education.

Therefore, the teaching method most used in intercultural education is discussion (Kim, 2018). Discussion-based intercultural classes focus on both respecting differences and critical introspection (Cho, 2015). This is because respect and acceptance of different thoughts are necessary to reach agreements via discussion. As another objective of intercultural education is to “face meeting with others, not to learn other cultures” (Abdallah-Preteceille, 2010, p. 77), discussions that achieve meetings and making relationships with others are expected to help people learn human universality based on self-recognition through such interactions.

Recently, ‘philosophy’ has been paired with the concept of ‘discussion’ in intercultural education. As one example, the chairperson of UNESCO recently emphasized the importance of philosophical practice in children aged 4-18 to establish the basis for intercultural conversation and society reform (Lin & Sequeira, 2017). To disseminate philosophical

discussion-based intercultural education, UNESCO currently provides discussion cases involving various philosophical topics (truth & false; violence; knowledge & ignorance; happiness; life and death; rights; fear, etc.) online (Chaire UNESCO philosophie enfants, 2020). Those cases demonstrate the feasibility of intercultural education via philosophical discussions with children, including in early childhood.

Philosophical discussion (*La discussion à visée philosophique* [DVP]) is a teaching method for linguistic and cultural education that was designed by Tozzi—an expert from UNESCO—in the 1980s and further developed in French elementary schools in 2000s (Cayet, 2019). Philosophical discussion is a co-building approach inspired by the Freinet teaching method as well as a contextual approach for creating new knowledge in place of discussion (Cayet, 2018). This approach is activated by cognitive conceptualization, questioning, and grounds suggestions (Tozzi, 2000, Cayet, 2019). Cognitive conceptualization is about ‘what do you claim to know?’, which includes conceptual definition and distinguishment. Questioning involves reviewing the assumption and subsequent result of raising the question or identifying the rationale behind the issue. Grounds suggestion involves finding out the truth about the things that one has been told; it includes justification, disassembling, and counter-evidencing.

This study was conducted with reference to the study by Cayet (2018; 2019), wherein the philosophical discussion outlined by Tozzi was performed with immigrant middle school students and suggested to be a promising new teaching approach for intercultural education in France. Cayet added several tools to promote French learning in immigrant students, such as assigning the role of ‘translator’ to students, presenting ten linguistic expressions that must be used, or instructing the students to express the concepts they had learned by using “reflective drawing” developed by Molinié (2010, 2011), and then converting these drawings into the language again (Cayet, 2018; 2019). However, the present study excluded consideration of such tools, as the aim was not language learning.

Intercultural education adopting a discussion-based format has yet to be diversely implemented in Korea. Kwak (2012) and Cho (2015) suggested a discussion-based intercultural education model and examined its effectiveness with examples of French and German culture classes at universities. Another study aiming to develop intercultural education programs was conducted by Kim (2018) while focusing on employees at German

branches in Korea. Intercultural education is a necessary component within various organizations or groups, as intercultural is the value to be shared between all social members. These cases have highlighted the potential of discussion-based intercultural education by demonstrating the reality of studies using discussion and the effectiveness of intercultural education. Studies examining intercultural education have come to be conducted in domestic early childhood education; however, it is difficult to find studies using discussion. As discussion-based intercultural education has begun to be adopted in domestic education sites, there is a need for research examining the discussion-based teaching approach in early childhood education, where intercultural education is most urgent.

To facilitate intercultural education in early childhood education institutions, all professionals in such institutions should receive relevant professional education (Hmelak, Lepičnik Vodopivec, & Barbareev, 2020). There is also a question as to whether or not early childhood teacher candidate training focusing on universal delivery of theoretical knowledge and practice improves on-site education (Kwon & Cho, 2020). Therefore, establishing and fostering a learning community that provides an opportunity for reflective thinking based on conversations with colleagues beyond the delivery of knowledge is often suggested as an alternative model for teacher training (Cho & Ko, 2006). Joint learning activities performed within the community are expected to influence on-site education (Seo, 2006). Therefore, philosophical discussion as the teaching approach of intercultural education for preliminary or current early childhood teachers may be effective in intercultural practice pursuing learning from conversations within the community. This may become an alternative solution to the problem wherein multicultural early childhood education has focused on the delivery of knowledge from other cultures (Oh, Bang, & Park, 2015). It may also serve as an opportunity to meet the multicultural education requirements to teachers to overcome any unwarranted prejudice or fixed ideas (Ku & Hwang, 2012).

Accordingly, the present study aims to examine intercultural education using philosophical discussion in kindergarten teachers to determine their perceptions regarding the adoption of intercultural education for children and teachers. This study will investigate the cultural concept and viewpoint formed by kindergarten teachers as well as the conceptual differences between multicultural and intercultural educations as experienced or stated by them. This study may also make it possible to help teachers avoid cultural determinism by helping them

consider culture as one type of resource while also promoting introspection based on consistent self-questioning as a main agent of learning within the mutually cooperating structure. The results are expected to inform discussions of the adoptability and direction of philosophical discussion-based intercultural education for preliminary and current kindergarten teachers as well as children. The questions raised in this study are as follows.

1. Process of Philosophical Discussion-Based Intercultural Education
2. Kindergarten Teachers' Perceptions of Adoption of Intercultural Education via Philosophical Discussion

Method

Study Participants

The participants in this study are eight class teachers at public and private kindergartens in Seoul. Their general backgrounds are briefly described in (Table 1).

Table 1. *General background of study participants*

Participant	Age	Work Experience	Class	Type of Institution	Academic Background	Experience in Multicultural Education	
						Completed	Performed
Teacher A	34	4 years	4 years old	Private	Completed master's course	O	O
Teacher B	29	5 years	4 years old	Private	Completed master's course	O	O
Teacher C	32	7 years	3 years old	Private	Graduated from university	O	O
Teacher D	31	2 years	3 years old	Private	Completed master's course	O	X
Teacher E	30	5 years	5 years old	Private	Graduated from university	X	X
Teacher F	31	5 years	3 years old	Private	Graduated from university	X	O
Teacher G	25	1 years	4 years old	Private	Graduated from university	X	X
Teacher H	29	3 years	5 years old	Private	Graduated from university	O	O

Study Method and Procedure

In this study, philosophical discussions were performed with eight current kindergarten teachers while focusing on philosophical topics that are relevant to intercultural. To encourage more active discussion from each participant, the eight teachers were divided into four in each group to conduct the philosophical discussions. To determine the perception of study participants on experience in philosophical discussion-based intercultural education, a semi-structural face-to-face interview was also conducted with each individual. Approximately one hour was spent in the group discussion whereas approximately 30 minutes was spent in each individual interview. The convenience sampling method was used for participant recruitment: Class teachers who were currently working at kindergartens among those who went to the same university or graduate school as the researcher were asked to participate in the study. The data collection period was from 14 Nov to 17 Dec 2021.

The discussions and interviews were recorded with the consent of all study participants, and initial analysis was conducted based on the principle that recoding would be transcribed within 24 hours. As the discussions and interviews were performed in a semi-structured manner, the major topics raised during conversation were briefly recorded on site as short sketches by the researcher while ensuring that the flow of discussion and interview did not deviate from the scope of intercultural understanding and philosophical discussions in early childhood education. For data analysis, transcriptions were read repeatedly, and the topics covered in the discussion and interview were categorized and coded. The discussion topics included the meaning of culture, consideration of the term ‘race’, attitudes towards differences, criteria for uniqueness, and attitudes of teachers towards freedom and equality. The interview questions involved previous experience with multicultural and intercultural education, changes in one’s thoughts after the philosophical discussion, thoughts on the concept and method of intercultural education, and the teaching method of intercultural education for preliminary or current kindergarten teachers.

Results

Process of Philosophical Discussion-based Intercultural Education

A philosophical discussion is a jointly organized, contextual approach to promote mutual understanding via cognitive conceptualization, questioning, and grounds suggestion about different concepts (Tozzi, 2002; Cayet, 2018). The existential questions that were cooperatively conceptualized in the present study concerned 'culture', 'race', 'freedom and equality', 'difference', etc. These questions captured how kindergarten teachers participating in discussions influence each other, change their perceptions, and reach agreements with examples of cognitive conceptualization, questioning, and grounds suggestions during discussions of 'culture'.

Re-conceptualization of Culture

Before entering philosophical discussion-based intercultural education, kindergarten teachers were asked about their personal conception of the term 'multi-culture'. They often recalled a family consisting of a mother from Southeast Asia, a father from Korea, and their children, indicating that they accept a concept of multi-culture that has been socially formed according to ideological categories such as race and ethnicity.

Teacher B: It just feels like race or ethnicity so far.

Teacher C: Children from a family with international education? Multi-culture reminds me of a family based on international marriage.

Teacher D: Multi-culture reminds me of mixed blood, Cambodian mother, stuff like that.

Some teachers described the concept of 'multi-culture' based on multicultural education they had personally completed or participated in. Regardless of their experience with multicultural education, they all understood the goal of multicultural education was to promote the acceptance of children from immigrant families. Moreover, before the Nuri Curriculum in 2019, the concept of multi-culture was naturally covered by introducing diverse cultures while dealing with a life theme of 'different countries in the world' when operating life theme-centered educational courses. For example, such education was

presented to allow children to indirectly experience topics dealing with intuitive differences by using dolls or puzzles of different races, and by reading and looking at picture books wherein children from immigrant families are the main characters. They also reported that the multicultural education they experienced had the goal of educating children about the culture or etiquette of other countries while dealing with the theme of ‘different countries in the world’.

Teacher D: For me, it is about understanding immigrant families or education for children from immigrant families.

Teacher C: As said by Teacher B, multicultural education used to involve understanding someone from a ‘strange cultural background’ who has entered the community. It was usually said “there are some people who look different, use a different language, or eat different food from us”.

The perception of the concept of ‘multi-culture’ presented by the study participants in this atmosphere of freedom served as a point of contention. Specifically, some teachers raised new viewpoints as to whether the category of ‘multi-culture’ includes families in diverse types or those having people with disabilities. Other teachers asked about the scope of ‘multi-culture’ being defined by the researcher. These attitudes of being reflective and raising questions promoted the formation new perceptions by leading the participants to consider the causes and outcomes of their viewpoints.

Teacher H: Does the concept of multi-culture only include children of different nationalities? Does it include disabled children?

Teacher D: I was wondering if discussions on ‘multi-culture’ should be limited to race or includes diverse types of family. I thought minorities or some groups considered [laughing] ‘unusual’ may be included in ‘multi-culture’.

Teacher A: The definition by the government agency refers to immigrant families, but I think... multi-culture is a wider concept. So, I’ve been trying to see what to focus on. One’s background with growth or educational experience shapes their culture, so all these things may constitute ‘multi-culture’. The wording ‘multi-culture’ itself brings a great diversity of opinion.

Teachers also discussed that there is also a culture of smaller concepts of individual families or individuals beyond what large groups such as countries and races share. Likewise,

during free talking about the concept of culture that each person was thinking of, culture could be determined to be conceptually complex. We were able to newly form an agreed upon concept of culture while asking cross questions and making submissions. The reconceptualization of culture also showed the need to expand the narrow viewpoint on 'multi-culture'.

Teacher A: I think my family itself is a 'multi-culture'. For example, the family tradition of making Kimchi-jjigae is adding pork and spam but my husband likes to add tuna. Eventually, my family's Kimchi-jjigae has come to include tuna, pork, and spam altogether. Multi-culture is consistently being made up like this, so everyone has multi-culture.

Researcher: According to Teacher A, culture is what an individual has depending on their experience. How can other teachers define culture?

Teacher B: Lifestyle, maybe? The way of life?

Researcher: Lifestyle? Do you think a person belonging to a culture is an individual just like what Teacher A thinks, a certain population, or a country?

Teacher B: I think all of them. Even though individual, population, and country are in different categories, they affect each other. Therefore, all of them may be eligible units of multi-culture.

Teacher C: I thought of a limited multiculturalism, but now I think the scope has expanded a little. Uhm, it was an opportunity for me to accept that an individual's culture may be multi-culture, beyond the prejudice against the concept of multi-culture constituted by marriage between different nationalities. After so long a time, I have to go out of definite thought and acknowledge this. It feels like increased awareness.

In other discussions beyond those presented above, each individual's own argument was deepened and justified by speaking an approach to adopt the concept. However, there was a trend wherein participants stuck to suggesting their own individual viewpoint rather than having a reflective attitude toward the causes and results of a position. Accordingly, new ideas were typically induced by the researcher with active questioning and counter-questioning. As a result, a new opinion arose that diverse cultures may be formed according to an individual's experience beyond the discussion of culture within the scope of ethnicity or nationality.

Researcher: What do you think is culture?

Teacher F: It may be the unique characteristics of a certain ethnicity or country. And it may be a common specificity shared within not only a country but also a certain group. And it may be an agreement on history or experience. I think all of those are culture.

Researcher: Do you think our cultures are the same?

Teacher F: It depends on the aspects being focused on. For example, we share common culture as Koreans but each of us has their family and regional background. Therefore, it cannot be said all of us have partly matched culture in some aspects.

Researcher: Teacher F seems to think that important and shared specificity within a group constitute culture. What do you think?

Teacher H: Culture is something shared within a group. Meanwhile, there may be a unique culture everyone has, as influence factors differ by person.

Researcher: Could you give me an example?

Teacher H: Having a favorite habit may be one of influence factors. If I love French movies, it may constitute my own unique culture.

Researcher: Is there any culture unrelated to nationality?

When being asked about culture and multi-culture, the kindergarten teachers surveyed in this work tended to either reconsider their personal scope of culture or criticize the conventional concept of multi-culture that is limited to the families of immigrant women. The researcher kept asking the study participants about their opinions of other backgrounds or any opportunities they had had to experience other backgrounds so that they could reflect upon their narrow perceptions of 'multi-culture' and recognize the diversity of cultural categories. Culture stemming from the concept of 'multi-culture' is an ethnic category that implies 'others' who are inevitably different from the mainstream group in Korea. However, culture stemming from the concept of 'interculture' premises that each person may have a different culture derived from an individual's uniqueness. Such conversion of recognition helps one realize that they may be foreign to others, just as others are foreign to them. Moreover, a mandate of approaching each other carries considerable weight, and it surpasses the mere acceptance of minority culture by the mainstream.

Thoughts about Adoption of Intercultural Education

Intercultural Education for Early Childhood Teachers

The kindergarten teachers participating in the study established their own perceptions of inter-culture via the philosophical discussions in this work. They insisted that efforts should be made to understand universality-i.e., extending beyond the reflection of prejudice and the acceptance of difference based on reciprocity-to achieve interculturalism. They all agreed that the philosophical discussion-based intercultural education practiced in this study would help bolster such efforts.

Teacher D: Given the Korean situation where a single ethnicity has been emphasized, intercultural education is needed. If I knew the concept of interculture when learning about other cultures, I would have accepted the definition of 'other culture' instead of 'culture different from mine' based on my cultural background. So, I think the key to intercultural education is accepting another culture as is without any prejudice, rather than just coming across other cultures based on my cultural background. Other current teachers or undergraduate students may be positively influenced during the process of discussion just as I was during conversations with other teachers.

Teacher B: This type of discussion-based education is necessary. Because it is important for us to have good judgement in various situations and contexts, not to have the correct answers inputted. For example, sometimes we need to take a certain attitude apart from recognizing a historical fact. To have a good judgement on it, discussion-based education is required. This is true.

Teacher C: Definitely, an opportunity for introspection is required to reflect on our own experience by listening to others and thinking about how to recognize cultural issues. Particularly, this applies to education for teachers. It would become an opportunity for either preliminary teachers or current teachers to have self-reflection and introspection and get out of prejudice or stereotypes.

Meanwhile, some participants suggested that ensuring that the discussion participants better understood the concept of 'interculture' would enhance philosophical discussion-based intercultural education by improving awareness. The researcher in the present study induced the participants to self-reflect on their own thoughts and establish new ideas via interactive communication based on philosophical discussions on culture, multi-culture, race, difference, freedom and equality, etc., without explaining the concept of interculture in advance of the discussion. However, the achievement of such recognition varied depending on the prior

knowledge, experience, and positive attitude of the discussion participants. Therefore, as per the participants, it would be more effective to present a conceptual comparison between multi-culture and interculture in advance of the discussion.

Teacher F: It would be more helpful in talking about experiences or thoughts if the concept of ‘interculture’ were taught before discussion. And it may be a promising idea to have teachers from different regions and backgrounds and at different ages join the discussion.

Teacher D: It would be a great advantage for preliminary teachers to have philosophical discussion-based education after learning the basics of interculture when they are concerned about their point of view and teaching method. However, it will become more difficult to establish their own solid philosophy if they happen to hear another person’s opinion in the discussion with no knowledge of basic concepts. I think it is desirable that the method of philosophical discussion be made through an in-depth process.

Moreover, the participants suggested some specific methods for realizing philosophical discussion-based intercultural education. They criticized multicultural education performed via online training for teachers as being ineffective due to its outdated contents and because teachers focus on receiving hourly credits when they simply have to play lecture videos. They also pointed out that participating in philosophical discussion-based intercultural education may come to represent an additional burden for teachers who are already in charge of heavy field work. Therefore, they suggested that the conventional multicultural training method be modified and that points be allocated for participation in training, rather than adding new training. They also suggested that the use of non-face-to-face discussions with web conference tools may effectively save time.

Teacher C: I have had multicultural education for teachers requiring clicking and listening to the same things. I have had no opportunity to listen to other teachers’ thoughts and have conversations with them to cause me to think differently while realizing that I was short-sighted.

Teacher G: Discussion-based education may improve the recognition of teachers on the concept of multi-culture, with increased understanding of intercultural education.

Teacher A: They may take part if hourly credits are given. Anyways, I think the form of training for teachers should be changed.

They also argued that simply making kindergarten teachers participate in discussions may lead to difficulty in the multicultural education they currently perform, so it is important to have a leadership role in the presentation of opinion and discussion. They also suggested that movement toward open teaching profession culture or class management in kindergartens should accompany such education, as one-off discussion may partially improve recognition but hardly lead to concrete effects in practice.

Teacher C: If four of us without you (researcher) are asked to discuss, we would end up expressing difficulty in performing multicultural education. However, if we have a mediator like you who could bring up the subject for thought, a diversity of opinions can be obtained.

Teacher B: I think philosophical discussion-based intercultural education would be effective in realizing prejudices and accepting new points of view; however, if a leader is absent in the discussion, it may instead enhance prejudices.

Teacher D: This way of education may cause preliminary or current teachers to become open-minded. Nevertheless, I doubt if an open mind developed by a one-off discussion leads to changes in educational practice. I think the paradigm of teaching profession culture or class management should also be changed.

To sum up, kindergarten teachers considered that the philosophical discussion that was used in this study would be effective in intercultural education for early childhood teachers. They also pointed out that the concept of interculture should be clarified to discussion participants in advance, and that any such discussions should have a leader. It was also suggested that a method should be designed so that it is not a burden to teachers while fostering effective participation, and that the organizational culture of kindergarten should be changed in the pursuit of intercultural education.

Intercultural Education for Children

Kindergarten teachers achieved understanding of intercultural education by comparing educational contents and methods. The approach that kindergarten teachers already report using in both formal and non-formal education is considerably consistent with that pursued by intercultural education. These teachers have implemented education to teach their students

that every person has their own unique characteristics, including what they are good at, to avoid the formation of opinions based on a single characteristic of appearance.

Teacher F: I was myself concerned about ‘whether I implemented multicultural education properly’. However, during the discussion, I could feel that our experience and thought are like the direction of intercultural education. I implemented education with the perspective that ‘we are all different’, not only in activities performed under the title ‘multicultural education’ but also in daily life, which is the start of mutual respect.

Teacher B: I showed children wooden dolls with a number of characteristics and asked them “What kind of friend do you think s/he is?”. Some of the children said “his/her skin color is dark”, but other children talked about all the characteristics they saw. For example, “S/he seems to like a cap”. There was a doll who was posing like Popeye and children said “S/he seems to eat vegetables well”. Thereafter the conversation ended up with ‘I like this food and that play’, reaching to an agreement with those dolls, and we are all different with its/our own characteristics. I could see that children do not only focus on a single characteristic that is notable.

Teacher D: There was a girl without hair and other children accepted her appearance as it was. On the contrary, considering any broaching of the difference as taboo may reflect the teacher’s prejudice. What we talk about in class was ‘all of us have different characteristics,’ not ‘her difference’.

The teachers noted that children tend to accept their friends with different appearances as they are, while adults have a difference-focused point of view rather than things in common. Accordingly, the participating teachers intended to instill a sense of value of ‘we all have distinctive characteristics but are equal as human’ in not only formal education but also non-formal education in their daily communication with children. They also thought that effective intercultural education could be implemented via not only class activities that were planned and taken lead by a teacher, but also through natural play. They suggested that, regardless of one’s cultural background, a human feels joy while similar play is exhibited between different countries. This is closely related to the ‘discovery of universality’ pursued by intercultural education.

Teacher D: There would be no better way than accumulating common experiences to realize that ‘we are not different but have things in common.’ Teaching or story-telling cannot replace

accumulating experiences together via plays that leads to the realization that 'They are like me. They are delighted with playing'. I think no other activity could replace those experiences.

Teacher F: I don't think that different race or culture largely affects playing with someone in early childhood. Even different language does not. There is something that can be resolved by just playing together. Playing with someone is not about reaching a result with a common goal but is rather complementary.

Teacher A: My class students enjoyed a number of games from different countries. So, it seems to naturally lead to multicultural education.

They may think 'there are some children who play this game in other countries,' even though the name and rules of play may be a bit different.

As described above, the participating teachers pointed to intercultural factors in the education they had implemented thus far and established their own understanding of intercultural education. They shared the intercultural value not only in teaching triggered by the educational need for teacher-initiated large group activities and specific incidents, but also in daily interactions with children. They also reported that playing enabled natural meeting and harmonization with people from other cultures. Moreover, they highlighted the need for a democratic atmosphere wherein intercultural education was sought in the specific period and wherein diverse opinions from anyone could be accepted in daily life. To this end, it was considered to be important for teachers to engage in conscious self-reflection on their prejudice with a cheerful outlook toward diverse cultures.

Teacher B: I think that an atmosphere to accept diverse opinions and respect diverse individuality should be formed in playing or daily life. Education starting over from certain incidents is also needed, but I do not think one-off activities are enough. Children may internalize the value of diversity when they feel excited in the process that their teacher accepts their opinion on daily operation and their other thoughts. I think we should just create the culture of our classroom in that way.

Teacher D: I think children may also grow up without prejudice if they participate in open discussions at ordinary times. As discussions do not always give a correct answer, children may begin to think of differences as "So what?", rather than "My teacher said it is OK to be different and we all should respect".

Teacher F: Intercultural education is associated with the attitude towards or the value of life, rather

than the knowledge that may be delivered via several activities. The words and actions of teachers contain his/her beliefs; therefore, improved perception or reflective attitude of teachers is necessary for materializing effective intercultural education. I have implemented story-telling activities about 'All of us are precious while what each of us looks like, loves to do, and does good work are all different' and children talked well about their thinking without difficulty, which I did not expect. It may be possible to implement philosophical discussion-based intercultural education if a teacher sets the right direction.

As described above, two teachers positively assessed philosophical discussion-based intercultural education in children based on the fact that it can avoid a teacher-centered, one-directional delivery of knowledge, while most other teachers showed negative about such education. They believed that there was a risk of strengthening prejudice, saying that philosophical topics such as those covered in this study were 'topics that they do not want to deal with' in early childhood. They said that they might come to talk about those topics if the need were to arise because of a certain incident, but that it would otherwise be difficult to proactively implement discussions with philosophical topics. In particular, they said that it would be difficult to deal with abstract concepts due to the characteristics of early childhood development and that teachers should proactively have the ability to clarify the concept of intercultural and take the lead in related discussions. One teacher was concerned that some children might begin to have prejudice or become hurt from the words and actions of teachers who failed to distinguish between 'difference' and 'discrimination' when having conversations about 'differences'. The teachers with less experience also claimed less confidence in taking the lead in discussions, so philosophical discussions with children could be done at a superficial level.

Teacher A: Children have a tendency of all or nothing thinking with large gap in moral development level, so they could accept anything with no definite idea or at ease. Therefore, I am worried about 'What if I make them have prejudice by bringing up such topics.' I am in favor of philosophical discussions to be conducted over certain issues or incidents as their level of thinking differs depending on age. Otherwise, intercultural education may have to be done casually.

Teacher B: The ability of children to manipulate their thought differs depending on whether it is about abstract concepts or concrete facts, and I do not think they know much about concepts such as 'race'. If a tendency to see a diversity of cultures as one of numerous personal characteristics

is established in infancy, it may become a basis for discussion of challenging topics in the future. Education implies 'what educational objective to pursue'. But I think it would be hard for me to achieve the objective. I may end up with sporadic stories. Of course, I am quite confident in talking about diverse topics with children if that is my goal. However, it may be hard for me to correct or finalize any prejudice children may come to have during such a process. It may be possible to have a discussion with children about specific cases that should be dealt with, if any.

Teacher C: Concept establishment may have to be used by teachers. It may be difficult. I mean when it comes to stories about discrimination, it may be difficult for me to bring it up unless children bring it up first. If I bring it up first before children do, I may come to inculcate a sense of distinction to them.

To sum up, the kindergarten teachers were able to determine the characteristics of intercultural education from the education they were implementing, and they recognized that intercultural education might be effectively implemented via formal or non-formal education within early childhood education institutes. They also said an intercultural class mood with respect for the thoughts of others should be established. However, most participants had negative attitudes toward the adoption of philosophical discussion as a method of intercultural education in children.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study determined the perceptions of kindergarten teachers regarding the on-site adoption of intercultural education after implementing philosophical discussion-based intercultural education. The results of this work can be summarized as follows.

First, philosophical discussion-based intercultural education was repeated in kindergarten teachers via questioning, grounds suggestion, and reconceptualization toward mutual agreement. The kindergarten teachers discussed their perceptions based on their experiences, and they were able to reflect on their prejudice via questions that allowed them to ruminate on their internalized perceptions. For example, they agreed upon the culture they should establish as a teacher by comparing the meaning of culture used in the context of 'multi-culture' and other situations. In this way, philosophical discussion-based intercultural

education helped the kindergarten teachers self-examine the expansion of their perceptions and prejudices regarding culture. Philosophical discussion-based intercultural education corresponds to the values of mutual respect, communication and interaction, pursuit of agreement, and critical reflection (Cayet, 2018).

Secondly, the study participants had different perceptions on intercultural education for early childhood teachers and children, respectively. They suggested that philosophical discussions may be effective in intercultural education for preliminary or current early childhood teachers; meanwhile, they perceived that it was most important that a democratic class climate be formed within the current framework of formal/non-formal education in advance when practicing intercultural education in children. This could be attributable to the expectation of intercultural education based on the topics covered in this study (e.g., race). Kindergarten teachers prefer training based on practical cases of class among the types of training on multicultural education (Ku & Hwang, 2012). Therefore, topics and cases feasible for philosophical discussion in children should be developed.

The education that is already being implemented by kindergarten teachers and the idealized intercultural education shared some objectives and contents. Respect of differences, value of diversity, and democratic attitudes were already being covered by large-group classes, conversations between children in daily life, and class atmospheres that existed outside of multicultural education. Therefore, intercultural education should be understood as the new philosophical viewpoint of teachers on diversity and differences that is added to—and does not completely replace or reverse—the contents and method of previously implemented multicultural education (Lee, 2011). In implementing philosophical discussion-based intercultural education, cases of multicultural education that are currently being conducted by early childhood teachers to identify something corresponding to the intercultural approach should be shared. In this approach, intercultural education could be highlighted as an ethical attitude with value for everyone, including kindergarten teachers, rather than being viewed as a burden.

The participants made some suggestions for effective intercultural education in the philosophical discussions for early childhood teachers: 1) The concept of intercultural should be clarified in advance of the discussion; 2) there should be a host for the discussion; and 3) the current education should be modified, rather than designing completely new education.

Tools that help early childhood teachers actively participate in philosophical discussions should also be developed. For developmental discussion, suggestions of linguistic expression, fair authorization of right to speak, etc., should also be considered.

This study newly demonstrates the implementation of philosophical discussion-based intercultural education and explores the perceptions of kindergarten teachers of intercultural education. The philosophical discussion in this study is appropriate as an intercultural education method, as intercultural education pursues new ways of understanding within actual communications. However, this study is limited by the fact that it was conducted based on a limited number of discussions and interviews in a limited timeline. Therefore, additional studies should be conducted to validate the research and development of systemic philosophical discussion-based intercultural education programs and their effectiveness.

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