

April Hart

Maintaining Educational Equity in Finland amidst Growing Cultural Diversity within the School System

Reference Material for Implementing Multicultural Education within Early Childhood Facilities in Helsinki, Finland

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<p>Suomen koulutusjärjestelmää arvostetaan ja sitä pidetään tasa-arvon kulmakivenä. Tästä huolimatta erilaisuuden lisääntyminen on ollut menestyksen kannalta haasteellista. Suomalaisissa koululuokissa erilaisten kulttuurien nopea kasvu vaatii vaatimustason ja opetussuunnitelman vastaavanlaista sopeuttamista. Tällä hetkellä maahanmuuttajataustaiset lapset menestyvät koulussa selvästi syntyperäisiä suomalaisia lapsia huonommin. Tutkimukset ovat osoittaneet, että erilaisista kulttuurisista taustoista tulevat lapset menestyvät parhaiten ympäristöissä, joissa opettajat sopeuttavat omaa opetustyyliä vastaamaan paremmin oppilaiden erilaisia oppimistyyliä. Tämän hetkinen ulkomaalais- ja suomalaistaustaisten lapsien menestyksen välinen ero saadaan korjattua hyödyntämällä kouluissa monikulttuurista koulutusta läpi Suomen.</p> <p>Tämä toiminnallinen oppinäytetyö esittää varhaiskasvattajille monikulttuurisen koulutuksen käsikirjan. Käsikirja sisältää opettajalle tärkeitä ja selkeitä monikulttuurisen koulutuksen määritelmät, ohjeet ja neuvot oppituntia varten. Lisäksi, myös inspiraatiota antavia, kulttuurin kannalta asiaankuuluvia ja paikallisesti testattuja toimintoja.</p> <p>Tämä opinnäytetyö ja käsikirja on tehty yhteistyössä Helsingissä sijaitsevan englanninkielisen Young Star-päiväkodin (YSEK) kanssa. Ennen käsikirjan muodostumista, yhteistyön ansiosta toimintoja sovellettiin ja testattiin YSEK:ssa.</p>	
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<p>Finland is revered for its education system that is built on the cornerstone of equality. However the rise in diversity has been a challenge to its success. As Finland experiences rapid growth of cultural diversity within their classrooms, education standards and requirements should be adjusted accordingly. Currently, children of foreign background perform markedly lower in academic achievement than native Finnish children. Studies have documented that children from different cultural backgrounds thrive best in environments wherein educators adjust their teaching styles to better suit their students' differing learning styles. The current gap in achievement amongst foreign and Finnish children could be remedied through utilization of multicultural education throughout schools in Finland.</p> <p>This functional thesis provides early childhood educators in Helsinki, Finland with an introductory handbook for Multicultural Education. The handbook contains clear definitions of Multicultural Education, along with guidelines and recommendations for educators to follow prior to implementing Multicultural Education in their classrooms. The handbook also contains culturally relevant, locally tested activities for educators to implement and/or draw inspiration from.</p> <p>This thesis and handbook were made in collaboration with Young Star English Kindergarten (YSEK) in Helsinki, Finland. The collaboration consisted of application and testing of activities by YSEK before addition to the handbook.</p>	
Keywords	early childhood education, multicultural education, educational equity, multiculturalism, intercultural competencies, multicultural society, cultural diversities.

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1 Introduction

The main purpose of this thesis is to create a reference product to assist early childhood educators in Helsinki, Finland on how to begin to implement Multicultural Education (hereinafter “ME”) in their classrooms. My prior experience, working as an early childhood educator within a diverse classroom setting, helped to frame the scope of the research. This thesis consists of research based upon: 1) review of text produced by scholars of both multiculturalism and ME, and 2) findings from a practical collaboration with the stakeholder, a diverse early childhood education institution. This thesis seeks to interpret relevant concerns by the stakeholder through the ME lens. Using these concerns and ME as a frame of reference, this thesis will determine the most practical and relevant methods to assist educators to begin to implement ME within early childhood settings in Helsinki, Finland.

The Finnish education system is known for its emphasis on the value of equity within its legislation and institutions (Blakeslee 2015, p. 9). In support, the Basic Education Act states, “The aim of education shall further be to secure adequate equity in education throughout the country” (Finnish National Board of Education 2010, p. 1). In her article detailing immigrant education in Finland, Blakeslee reveals that through the PISA test results, as well as studies conducted on immigrant performance in schools throughout Finland, it is apparent that immigrants are not achieving the same academic success as native students. She continues to outline a solution, wherein she states that the Finnish education policies must be updated to include and promote ME, in order to truly uphold equity in the Finnish education system. (2015, p. 9).

There is a staggering difference between the amount of foreign-born children in present day Finland and those that were present in the 1990’s (City of Helsinki 2013, p. 4). The Official Statistics of Finland cited by Blakeslee show that in the 1990’s, there were roughly 2000 foreign born children, aged 7-16, residing in Finland. Currently, the number of foreign born children has risen to 18,000, with an expected trajectory of reaching 30,000 over the next 7 years. (2015, p. 10).

This thesis is being produced in collaboration with Young Star English Kindergarten (hereinafter “YSEK”). YSEK is a private kindergarten located in Vuosaari, Helsinki, Finland. The kindergarten offers tuition exclusively in English, and is staffed mainly by native English speakers. The kindergarten was founded 11 years ago by a family of foreign background, and is in itself very multicultural, with students originating from over 10 different countries. The kindergarten is quite small and familial, with approximately

30 children on average enrolled each year. They offer basic day-care services for children aged 3-6. Additionally, preschool is included in the tuition when the child reaches 6 years of age. YSEK considers themselves to already embrace many aspects of multiculturalism in their curriculum and in the way they interact with children. One good example of their multicultural attitude, is seen through their annual Multicultural Month, where a different country is talked about and discovered every day (through dance, games, songs, and pictures). To conclude the Multicultural Month, YSEK holds a Multicultural Lunch, wherein the families of the kindergarten bring a traditional (to their native culture) food dish to share with each other. The idea for this thesis was conceptualized through the already existing interest in Multiculturalism held by the working life partner, along with the ever increasing diversity in the kindergarten. YSEK has consistently enjoyed an incredibly diverse kindergarten population. As the majority of their children come from culturally diverse backgrounds, YSEK strives to do all that can be done in regards to promoting positive attitudes towards diversity, and providing optimal learning environments for their students. These aspects fell in line completely with the goals and values of ME. Therefore, YSEK is eager to see where they can improve their curriculum, and to uncover how the reference book could guide them in those early steps towards ME.

2 What is Multicultural Education?

It is an issue of human rights that immigrant youth are provided with an equal opportunity to achieve in school (Alitolppa-Niitamo 2004, p.131).

2.1 Case Study: Drammen, Norway

In the 1970's, a school in Drammen, Norway began to face challenges due to high diversity that was beginning to manifest in classrooms, as opposed to the typical classes made up of native Norwegian children. The culture of the school was at odds with the cultures of the children. Due to the predominantly Norwegian specific teaching styles (teaching conducive mainly to field-independent learners, and content entered around the majority culture lacking diverse content integration), and the school as a system catering to the majority culture, these culturally diverse children were performing poorly both behaviourally and academically. Once the school realized that they needed to change their system and their teaching styles in order to give each child optimum learning potential, they were able to create a thriving environment for all of their students. The new environment consisted of diverse cultural content integration, utilization of various teaching styles suitable for field-sensitive learners, and empowering prac-

tices supported by the school that encouraged multiculturalism and diversity appreciation.

Moen, an educator at the school, describes their new mission in the following excerpt, “Our conception was that children who grew up in a multicultural school environment would enter adult life with experiences from school that would make it easier for them to take part in an international community marked by cooperation and coordination. Such a community is a must if we are to solve our global problems. In such a perspective, 30% from language minorities became a resource and not a problem” (1997, p. 13).

With this new mission underlying their institution, the school began to see dramatic results. Moen accredits the change in behavior to the students’ newfound joy of mastery, made possible through new methods adopted by the teachers and school. As they developed self-respect through mastering concepts, they wanted to achieve more. (Moen 1997, p. 13).

This case study is an excellent example of school wide ME reform. While most educators do not possess the right or authority to implement such reform, adopting ME values in their classrooms is certainly a step in the right direction. With positive, compelling results, comes notoriety and intrigue- wherein lies the potential to incite school-wide reform.

2.2 Core Objectives and Aims of ME

Nieto, an author and renowned supporter of ME, inclusively describes ME in the following way, “A process of comprehensive and basic education for all students. It challenges racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms the pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, rebellious, economic, gender, exceptionalities) that students, their communities, and teachers represent” (1992, p. 208). Simply put, ME promotes educational and societal equality by starting early in the classroom, utilizing the teachers as guides to get there. ME is achieved through utilizing culturally diverse material, prejudice-reducing activities, culturally sensitive learning and teaching methods, and teachers that believe in equality both at an educational and societal level. The educators role in successfully implementing ME is crucial. There must be a clear description of the rights and responsibilities to uphold equality and justice that applies to each member of our society, including the classroom. The educator

must embrace those values and beliefs of ME and consistently address offences to them.

ME can commonly be misunderstood as catering to the minorities present in the classroom, when in reality it is quite the contrary. All children immersed in a ME curriculum benefit from the teaching methods and materials. Pedagogical theories in the classroom are able to stay in place, as ME affects the delivery of content, along with the selection of content, while allowing for the underlying values of the existing pedagogy to remain intact. Children from an ME background show more perspective-taking ability and interest in civic duty. (Banks 1998). As our world becomes more and more connected through globalisation, it is integral for children to learn how to appreciate and understand other cultures and perspectives. UNESCO supports this objective in their Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity stating, "Formal and informal education systems must embrace perceptions and expressions of cultural diversity as soon as possible in order to meet the new challenges facing our increasingly pluralistic societies. It will involve an overhaul of curricula and methods of teaching, training, and communication within every education system designed to promote the construction of a national identity based on that of a dominant group" (2002, p. 28).

Additionally, ME holds that teachers take into account their student's individual learning styles, and adapt their teaching to best maximize each child's learning potential (Banks & Banks 2005, p. 22). Therefore, all children benefit from learning in a ME classroom (Banks 1998). Most importantly, ME promotes social justice and the protection of it. We should strive to rid society of social injustices. Educational facilities that cater to the majority are perhaps of the most offensive injustices, as the victims are children who are at the mercy of others with no fault of their own. Another common misconception is that the utilization of ME could set back the curriculum schedule, or lead to less concentration on maths and sciences (Nieto 2009, pp. xvi-xvii). Such claims are erroneous, as all aspects of a successful curriculum can be developed and executed while still upholding the values and standards of ME. The responsibility of fusing ME into a curriculum successfully (or developing a new curriculum based on ME) falls solely on the educator (Banks & Banks 2005, pp. 1-25). The product of this thesis, the reference handbook for educators, will seek to guide educators on how to *begin* to implement ME in their classrooms.

2.3 The Need for ME in Helsinki

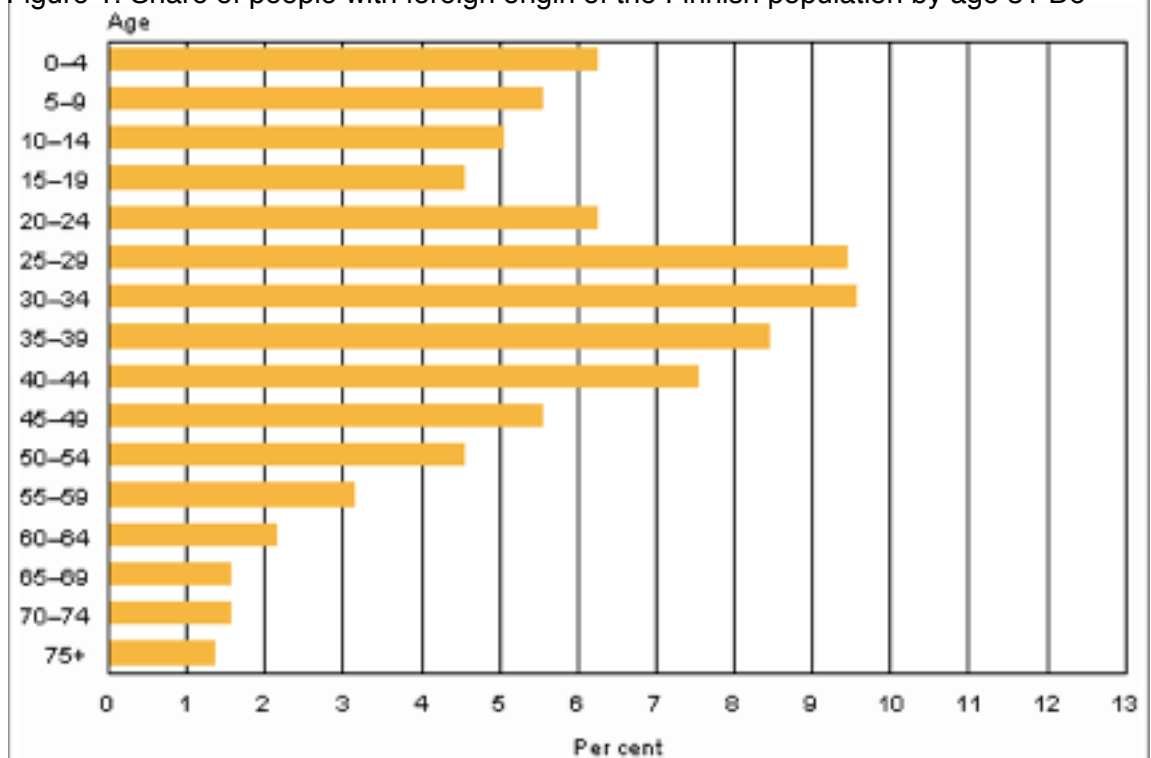
With immigration being fairly new to Finland and Finns, it is crucial to begin to promote positive attitudes towards diversity already in the early years. In a survey conducted by

Eurobarometer, Finland holds one of the highest rates of racism amongst the countries included in the survey (all of which are EU members) (Eurobarometer 1998).

In 1997, a survey uncovered that 20% of 506 15-16 year old Finns found that racism was acceptable, do to it being an aspect of patriotic phenomena (Virrankoski 1997). Additionally, studies have shown that racism towards growing immigrant groups in Finland are remaining constant (groups such as Somalis and Russians) (Jaakkola 1999, p. 52). What is unknown can sometimes manifest into something to be feared, therefore insisting that children *ignore* diversity, and instead pretend that everyone is the same, does little to promote positive attitudes towards diversity. Educators in Helsinki should embrace the richness that diversity brings to the classroom, and encourage their students to do the same. Within a ME classroom, children are able to flourish within each of their academic subjects, utilising their optimal learning styles, while also learning about other cultures and perspectives. ME, amongst culturally diverse children, is crucial as problems arise when immigrants do not understand their old and new culture well enough. Additionally, children of immigrants have a particularly difficult time, because they struggle to understand their new society's culture, but are also relatively foreign to their parent's culture. Therefore they tend to mix both cultures rather than assimilate completely to one in particular. (Lahti 2007, p. 351).

With an increasingly multicultural population emerging in their classrooms, educators across Helsinki must be aware of the variances in learning styles and communication patterns of students from different cultures. Figure 2 shows that 5-6 percent of children in Finland, of early childhood age, are of foreign origin. Additionally, in the capital region, approximately one-fifth of residents are of foreign descent (Official Statistics of Finland 2012).

Figure 1. Share of people with foreign origin of the Finnish population by age 31 De-



Lahti conducted a case study of a multicultural school in Finland wherein she observed that within the curriculum, the teachers have the right and responsibility to care to each student's individual needs, therefore equal treatment of immigrant children in a classroom rests mainly in their hands. Lahti continues by recommending that teachers consider the cultural background of their students when teaching, in order to maximize learning potential. (Lahti 2007, p. 351). Doing such, will help educators to boost student achievement and confidence both in and outside of the classroom.

While working at a kindergarten in east Helsinki, I experienced just how multicultural the early years environment was there. In the kindergarten, there were 2 children of native Finnish descent. The remaining children held heritage from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. I inherently felt the need to amend the curriculum in order to include aspects from their own culture/history. At the time, I was not aware of the actual practice and theory of ME. Now that I am familiar with, and am actively using ME, I see how fruitful it is in practice at the work place. My experience is surely shared by other educators in Helsinki. With ever growing diversity, classrooms have made a remarkable change from playing host to one or two cultures, to now accommodating cultural diversity that ranges from one-fourth to one-half of the class.

3 Liberal Multiculturalism

To understand multicultural education, we must first understand the underlying theory of *multiculturalism*. Across the board, multiculturalism is misunderstood, and broadly generalized as the acceptance of other cultures (Kymlicka 1995, p. 6). This could be considered a rudimentary step to multiculturalism, but cannot possibly define the whole concept.

As there are a few differing theories of multiculturalism, I have chosen to focus on liberal multiculturalism. Before delving into the actual theory of liberal multiculturalism and its place in a societal context, perhaps it is fitting to first address where and why the need for it arose. Kymlicka, a renowned author and scholar of multiculturalism, explains that throughout history, countries (states) across the world have strived to achieve the status of 'nation state'- meaning that the state is seen to be the property of the dominant culture present (and vice versa, those with the dominant culture are seen as the owners of the state). Therefore, the values and cultural trademarks of that culture are supported through the country's infrastructure. (1997, p. 28-31). Kymlicka defines this process of infiltrating mononational values as *nation-building*. This practice can be seen through many different aspects, and is especially pervasive in the educa-

tion system- holidays that are celebrated (heroes from the dominant culture), national languages, teaching styles, literature supported in the school system and curriculum, religions, folklore, etc. (1997, p. 28-29).

As those aforementioned values are so deeply embedded into almost every aspect of life, at least on an institutional level, minority cultures must assimilate in order to integrate successfully, lack of assimilation would likely lead to exclusion (Kymlicka 2009, pp. 71-77). In essence, assimilating can be seen as a “goal” of integration in most countries, but it is also destructive to the individual's (and group's) identity. Kymlycka describes those “side effects” of nation building and thereafter, assimilation, as follows, “ Such groups are often excluded entirely by the process of nation building, or included only at the price of accepting assimilation and second-class status, stigmatised by the racist and ethnocentric ideologies used to justify nation building” (2009, p. 65). ME strives to alleviate some of those side effects by incorporating more aspects of minority cultures into the curriculum, critically assessing the schools infrastructure looking for disempowering practices, as well as encouraging teachers to utilise different teaching strategies based on the learning styles of the students (Banks & Banks 2005, pp. 20-25). This creates a more level playing field for all children in the education system.

In contrast to nation-building, a liberal multicultural state holds to three beliefs, as defined by Kymlicka. Firstly, the state belongs equally to all of its citizens. Second, it also abolishes any nation-building policies and that leave minority cultures marginalized or excluded. It places importance on cultures of non-dominant groups and minority groups, abolishing the need for those groups to adhere to the dominant cultures values and culture. Third, it must acknowledge negative consequences that have fell upon any one group through assimilation and exclusion, and to rectify them accordingly . (Kymlicka 2009, pp. 65-66). It is apparent that liberal multiculturalism and ME hold true to the same values and principles. Liberal multiculturalism seeks to address social injustices on all fronts and right societal wrongs, whereas ME seeks to create equality by positively influencing the minds of our youth from a young age.

4 The Development of Multicultural Education

Banks & Banks outline the history of ME as being born in lieu of the civil rights movement of the 1960's in the United States. The civil rights movement was the milestone of equal civil rights and treatment for African Americans in the United States. It targeted those inequalities present in public accommodations, housing, employment, and education. African Americans were not the only minority group to lay claim to the civil rights

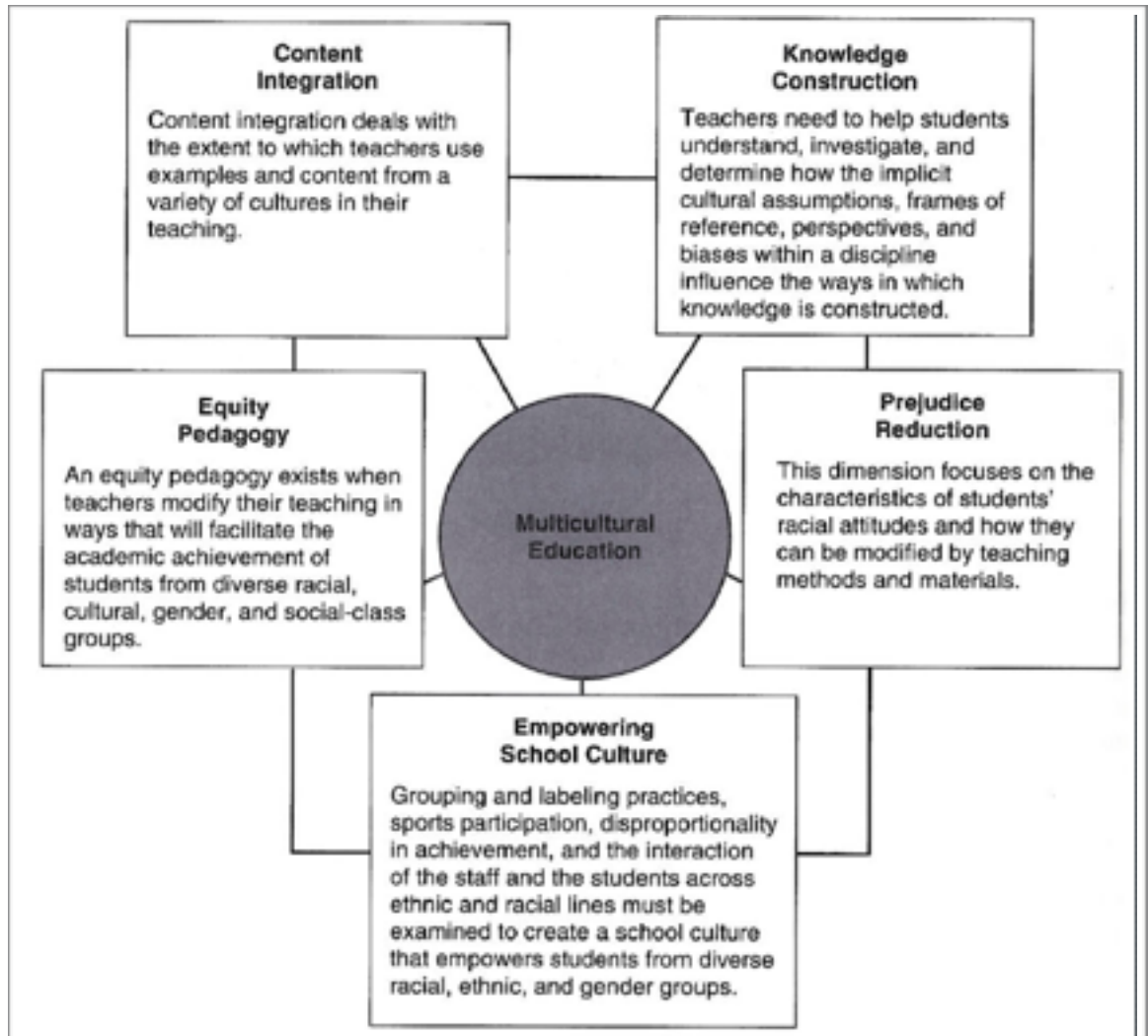
movement, other minority groups across the United States began to follow suit as they saw violations being addressed. (2005, pp. 6-7). Banks & Banks further describe how the civil rights movement substantially influenced the education system in the United States. The ethnic groups who laid claim to the civil rights movement criticised schools for their lack of acknowledgement of minority groups in their curriculum, as well as the lack of African American personnel in leadership or teaching positions. Textbooks were also under scrutiny for not representing the irrefutable diversity present in the United States. (2005, pp. 6-7).

As these grievances came to light, schools, along with other institutions in question, were hastily implementing “multicultural measures”. Rather than taking the time to integrate ethnic material into their existing curricula, schools moved to develop independent and separate material to address the ethnic deficit. (Banks & Banks 2005, p.6). Banks & Banks observe that this material can still be recognised in the present-day education system; they include, but are not limited to, ethnic history elective courses, ethnic cuisine on certain days, holidays, and special celebrations. While there was a clear effort on behalf of the education system, the effort was misguided and in no way contributive to equality. The issue in the majority of existing curriculums lies within the fact that while these minority cultures are meant to be accepted as equal and valued, yet they are still being recognized and treated separately- not as a cohesive unit. (2005, pp. 6-10). ME seeks to create a constant dialogue about perspectives. Sure, we can talk about Westward Expansion, how it benefitted the US, and the bravery of Lewis and Clark, but who else experienced Westward Expansion? What did the indians experience? At what cost was Westward Expansion to them? (Banks & Banks 2005, p.21) This type of dialogue, practice, and value that ME places on other cultures, is in essence the heart of Multiculturalism.

Some schools may utilise ME for select minority groups existing in their population, for example, a curriculum that integrates more female-ethnic material (as genders are also groups of their own). However, Banks & Banks explain that schools must go above and beyond curriculum reform; they state that a total school reform, structured in a manner wherein educational equality, not only for ethnic groups but also for cultural and economic groups, is needed in order to fully embody the notion of ME (2005, pp. 22-25).

5 Dimensions of Multicultural Education

Figure 2. The 5 dimensions of Multicultural Education as defined by Banks (2009).



As discussed in the preceding subchapter, the first attempts of ME were honorable, albeit flawed. Since then, the notion of ME has developed and advanced into a distinctly, applicable method of education. ME can be segmented into 5 dimensions- Content Integration, the Knowledge Construction Process, Prejudice Reduction, an Equity Pedagogy, and an Empowering School Culture, all of which will be discussed thoroughly in this chapter, and are illustrated in the model below (Banks & Banks 2005, pp. 20-22).

The popularized argument that ME is based solely on content integration leads to math and science teachers dismissing ME as relevant in their classrooms, and allocating ME as a practice used exclusively by the social services and literature teachers (Banks & Banks 2005, p. 20). This argument is damaging to the reputation and presumptions educators and administrators hold towards ME. Understanding ME as a holistic approach facilitates utilizing its most advantageous form.

5.1 Content Integration

Before the civil rights movement, textbooks in schools presented almost entirely caucasian American content. Historical figures, significant dates and events, renowned milestones and phenomenons were all centered on the perspectives and experiences of caucasian Americans (Banks & Banks 2005, p. 6-7). The same can be said for any class and subject, and for any material, thus not limited to textbooks. For example, in music classes, material used was predominately derived from caucasian American culture. In literature classes, ethnic authors were not represented. Since the civil rights movements, additions have been made to textbooks, integrating some ethnic material into them (Banks & Banks 2005, pp. 6-7). Again, these early attempts were honorable, but lacking in parity.

Content in early childhood settings entails much more than textbooks (in fact, rarely that). Content can be described as any material the children are exposed to, this could include toys, books, games, songs, food, and activities. This is the content in which to apply content integration.

5.2 The Knowledge Construction Process

Banks states the aim of the knowledge construction process best, as follows, “The knowledge construction process relates to the extent to which teachers help students to understand, investigate, and determine how the implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives, and biases within a discipline influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed within it” (Banks & Banks 2005, p. 20). To summarize, the knowledge construction process involves the teachers in encouraging their students to analyse material from different perspectives, and not to take the authors thoughts and opinions at face value. Banks & Banks hold that every person holds certain biases and judgements, and whether or not they intend for this to be apparent in their writing, it almost always is. There are also works of literature that are openly racist, and argue (perhaps delicately in some cases) the supremacy of the white race, such as, “The Bell Curve”, wherein authors Herrnstein and Murray claim that low-income African Americans have less cognitive ability than others. Such works came about during an era when racism was rampant throughout the scientific community. (2005, p. 21). If students acknowledge that these distorted facts exist in common, and even acclaimed, literature they are more apt to discern between fact and fallacy.

Lack of a diverse perspective can be especially detrimental in material that young people are exposed to, as their minds are open and malleable to new information. Therefore, teaching children to conduct their own investigations into issues gives them a more grounded and multi-perspective understanding of the issues at hand.

5.3 Prejudice Reduction

Studies show that children come to school with preexisting negative presumptions and beliefs regarding other races and cultures (Banks & Banks 2005, p. 21). In order to fully reap the rewards of multicultural education, this foundation of negative beliefs must be addressed. Teachers can use the practice of Prejudice Reduction to achieve this.

Prejudice reduction involves teachers integrating activities and lessons regarding diversity appreciation and acceptance, into their everyday (or at least, regular) routine. These activities aid children in developing positive attitudes towards other cultures and races; in practice, the activities include integrating positive images of ethnic groups into study materials, and using multiethnic content consistently (Banks & Banks 2005, pp. 21-22).

5.4 Equity Pedagogy

Banks & Banks offer a sound description of equity pedagogy, they state, “An equity pedagogy exists when teachers modify their teaching in ways that will facilitate the academic achievements of students from diverse racial, cultural, gender, and social-class groups” (Banks & Banks 2005, p. 22). This means that each teacher would take into account the cultural, social, and gender background of each student when interacting with students. Because of the vast amount of information regarding all of the aforementioned groups’ backgrounds and practices, we will focus on the cultural background.

Different cultures thrive accordingly within certain learning environments. There are two main theories that expound upon the difference of learning styles in connection with culture and class. The Cultural Deprivation Paradigm focuses on social class’ effect on learning. It maintains that children from a lower economical group do not start out on an equal playing field, that they essentially start out with a deficit that should be filled by enhancing their early socialisation experiences (Banks & Banks 1995, pp.15-18).

This theory hinges entirely on the fact that families (caregivers) from lower economical groups do not have the education, nor the means, to provide their children with optimal early socialization experiences. Such deficits include lack of books, formal language, and education amongst low-income students. Those same aspects are generally provided amongst middle class families, thus giving them a head start in school (Banks & Banks 1995, pp. 15-16). This theory has its weaknesses, and is largely criticised for not giving ethnic culture enough weight as a variable in these deficits.

On the other hand, the Cultural Difference Theory, focuses on the effect culture has on learning. The theory maintains that students from ethnic backgrounds do not thrive in school because they experience detrimental cultural conflicts; in other words, the school's culture differs so drastically from their individual cultural that it creates a stumbling block to learning. (Banks & Banks 1995, p. 16-17). Ramirez wrote one of the leading authorities on learning styles relevant to culture. In their book, "Cultural Democracy, Biconognitive Development, and Education". He characterized two predominant learning styles amongst children- field-sensitive and field-independent (1974). Sims & Sims created the following table explaining teaching styles both field sensitive and field independent learners thrive in.

Figure 3. Teaching styles for different learning types (Sims & Sims, 1995).

What Students Expect from Faculty (Based Upon Preferred Style)	
<i>Field-Sensitive Orientation</i>	<i>Field Independent Orientation</i>
To give support, show interest, be emotional To provide guidance modeling and constructive feedback Seek verbal and non-verbal cues to support words Minimize professional distance Seek opinions when making decisions and incorporate effective considerations Identify with values and needs of students	To focus on task and objective To provide independence and flexibility Commands and messages are given directly and articulately Maximize professional distance Make decisions based upon analysis of problem and objective criteria Identify with goals and objectives of task

Schools generally cater to field-independent learners; Ramirez's research supported the hypothesis that Mexican-American students were generally field-sensitive, thus leading to the rationale for their substantially lower academic achievements in relation to their caucasian American counterparts (1974). Studies were also done by other re-

searchers in the field regarding other ethnicities. By and large, children of ethnic background usually thrive more in a field-sensitive learning environment, contrasting with the environment present in most learning institutions. The conflict amongst both theories mentioned is the ambiguity of the weight that both culture and class (or a combination of them) have on learning styles. (Banks & Banks 1995, p. 19).

5.5 An Empowering School Culture

Empowering the school structure requires everyone involved at the institution to critically reflect on their own practices, and try to identify areas that could be disempowering for children from minority cultures. All members of staff must be involved in this process, therefore all members must understand the importance and significance of ME. This process is an enormous endeavour and truly requires all involved to be on the same page regarding what the goals are for their institution, and where their motivations for change lie. Banks & Banks identify specific areas that must be scrutinised within an education institution: “grouping and labelling practices, sports participation, disproportionality in achievement, and disproportionality in enrolment in gifted and special education programs” (2005 p. 23).

A prime example of a disempowering practice present in Helsinki is their special education classes, which have a disproportionately large amount of immigrant students (Kivirauma, Klemela, & Rinne, 2006; Sinkkonen & Kyttälä cited in Blakeslee 2015, p. 15). Usually this stems from difficulties in acquiring their new country’s language, cultural norms affecting their judgment of appropriate behaviour, less early childhood support and guidance, and the somber fact that many teachers hold negative preconceptions towards immigrant children (Nusche cited in Blakeslee, 2015). When immigrant children are submerged in special education classes, the environment can have a negative impact on their learning potential and skill development. For example, there are less models of strong native language speakers that they are exposed to, which in turn can negatively effect how they acquire their new language. (Sinkkonen & Kyttälä cited in Blakeslee 2015 p. 15). Usually, the curriculum has been mitigated to suit children with lower learning ability. As most immigrant children have not been selected for special education programs for learning disabilities, rather cultural differences and the side-effects of those, it does not provide an equal educational start for them, and is not an environment conducive to academic excellence. (Sinkkonen & Kyttälä cited in Blakeslee, 2015 p. 15).

6 The Role of Early Childhood Educators in Finland

The role of a kindergarten and/or daycare in a community varies greatly from country to country. In institutional kindergartens and day care establishments, there are educational qualifications that must be met regarding the staff members. “At least every third person operating in care and education assignments must have professional qualifications conforming to the Decree on Professional Qualifications of Social Welfare Personnel- i.e. post secondary level qualification” (OECD 2000, p. 42). The remainder of staff must have at least upper secondary level qualifications. Those aforementioned postsecondary qualifications can include kindergarten teachers, special kindergarten teachers, social educators, practical children’s nurses, Bachelors and Masters of education, kindergarten practical nurses, and practical nurses. (OECD 2000, p. 42).

All of the aforementioned professionals are potential stakeholders in this project. The reference guide will not be specifically formulated for individuals possessing a post secondary education, but will also be accessible for those possessing only upper secondary level qualifications. In this way, the author hopes to reach as many educators in Helsinki as possible. While professional competence is of utmost importance when working with children, those without post-secondary qualifications also have influence and effect on the children they work with. Therefore, it is important to consider them as well as stakeholders.

7 Multicultural Education in Finland

“Education is linked to culture and constant change in society, which should be taken into account in the continuous assessment of the implementation of ECEC, as well as in the process of goal setting and environment” (Finnish National Board of Education 2010, p. 9). It is incredibly important and beneficial that the national curriculum of Finland is in support of societal flux, and acknowledges the need for ECE establishments and professionals to adjust their own practices and goals in order to meet that change. As significant cultural diversity in classrooms is a relatively new phenomena in Finland, multicultural education has not had sufficient time to be fully integrated into teacher education. Thus there is no official method for multicultural education in schools or amongst the Finnish academic community. (Dervin, Paatela-Nieminen, Kuoppala, Riitaoja 2012, p. 1). The product of this thesis, the handbook, aims to offer some guidance as how to begin to implement ME in early childhood settings.

ME is frequently misinterpreted as being partial towards those culturally diverse children present in the classroom (Banks 1998). This common misconception is dangerous, as it can cause educators to steer clear of utilising it for fear of their native students losing valuable education and skills development opportunities. ME is not a diversity tolerance incentive that solely promotes the integration of diverse students into a school system, it is a school wide initiative that dedicates itself to educating its pupils under the values of , “equity, justice, and mutual understanding and appreciation for differences” (Blakeslee 2005, p. 18). According to Dervin et al., reviews of Finnish schools show that they fall short in operating under those values (2012, p. 2). A particularly strong statement by Holm & Londen is troubling but factual, “Multicultural Education in Finland means immigrant education” (2010, p. 116). In other words, the goal of ME in Finnish schools correlates with the goals of immigrant integration, which customarily bears the end goal of integrating into the social “norm” of the host society (Holm & Londen 2010).

The National Core Curriculum details one section, 6.4, specifically for immigrant children (Finnish National Board of Education 2010, p. 47). It specifies that immigrant children should be taught according to the same objectives set forth for native children. However, they also acquire their own separate objectives. Both of which are innately present in all subjects of teaching, and that is language acquisition- both of the host country’s language and of their own native language. The other objective specific to immigrant children is cultural competence, which also pertains to the child’s native culture and the host country’s culture (Finnish National Board of Education 2010, p. 48). The Finnish Board of Education advises teachers to take the child’s existing knowledge and cultural understanding into account when teaching immigrant children. Different modes of assessment are encouraged for teachers to successfully gauge the development of language proficiency. Additionally, cultural background should be considered when interacting with immigrant parents (Finnish National Board of Education 2009, p. 10.). In contrast to the United States, Finnish teachers have some freedom in choosing individualised assessment methods (Blakeslee 2015, p.13). This is incredibly supportive of implementing Equity Pedagogy, from the 5 Dimensions of ME, and should be utilised by educators.

Lahti explains that typically, children who have come from foreign countries are placed in groups that reflect similar cognitive development. Additional support from teachers and specialists, student welfare support, and remedial classes are available if needed (2007, p. 351). According to Lahti, it is the municipality’s duty (although it is voluntary not obligatory) to organise classes that support their mother tongue and religion, but there must be at least 3 students in the same municipality with the same background

(2007, p. 351). Undoubtedly, there are practices in place that specifically promote the development of culturally diverse children. These practices are resources for early childhood educators when working with a diverse student body, and should be utilized as such.

As previously mentioned, there are many aspects of the National Finnish Curriculum that are supportive of multicultural education, such as high support of fostering immigrant student's mother tongue, low teacher to student ratio, and no ability grouping. However, what is written in the curriculum is not necessarily indicative of what happens in each classroom across Finland. There are written guidelines in the curriculum, but the majority of instructional control is held by the teacher, who can select what services the child needs, and how to interact with and instruct him in the classroom. As different teachers hold varying degrees of experience and education in regards to ME, there should be support and training made available to teachers in order to better educate them on how to create a truly equal and progressive classroom that upholds the values of ME (Rasanen 2007).

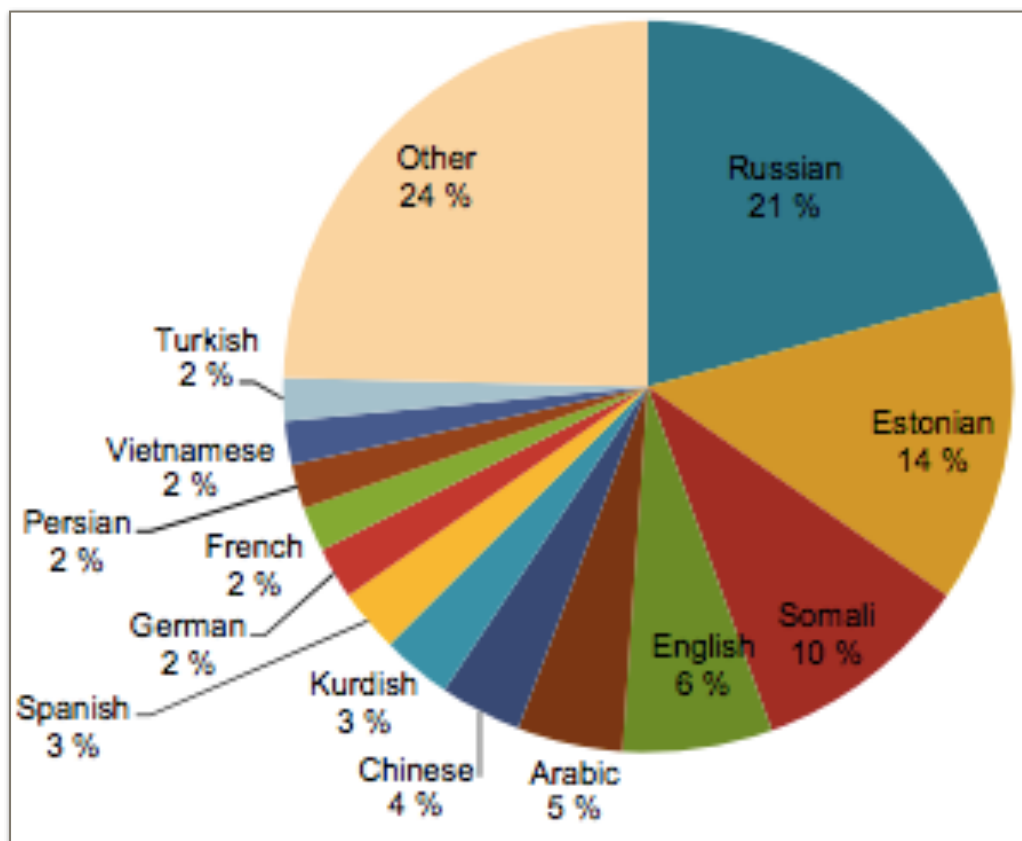
Blakeslee offers up several remedies that would benefit immigrants schools, firstly she recommends that teachers receive additional education in how to teach Finnish as a second language, as well as additional training in how to utilize ME. Secondly, she observes that policies regarding Finnish as a second language should be amended to include further support (past the initial language acquisition phase) as the child ages and begins to use more advanced literature. Lastly, parents should be involved in a more multidimensional way, she specifically recommends family literacy programs and early home interventions as tools to gain more participation from immigrant families. (2015, p. 20). "With changes such as these, Finland can continue to lead the way in equitable education for all students" (Blakeslee 2015, p. 20).

8 Immigrant Groups in Finland

“To conceptualize immigrants and refugees through static concepts, characterizing their situation as if it were just one picture on the film roll of their lives, does not give a realistic, true understanding of lives that are undergoing rapid social change and a multitude of social processes in shifting environments” (Donnelly & Hopkins 1993).

Finland is home to many immigrant groups, but the largest by far are Russian-speaking countries, Somalia, Serbia and Montenegro, Iraq, and China (Jaskinskaja- Lahti 2000, p. 3).

Figure 4. Foreign-lanugage residents by mother tongue in Helsinki on Jan 2013. (City of Helsinki, (2013).



Alitolppa-Niitamo conducted the first, and only, wide-scale study on factors that affect Somali-students school performance in Helsinki (2004).

Alitolppa-Niitamo observed that because of this surge of diversity in Helsinki, it is necessary to reevaluate policies and practices in order to provide equal access and opportunities- especially in schools, wherein the responsibility lies to prepare immigrant children for life in Finland. The complexity of this stems from the fact that our immigrant

population is incredibly diverse themselves, and there are many ethnic groups that make up this population. (2004, p. 17).

7.1 Russian-speaking Immigrants

Of those aforementioned immigrant groups currently present in Finland, the largest and most quickly expanding group are Russian-speaking immigrants (Jasinskaja-Lahti 2000, p. 3). Not all Russian-speaking immigrants can be qualified as Russian, as many are from countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union. According to research conducted by Jasinskaja-Lahti, these Russian-speaking immigrants make up approximately 40% of the immigrant population in Finland, and the youth component of this group struggles immensely with adaptation and immigration (2000, p. 5). As this group shares one common language, they are frequently categorized as simply, "Russian", by the majority of Finns; when in fact they hail from their own separate and unique countries. This is an obstacle for integration, as during the integration process they start to consider themselves, "Finnish", but are repeatedly referred to as "Russian", thus catalyzing a conflict of ethnic identity during an already difficult time of in their life. (Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000, p. 5).

It is incredibly important that educators are aware of this phenomena. Early childhood educators with Russian-speaking students in their classroom, must acknowledge the diversity amongst them. This diversity must not only be tolerated, or accepted, but appreciated. Goading students to get along with each other and to ignore differences rarely results in a positive outcome. Acknowledging, exploring, and developing an appreciation for differences in the classroom is the key to establishing a thriving ME environment. Early childhood educators are at an advantage, as we receive children before they have developed most stereotypical or discriminatory thought processes based on outer appearance or cultural diversity. Therefore it is crucial that we teach through an ME lens responsibly.

7.2 Somalis

“Their challenging role as pioneers was obvious also in the sense that there had been no previous Somali communities in Finland to cushion the acculturation process, and at a time when the scars of the civil war were still fresh, ethnic organization was a complex process, thus limiting their bridging (intraethnic) social capital” (Alitoppa-Niitamo 2004, p.119).

In the early 1990s, there was a new, rapidly expanding group of immigrants- the Somali refugees. Alitolppa-Niitamo described the first Somali-speaking population, and the youth in particular, in Finland as “Icebreakers”, as they were the first Somali group to arrive in Finland (2004). Through her research she discovered that the youth and young adults of this Somali population were the main lifelines to mainstream Finnish society for the rest of the Somali population. They picked up the language quickly, and quite often were called on to translate and help bridge the cultural gap between themselves and Finnish culture. (Alitolppa-Niitamo 2004). This was a difficult role for those young Somalis to fill, as they themselves needed guidance and role models. One of the implications of this dilemma was the lack of information regarding education and career guidance. (Alitolppa-Niitamo 2004).

In addition to struggling with successful career and education paths, Somalis are also the most stigmatized ethnic group in school settings (Alitolppa-Niitamo 2004 p. 119). Alitolppa-Niitamo states, “In terms of racism, prejudice and anti-immigration sentiment in the receiving society, Somali students seemed to be hit the hardest, with severe consequences to their self-esteem and to the availability of linking social capital” (2004, p. 119). Additionally, there were many challenges for the “icebreaker’s” education, considering many of the youth and young adult population either had not received proper education, or were unaccompanied minors upon arrival to Finland (Alitolppa-Niitamo 2004, p. 120). Alitiippa-Niitamo observed that Somali children faced immense difficulties in school as they struggled to connect their past experiences to traditional “Finnish” cultural aspects (2004). It is apparent that ME approaches would be truly beneficial in addressing this issue .

Educators with Somali students in the classroom must understand these vulnerabilities. It cannot be stressed enough that regardless of prior experience or preconceptions educators have towards *any* ethnic group, they *must* treat each child as an individual, without attaching those negative experiences to an entire group.

9 ME as a Solution to Increase Student Achievement in Early Childhood Settings

Finland's education system is founded on the principle of equality (Blakeslee 2015, p. 9) . However, as classrooms are becoming more and more diverse, and the amount of immigrant children in Finnish schools steadily increases, educational policies must be revised and updated to match the current societal state and maintain equality throughout (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2004, p. 17). Contrary to popular belief, Finland has a great deal of history with diversity, as there are longstanding ethnic minorities in the country- Roma and Swedes. However, Finland is relatively new to international cooperation and immigration. This widespread preconception that Finland is a homogenous society comes largely from nation-building and education that promotes this idea. (Lahti 2007, p. 350).

The current education system in Finland was described by Kivirauma et. al, as the following, “[Finland’s education system] seems to be most suitable for Finnish- and Swedish- speaking middle- and upper- class children, especially girls” (2006, p. 130). This shows to be at least partly true, as while native Finnish children tend to be high performers in school, immigrant children are repeatedly the lowest performing (Blakeslee 2015, p. 14). Räsänen points out that while the national core curriculum makes special provisions for ethnic minority children, they are treated as a separate group, with their own aims. The minority groups are primarily focused on learning about their own culture, to strengthen their own identity, as well as to learn about Finnish culture, to help develop a “bicultural identity”. (2009). The aspects they learn about Finnish culture should, in the end, help them thrive in Finnish society. On the other-hand, the majority is expected to *accept* ethnic diversity and to learn about those cultures coming to Finland from abroad (Rasanen 2009). The aims for each group differ immensely, and while the majority are learning about other cultures and diversity in the classroom setting, it cannot be considered ME, as the content is separate for the most part. Holm & Londen cited by Dervin, et.al, explains that while the Finnish National Core Curriculum does designate a section for immigrant students, the rest of the curriculum does not take into account a culturally diverse student body (2012, p. 2).

Clausen, the developer of What-ever-land Multicultural Education material, states, “The change of attitude towards tolerance begins with early education. Daycare centre is the first meeting place of the immigrant children and Finnish children”.(Tuomarila cited by Clausen 1997, p. 39). To be able to take those first experiences in daycare and kindergarten and develop them into positive and respectful relationships and attitudes,

is a monumental achievement and responsibility. Utilizing ME at such an early age, will foster a respect and appreciation of other cultures that is more difficult to gain as children get older and have developed negative attitudes towards diversity. It will also position those culturally diverse students on the right path, as there is a clear link between language, culture, identity, thinking aptitude, and educational success. (Ogechukwu cited by Clausen 1997, p. 43).

10 Aims of the Project

The aim of this thesis is to produce a handbook for early childhood educators in Helsinki that can offer guidance and inspiration for taking the first steps to implementing ME in their classrooms and facilities. The hand book will include practical theoretical information such as the steps of implementing ME, and the levels of ME that can be implemented, along with an array of ME focal activities and ideas that have been tried and tested in an English kindergarten in Helsinki. As much of the information on ME has been developed in the United States, this handbook will detail activities that the author found specifically suitable for the social climate in Finland. For example, much of the diversity in the US is amongst “native” Americans themselves, not necessarily immigrant children, or children of immigrants. In Finland, it is quite the contrary, Much of the diversity in Finnish schools consists of children who have immigrated with their parents to Finland, or whose parents immigrated here. Thus the language of instruction is usually not their own, it could be a second or third language. Additionally, the culture and customs of Finland are usually completely foreign to the children as they have been living in the micro-society of immediate family members up until the point they join a daycare or kindergarten. These aspects are taken into account whilst selecting material for this thesis.

Through the handbook, the author hopes to provide YSEK, and other kindergartens in Helsinki, with an encouraging and supportive guide, wherein they can find the inspiration and structure to begin to understand and implement ME in their classrooms and facilities. As the handbook will be published solely in English, the target beneficiaries will ideally be the English kindergartens in Helsinki. However, if there is demand for such a handbook to be printed in Finnish, Russian, or Somali, the author will seek to distribute translations accordingly. One aspect cannot be stressed enough: *cultural diversity in the classroom is not a prerequisite to implementing ME*. Certainly, having a diverse classroom is added incentive for a teacher to implement ME, however ME is beneficial to all students.

The City of Helsinki states, "By 2030, the number of foreign language native speakers is forecast to have grown by 73,000" (2013, p. 11). Immigration and diversity are now irrefutable facts of life in Finland, especially in the Helsinki area. The Pisa 2003 report emphasizes this issue as valid stating, "The depth of the Finnish tradition of equality, in fact, will shortly be put to a severe test owing to the increasing numbers of immigrant students and growing cultural heterogeneity" (Väljärvi, J., Kupari, P., Linnakylä, P., Reinikainen, P., Sulkunen, S., Törnroos, J., & Arffman, I. 2007, p. 55). There is a real *need* for educators to be prepared, and equipped, on how to handle this influx of cultural diversity in their classrooms. Lack of preparation and change, on the teachers behalf, to adapt to this new environment of multicultural residents, would be a monumental disservice to their students. Sahlberg, the director general of the Centre for International Mobility and Cooperation in Helsinki, states, "The challenge for Finland is not to try to maintain high student performance, but to strive to keep the country an equal society and maintain its leading position as having the most equitable education system in the world "(2012, p. 21).

Holm and Londen assessed that currently ME is not considered a relevant topic in schools, unless that school has students that are either first or second generation immigrants. ME is therefore not regarded when the school's population is made up of mainly white, native Finns or Swedish-speaking students. (Holm & Londen 2008). The legislation guarding and providing services for immigrant children provides ample support for language learning, offers remedial classes, and encourages teachers to be culturally sensitive. However, what is absent from the legislation is that it does not require that native Finnish students should develop an appreciation for multiculturalism and a multicultural society, therefore the aims of ME are not truly met. (Holm & Londen 2010). While the environment in Finland has the potential to be incredibly conducive for ME, the right actions have not been taken to do so.

There have been positive efforts to implement ME in the Finnish curriculum, for example, Socca- the Centre of Excellence on Social Welfare in Helsinki, implemented the Moniku project in the capital area, with the intent of setting some standard as to what ME should entail in early childhood education (Socca: Pääkaupunkiseudun Sosiaalialan Osaamiskeskus (PSO) 2007). This project was executed in joint collaboration with 21 local Helsinki kindergartens (Venninen, 2009, p. 2). Together they set out to define different aspects of multiculturalism as to how it pertains to an early childhood educator, as well as to outline an approach to ME that could be utilized by early childhood facilities in the capital area; including strategies aimed at improving teacher's multicultural competencies (Socca: PSO, 2007, p. 6). The ME approach was provided

to a wide range of kindergartens in the Helsinki area, with the intent of those kindergartens implementing the methods outlined. The results of this project were documented by Venninen, who sent questionnaires to the beneficiaries of the project in order to gauge the effectiveness and success of it. Venninen's findings revealed (among other things) that many respondents of the survey, or recipients of the newly developed ME approach, felt that ME was not relevant to their facilities, as they were not culturally diverse (2009), a common misconception. Based on those findings, it is clear to see that there is a need for ME training for educators in Helsinki.

While the product of this thesis will not achieve the goal of providing comprehensive training for educators, it *will* simplify the theory of ME in order to clarify the values, goals, and beginning steps; which in turn should surely awaken motivation towards implementation in their classrooms and inspire educators to take further steps in ME.

11 ME Theory in Early Childhood Education

ME can *appear* to be embraced by many early childhood settings as it is easy to display multicultural surface aspects, such as multicultural crafts, holidays, menus, etc. Ladsen-Billings cites McLaren, arguing that multiculturalism has spawned a variety of forms that are far from its origins of liberation and social justice (2003, p. 53). In a sense, ME is competing with itself, a misunderstood version of itself. Multiculturalism has picked up a reputation of being sensitive to other cultures, and depriving oneself of your own culture, which could not be farther from the truth. When ME is understood fully by educators, it can be seen as a tool for high academic performance and educational equality. Nieto describes the imposter forms of ME, as tools educators use to try to increase self-esteem in their diverse students, or purely a curriculum that occasionally substitutes white heroes and figures for diverse ones (2003, p. 1).

Achieving the balance in a classroom, wherein students feel confident to speak up, start discussions, and comment their opinions is something that every educator strives for. When students become involved in an activity/discussion is when they are most apt to learn. ME encourages teachers to facilitate such action. Instead of simply listening to the teacher, and retaining information at face value, students are emboldened to criticise the facts, and analyse them from different perspectives. In addition to this, every student benefits from a teacher who customizes their teaching style in order to achieve optimum learning potential from each student (Banks 1998). Students of diverse cultural background are surely contented to see aspects of their own culture within the

school's materials and content. With these components of ME, the classroom becomes a thriving learning environment, making each child a priority.

Banks states, "Multicultural education is necessary to help all of the nation's future citizens acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to survive in the twenty-first century. ...A nation whose citizens cannot negotiate on the world's multicultural global stage will be tremendously disadvantaged, and its very survival will be imperiled" (Banks 2005, p. 35). It is important for Finland to look to other nations who have had more experience with diversity and immigration in order to see what issues arose within education, and how they are/were being handled. Cultural competence is essential in this day and age, luckily there are models for Finland to look to in order to avoid mistakes that have already been made. In other words, history does not need to repeat itself.

Banks explains that in order for people to be participating citizens, it is crucial for them to possess the cultural competence needed to work with culturally diverse people. He continues that education is strongly linked to citizen participation, and where there is a lack of education, there is also a lack of participation. (1998). Therefore, if our culturally diverse students are not being educated in an equitable manner, they will not participate at the same rate (Banks 1998) as their native Finnish counterparts. This is already evident in the United States, where people of color vote at a much lower rate than white Americans (Banks 1998). If that is the case, and no steps are taken to justify the situation, we are passively promoting institutionalized prejudice. The majority group will continue to dominate decision-making and authority positions, while minority groups remain subordinate.

The increased flow of migration to Finland has resulted in the lack of political integration of its immigrants, and the reality of an accurate representative democracy fading quickly (André, S., Dronkers, J., Need, A. 2014, p. 7). The three areas of integration needed for a truly successful integration in a foreign society are social integration, economic integration, and political integration (Andre, et.al 2014, p. 7). All three of these areas support each other, and are in some ways interdependent on each other. For example, Andre et. al states, " Political integration[...] could lead to more social and economic integration and vice versa [...] electoral participation could be said to be an important element of political participation for every citizen of a country, turning out to vote is the most common and important act citizens take in a democracy" (2012, p. 7). As noted, Finland already possesses a notably low measure of immigrant political integration. A key approach to addressing this issue, is to start encouraging participation

and inclusion at the early childhood level, influencing immigrant children positively through ME.

The stakeholder of this project, YSEK, maintains a highly culturally diverse student body, around 80% of the children hail from a foreign background. The implications of utilizing ME at YSEK are substantial. The opportunity to implement ME in such a diverse setting is stimulating not only for the educator, but also for the students. However, in addition to being stimulating, there is a chance that the task of hosting such a variety of cultures could prove to be overwhelming for the educator. Striving to give each culture balanced consideration could prove to be a difficult task for an educator new to ME. Taking that into consideration, the beneficiaries of this handbook should patiently implement ME activities and ideas, waiting for opportune moments rather than attempting to implement everything hastily.

As previously mentioned, this handbook is not a guide for ME curriculum reform, nor is it a complete guide to implementing ME in your classroom. The literature and information on the latter is vast, and subsequently cannot be condensed adequately to be included in the product. This guide will provide various practical, theoretical aspects that will guide the educator in implementing introductory aspects of ME, whilst additionally providing activities and ideas for the classroom that have been specifically selected with Finland's immigrant demographic in mind.

12 Process of the Project

This project began with the author and the workplace partner, YSEK, establishing what the final product should entail. YSEK expressed the need for a tool that could guide their early childhood educators in the implementation of ME. Therefore it was decided that data should be collected using key words relevant to the workplace partner's desire, such as: immigrant education in Finland, ME, ME in Finland, immigrants in Finnish schools, multiculturalism, foreigners in Finland, ME activities, and early childhood education.

The tool should encompass those core, integral aspects of ME that are not interchangeable: equity, justice, and mutual understanding and appreciation for differences. The tool should also be primarily composed of activities and ideas that are able to be implemented in the early childhood setting, sensitive to ESL (or foreign language)

learners, relevant to the ethnic groups at large in Helsinki, and emphasize intercultural activity.

12.1 Data Collection

To prepare for the selection of material for this qualitative study, the author completed a thorough literature review on a variety of sources concerning ME, multiculturalism, immigrants in Finland, and ME in Finland. As there is already an abundance of quality literature regarding the topic, the author chose to utilize literature review as her primary data collection method. This study was exploratory in nature. Guest, Macqueen, and Namey, outline the tasks in exploratory studies as, reviewing data before any analysis is even conducted, looking for any themes or trends to then base your analysis on. In contrast, confirmatory studies generally set their analytical categories before reviewing any data. (2012, p. 7). Other methods of collection were considered. However, in order for this thesis to have internal validity, it was imperative to conduct substantial literature review from the frontrunners of ME. Interviews of ME educators were considered, but due to a lack of accessible ME educators in Finland, this idea was quickly abandoned.

Material was chosen based on its relevance to the following keywords: immigrant education in Finland, multicultural education, immigrants in Finnish schools, multiculturalism, foreigners in Finland, and early childhood education. Material connecting ME with Finland was obtained in favour of others, however foundation information regarding the theory and practice of ME was collected mainly from sources derivative of the United States. As mentioned above, there is an abundance of literature connected with ME. Therefore, one must select material prudently considering the fact that there are many "imposter" versions of ME. The author was deliberate in only selecting material that upheld those key values of ME- equity, justice, and mutual understanding and appreciation for differences. Material that was produced by renowned authors of ME literature was also favoured as to guarantee validity. The material selected consists of various academic articles, books, studies, and statistics regarding the subject.

12.2 Data Analysis

During the literature review, excerpts were chosen through thematic analysis. Guest, et. al., make the following comparison of thematic analysis, "Thematic analyses move beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes" (2012, p. 10). The objectives

of thematic analysis aligned well with the research task at hand, therefore it was selected as the data analysis method. As much of the literature is derivative of the United States, it was important to find aspects that were relevant to Finland as well. While ME is relevant in any educational setting, much of the material originating in the United States is tailored for African Americans and Hispanic/Latino Americans. While the ethnic group in an activity can be substituted and replaced easily, some content is not relevant for *immigrants and/or children of immigrants*. Therefore, material specific to the handbook acquired its own criteria. The criteria for selection of handbook material was contingent on foreign language sensitivity, relevance for the ethnic groups at large in Finland, target age group of the activities, and intercultural emphasis.

Thematic analysis was executed using the following keywords: immigrant education in Finland, ME, ME in Finland, immigrants in Finnish schools, multiculturalism, foreigners in Finland, and early childhood education. The author manually searched for recurring themes within the text to gather sufficient, relevant information regarding the topic. Once the author identified a sufficient amount of themes, she interpreted, analyzed, and connected them. Guest et. al., state that thematic analyses is most useful when , “capturing the complexities of meaning with a textual data set” (2012, p. 11).

12.3 Process of Making the Handbook

A rough draft of the handbook was compiled and critiqued by both the author and YSEK. Thereafter the activities and ideas in the handbook were tested in the classroom setting by the educators at YSEK. Activities and ideas that did not receive the expected outcome were reconsidered for the handbook. The handbook was sent for practical testing 2 times during the production period. After each testing period, the staff members of YSEK along with the author discussed the successes, as well as areas of improvement, for the handbook. Revisions and adjustments were consequently formulated and discussed among YSEK staff members and the author in order to build the optimum product. Some aspects of co-design were present in the production of this thesis. For example, the process of production involved both the author and the stakeholder. Ideas and critique from the stakeholder were valued, and consequently altered the final product. However, as the original framework and rough draft was designed solely by the author (based on the needs of the stakeholder), the co-design method was not fully met. Rather the handbook was further developed from its original form based on feedback from the stakeholder.

12.4 Distribution of the Handbook

The handbook was created and published as an eBook. It is available for download through iTunes, and can be searched under its title, "Implementing Multicultural Education". An electronic document was chosen as paper products are becoming more and more obsolete, and more importantly, electronic access is environmentally responsible. . The latter is an incredibly important facet in YSEK's curriculum. They encourage children to recycle and reuse products as much as possible, as well as amongst their staff members. Additionally, online access makes the handbook readily available to any/all educators interested.

12.5 Evaluation of the process

This project was challenging, as the majority of material on ME is derivative of the United States. There is not an abundance of information regarding ME utilisation within schools in Finland. Additionally, the majority of material that is available regarding ME in Finland is written primarily in Finnish, therefore translation of such material proved to be time-consuming and at times, validity could not always be assured, as the author is not a native Finnish speaker. Therefore, English material was used in favour of Finnish. In this respect, the lack of an abundance of Finnish material could be viewed as a weakness of this thesis. As this thesis focuses on ME in early childhood settings in Helsinki, it is incredibly important to represent Helsinki in the both the data collected, and the thesis itself. The author strived to assure this was done. However, given the lack of material in English regarding the topic, Helsinki-based material could be under-represented in this thesis. To compensate for this shortcoming, the author was sure to include sufficient Finland-based material.

The collaboration with YSEK guaranteed that the final product would be satisfactory for them. This was an integral aspect towards the success of this project. However, additional revising and editing done in collaboration with YSEK, and even with the parents of the children attending the kindergarten, would have undoubtedly benefitted the final product.

12.6 Assessment of the Handbook

YSEK employees were satisfied with the final product, which is essential as they will be the educators utilizing it. The process of receiving feedback and critique from YSEK assured that the end product would be satisfactory to them. Feedback from the employees revealed that the children at YSEK enjoyed the activities from the handbook as well. As the children are also stakeholders in the project, this is a favorable reaction. As the developer of the handbook, the author was satisfied with the content of the handbook. As an educator, the author determined the activities as effective and productive for the stakeholders.

13 Stakeholder Gains

Before we outline the stakeholder's gains, we must first determine who the stakeholders are. Clearly, YSEK the institution (management and owners), and the educators are both stakeholder's in this final product. The information and guidance they will gain from the handbook will benefit their institution as a whole. Educators will be able to address cultural aspects/differences with some guidance, and reap the rewards of an involved, integrated classroom with budding intercultural skills. The owner and manager gain the ability to provide its current and prospective employees with reference material regarding ME. Looking at ME from a holistic perspective, we can also rule that the students and families affiliated with YSEK are stakeholders in this product. Enabling children to begin to question the facts, analyze aspects from multiple perspectives, and identify and address inequalities can undoubtedly be considered a gain. For the family unit, having such a child will encourage openness and appreciation for diversity throughout the family.

14 Purpose of ME

The purpose of ME is to instil in children the ability to make their own judgements based on facts, without taking others' prejudices and preconceptions as their own. ME prepares children to think about aspects critically, and to look at issues from the perspectives of all parties involved. This is a crucial skill, as we are surrounded by "propaganda" in everyday life. Media, movies, literature, TV shows, all of these information outlets have an affect on how we compartmentalize other human beings, whether con-

sciously or subconsciously. ME encourages children to look at individuals as just that, individuals. It encourages both teachers and children to look for the immense benefit of being exposed to other cultures, rather than to view cultural differences as foreign and something to be feared. The end goal of ME is to create socially /civilly responsible individuals who strive to uphold equality in all aspects of life.

15 Learning Outcomes for the Author

I have learned an immeasurable amount of knowledge throughout the life cycle of this project. I feel that I have achieved a holistic understanding of ME. The benefit to myself as an educator is vast, and along with that comes a responsibility to strive to inform other educators about the need for ME. In addition, I am also able to identify those “imposters” of ME, which is equally as important.

Not only did this project benefit myself as an educator, but also as a social services practitioner. I believe that the aspects and values of ME are applicable to life as a whole. In particular, the work of a social services practitioner stands to gain from utilizing an ME lens. The ability to look at issues from multiple perspectives, and treat each individual as someone with intrinsic value, will benefit the strengths identifying aspect of social services and social work. The ability to think critically without taking information at face value will aid in providing fair and unprejudiced service. I have learned that ME is not simply a classroom initiative to encourage acceptance of diversity. In essence, it is how I wish to conduct myself as a human being, as a global citizen.

16 Discussion

The strengths of this thesis lie within the accessibility and validity of its content. The author has developed content that is accessible to virtually all educators on-line. An additional strength is the validity of its sources. As much of the foundation information on ME was derived from frontrunners and founders of the movement, the content can be trusted. Additionally, this thesis was created by an educator, for educators, and even tested by educators. Therefore the content is realistic and practical. It is the author’s hope that the final product of this thesis will implicate positive action for reform on behalf of early childhood educators. Additionally, as the final product has been produced

in English, it would be prodigious if the product was used by the English early childhood facilities in Helsinki.

While there is sufficient Finland-specific content, there is a lack of Helsinki-specific sources and content, wherein lies the weakness of this study. Therefore this study aspires to implicate further research on the topic, as it would greatly benefit the ME movement in Finland.

16.1 Ethical Considerations and Validity

As this study was conducted primarily using text and existing knowledge of ME, there were no obvious ethical considerations in regard to participants of the study and procurement of data. Additionally, as the material obtained was not connected to any governmental or private institution, no research permits were needed. However, the author held the ethical obligation to present the facts and results of the study as a true representative of ME, withholding differing personal interpretations and biases.

As previously mentioned, the validity of this study was reinforced by gathering material specifically from renowned, front-runners of ME. Supplementary material was analysed to be sure that it upheld the same values and aims of ME before being used in this thesis. Validity can also be ascertained from the fact that the final product of this thesis has been tested in the field by educators in Helsinki, Finland. This speaks to the reliability of the product. It has been tested and amended in order to provide the best possible tool for early childhood educators.

16.2 Limitations

The final product of this thesis aims to guide early childhood educators in implementing rudimentary steps of ME. Additionally, to provide the educator with an activity/idea bank from where they can utilize or draw inspiration. Obviously, the limitations of this product are substantial, as it is not a sufficient tool to guide curriculum reform, and is not so expansive that it can afford to be the lone tool a ME educator uses. However, in any case, ME in practice is not a finite concept that can be wholly encompassed in one paper. Each educator holds the ability to make ME their own, and to draw from their own experiences when lesson planning and holding session. It is the author's hope that this accessible tool will inspire early childhood educators in Helsinki to take the first steps in implementing ME within their classrooms. Given the vast variations of ME which have

been interpreted and conveyed inappropriately, this thesis aims to offer a clear, simple explanation of ME, along with a “starter kit”.

17 Conclusions

The objective of this thesis was to provide early childhood educators in Helsinki, Finland with a handbook outlining how to begin to implement ME in their classrooms. Furthermore, this thesis strove to inspire early childhood educators to begin to think and teach through an ME lens. Included in the handbook is an activity bank, wherein ME educators can select and implement ME activities.

This thesis, along with the reference material, is available for download on-line under its title.

ME should not be a luxury that only select children have the privilege of being immersed in, it is a fundamental right for children to be able to learn how to thrive in our increasingly pluralistic society. As early childhood educators, we hold the integral position of influence and authority from a young age. What an opportunity we hold to guide our students towards intercultural prosperity, equality as a cornerstone for their values, and courage to address injustices.

Given the relatively recent influx of diversity in Helsinki due to immigration and refugee/asylee policies, we are in a unique position to look to our neighbours for guidance. The United States has extensive history with educating diverse student bodies. Along the way there have been blunders that Finland has the chance to learn from and tackle from the start. Educating our children from a young age to enjoy and flourish amidst diversity, promoting equality as a core value, encouraging children to look at issues critically- all of these aspects are promoted within ME. Likewise, all of these aspects lend to a society accepting of diversity and conducive to equality.

Finland already possess statistically low performance among foreign-language speaking children in their schools. In an effort to prevent the huge academic divide amongst minorities and the majority, as the United States is currently experiencing, action must be taken to address the deficiencies within the education system. Finland is revered for its education system that is built on the cornerstone of equality, however the rise in diversity has been a challenge to its success.

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First Edition

Implementing Multicultural Education

Within Early Childhood
Facilities in Helsinki, Finland

April Hart

Multicultural Education strives to achieve educational equity, working towards providing all children with equal access and opportunity to succeed.

- I. The Handbook**
- II. What is Multicultural Education?**
- III. What Makes a Multicultural Educator?**
- IV. Why Multicultural Education in Helsinki?**
- V. Implementation of the Handbook**
- VI. Activity & Idea Bank for Educators**

I. The Handbook

This handbook has been developed to serve as a practical, introductory guide to implementing Multicultural Education in early childhood settings. The activities and advices you will find in this handbook will aid to establish a rich, intercultural learning environment. The content for this handbook has been specifically selected for educators in Helsinki, Finland. As such, it aims to complement the existing National Curriculum of Finland, whilst being mindful of the structure and organization of early childhood education facilities in Helsinki.

It is important to understand that the advices and activities in this handbook are not cookie-cutter and finite. Rather, educators should take a pragmatic approach when utilizing this handbook. Educators should know their class well enough to understand whether certain activities should be amended in order to yield better outcomes. Therefore, use your own competence as an educator to gauge which activities and advices work best for your classroom. Furthermore, there are numerous models and approaches to ME. “The Levels of Integration”, approach by Banks is the supported approach in this handbook.

The activities in this handbook are centered around the 5 key Multicultural Concepts set forth by Banks, and further revised by Melindez:

Key Multicultural Concepts

Culture, Ethnicity, identity

Culture, culture beliefs, cultural symbols, cultural celebrations, ethnic groups in Finland/my community, cultural diversity, cultural groups

Socialization and interaction

Child rearing patterns, family patterns, values, self-concept, social interaction patterns, racism, prejudice, discrimination

Intercultural communication and perception

Languages, communication patterns, non-verbal communication, symbols, world/life view, oral traditions, literature and folklore

Power and status

Social classes, locus of influence, status of women, men, and children

The movement of ethnic groups

Migration, immigration, purposes of migration and immigration, immigrants in the community

(Banks cited in Melindez 1997, p. 222)

II. What is Multicultural Education?

Simply put, Multicultural Education (hereinafter “ME”) strives to give each child the best possible learning experience and environment (Tiedt 1998, p 27). It utilizes materials from different cultural backgrounds in lessons, activities, and material. This creates a rich, multicultural environment for students to learn and develop within. Exposure to such cultural diversity provides children with the opportunity to develop intercultural skills, which are integral in today’s pluralistic society.

ME also encourages the utilization of different teaching styles in order to give each child equal access to the information being taught. These teaching styles assure every child has equal opportunity to learn as the next. Therefore a ME educator should always be open to trying new teaching methods- even utilizing several teaching methods- in their classroom, contingent on what kind of learners are present. Through utilization of these culturally appreciative materials and teaching methods, multicultural educators strive to attain educational equity within their classrooms and schools.

The 5 Dimensions of Multicultural Education

The 5 Dimensions of ME, as defined by Banks, are all essential in creating success with ME. Below is a figure illustrating the 5 dimensions of ME.

The Benefits of Multicultural Education

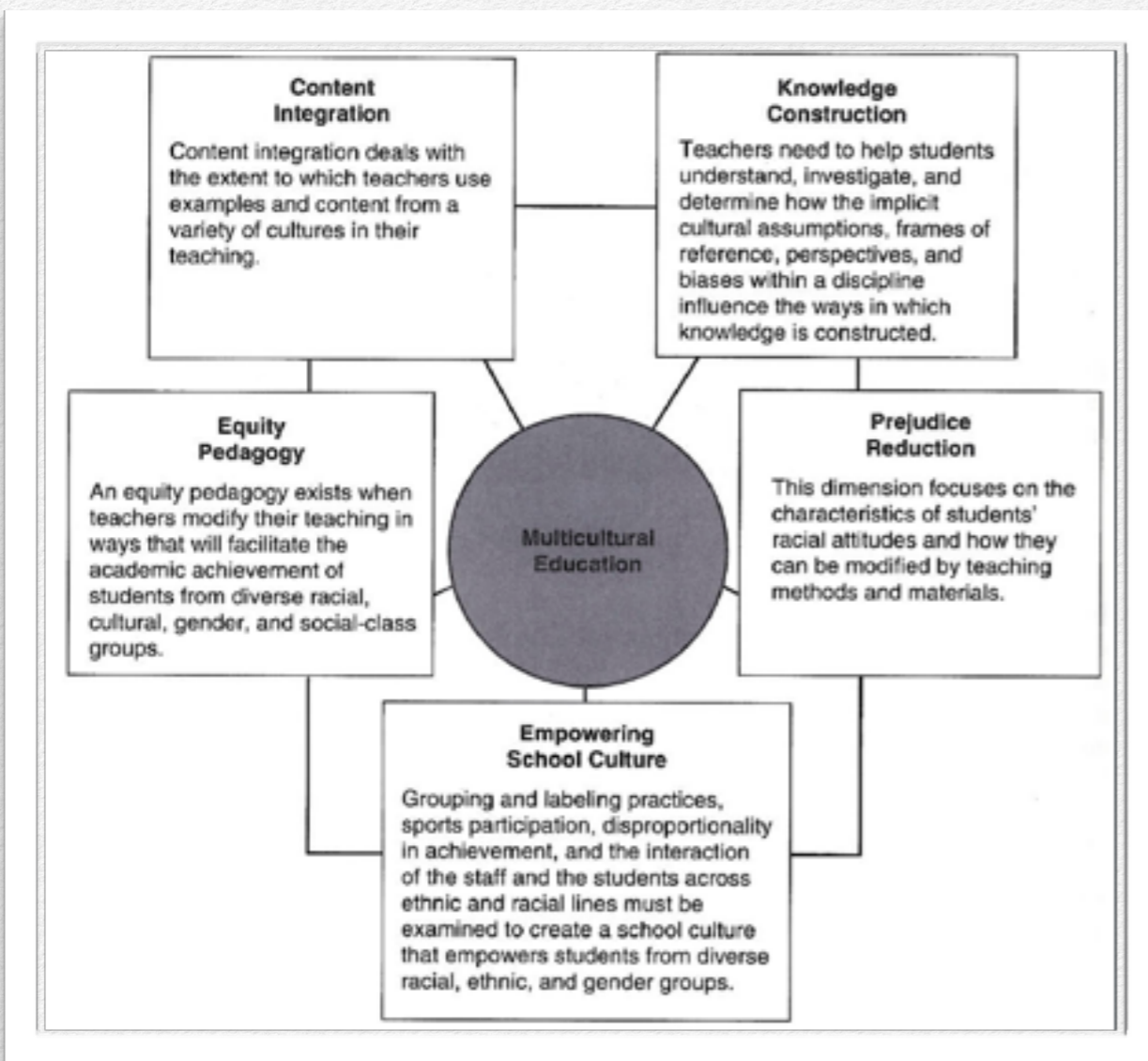


FIGURE 1. The 5 dimensions of Multicultural Education as defined by Banks (2009).

The benefits of ME are widespread, and are not limited to benefiting solely the culturally diverse individuals present in the classroom. All children who are immersed in ME at a young age were found to possess higher than average skills in perspective-taking, and were more open to learning about other ethnic groups' values and contributions to society (Banks 1998). Studies have also shown that those students immersed in ME (both minority and majority students) expressed a greater feeling of commonality between their own values and other ethnicities' values (Gurin, Nagda, Lopez 2004).

Most importantly, ME strives to achieve educational equity, giving each child equal access and opportunity to succeed as the next. All of these ingredients make for a more communal and productive society- first in the early childhood setting, and then later in the real world.

As an educator, you hold the key to a successful ME classroom. In the following chapters, we will go over the makings of a ME educator, the need for ME in Helsinki, and how to properly implement this handbook.

III. What Makes a Multicultural Educator?

“Becoming a multicultural teacher means becoming a multicultural person” (Nieto- Melendez 1997).

The key to succeeding in the implementation of Multicultural Education, lies within teachers and educators (Melendez 1997, p. 211). In order to be a facilitator of Multicultural Education, educators should seek to exhibit the following attributes and attitudes:

- A base knowledge in child development
 - Upholds tolerance, respect, and openness in their classroom
 - Always be willing to try new methods and approaches to benefit their students
 - Holds all children to the same expectations, and understands that all children can be high achievers
 - Believes in the importance of multiculturalism, both in our society, and in our classrooms.
- Go through these and consider whether or not they hold true to you as an educator!**

- Is committed to helping children understand social diversity, and is also aware of their own biases, prejudices, and presumptions and works towards deconstructing them.
- Interacts with parents and collaborators in a respectful manner, for the benefit of the child.
- Has a positive, open, and willing attitude towards themselves and others.

(Melendez 1997, p. 212)

We must be open and honest when evaluating ourselves as educators. Before attempting to implement ME, these very basic attributes should be present.

What makes us different?

Educators carry a heavy responsibility, educating our future generations and promoting their well-being and self-image. What separates educators from Multicultural Educators?

A Multicultural Educator is characterized by the following traits:

- I. They are aware of the lack of educational equity within the education system
- II. They recognize when unfair treatment is taking place based on the child's group affiliations- whether it be social class, ethnicity, or gender.
- III. They have a proactive attitude that pushes them to address and rectify those actions of inequality.

(Melendez 1997, p. 155)

“Envisioning empowering classrooms where our young children will find themselves and their cultures validated is the dream that sustains this work.”

(Melendez 1997, p.vii)

IV. Why Multicultural Education in Helsinki?

As the population in Helsinki becomes more and more diverse, educators hold the responsibility of ensuring that each child in their classroom, regardless of racial or ethnic background, has the equal opportunity to thrive academically. According to statistics posted by the City of Helsinki, nearly every tenth person aged 25-34 living in Helsinki is of foreign origin (Official Statistics of Finland (OSF) 2012).

With these numbers climbing every year, it is incredibly important to prioritize ME in early childhood facilities throughout the city. Immigration, and the diversity it brings, is still relatively new to Finland, and Helsinki holds the bulk of foreign residents from abroad (OSF 2012). Therefore their schools should begin to take a more active role in promoting multiculturalism, which can be more effectively achieved when utilizing ME. This is a responsibility that early educators hold, as we play such a substantial role in shaping attitudes in the first social environment (or society, if you will) many youngsters will be a part of.

Levels of Integration of Multicultural Content

➔ *Contributions Approach*

Focuses on heroes and holidays. Purpose is to recognize contributions of other cultural groups.

➔ *Additive Approach*

Curriculum remains the same, but includes selected cultural themes. They are “added” to the existing curriculum

➔ *Transformation Approach*

Curriculum is developed around themes and concepts related to target cultural groups. Children examine a variety of issues from the perspectives of different cultural groups.

➔ *Social Action Approach*

Curriculum is purposefully developed to allow children to ponder and take action on a variety of social issues related to diversity.

(Banks & Banks 2009 cited in Melindez 1997, p. 185)

V. Implementation of the Handbook

Surface attempts of ME, while they can be honest and worthy attempts, sometimes do more harm than good. ME educators should strive to teach about diversity while promoting unity.

More often than not, surface attempts of ME teach about diversity, but rather than unify, they compartmentalize other cultures into sub-units of a curriculum- a certain month in the school year, holiday celebrations, or cuisine. Which in turn creates awareness, but can also create a further divide between cultures.

Therein lies the key to ME, to teach your curriculum from an ME standpoint- continuously and fluidly combining the two into one aspect, giving diversity a permanent seat at the table.

Remember, this handbook is not a sufficient guide to implementing curriculum reform. This handbook gives you, the educator, an understanding of ME, as well as introductory steps (and activities) you can follow in order to begin to implement ME.

Keeping that in mind, review the following approaches to understand which one aligns most with your readiness and ability to implement ME.

Content Infusion

As this is not a guide for a full curriculum overhaul, depending on how you use the activities and advice in this handbook, your approach will likely fall under the Additive Approach or Transformation Approach. Implementing ME in your current curriculum would likely qualify as the Additive Approach, as you are not changing the curriculum, rather adding to it. If you are in a position that allows you to change your curriculum, and you're motivated to do so, the Transformation Approach, and eventually the Social Action approach, would be ideal goal levels of integration.

Planning is essential for a successful ME curriculum. Before you start to select which activities to implement in your classroom, you must first examine your existing curriculum critically, and discover where you could benefit the most from integrating multicultural content. As this is an introductory guide to taking those first steps in implementing ME, developing a new ME curriculum will not be discussed.

How can you start to implement ME into your existing curriculum? Use this checklist Melindez offers in order to guide the process:

Content Infusion Checklist:

- Go through your existing curriculum and list the topics and themes that you teach.
- Review the profiles of your students, and note their culturally diverse traits (ethnicities, religion, languages, social class, exceptionalities)
- Look through the list of topics and themes you teach, and consider where you could infuse multicultural information and material. Mark those topics and themes so you can refer to them later. Your first priority should be infusing cultural content relative to what is present in your classroom- then you can consider infusing others.
- Brainstorm how you could infuse multicultural content into those topics and themes that you marked, and be sure to write down your ideas.
- Rewrite those themes and topics into your curriculum (in other words, have them planned), and try it out in the classroom!
- Document how the children react, that way you can compare and contrast reactions to the content and your own teaching style.

(1997, p. 269)

Before Beginning..

Before planning a ME curriculum, an educator must achieve the following:

1. Be aware that multiculturalism must begin with adults.
2. Know the students and their cultural backgrounds.
3. Expect conflict and model conflict resolution.
4. Bring the outside world into the classroom and help parents see the value of learning, including play, firsthand
5. Present modern concepts of families and occupations.
6. Use literature to enrich children's learning and understandings about cultural pluralism.

(Tiedt 1999, p.32)

VI. Activity & Idea Bank for Educators

I. Activities that can be infused into any topic

Role Play

When there is an opportunity for students to role play, allow them to act out their scenario showing actions/traits that are unique to their own family/culture.

When role playing with props, integrate ethnic props, e.g., eating utensils (chopsticks, Japanese soup spoons), metal Indian serving trays, European teapots and cups, Asian wok, jewelry, empty spice bottles with laminated picture labels, etc..

Books with Multicultural Themes

Use storytime as an opportunity to explore other cultures and customs.

Be sure to keep your storytime interactive, encourage questions and comments! Ask students their opinions and perspectives on the main topic/message of the book. You will see how many differing viewpoints are in your classroom

Brainstorming

Encourage students to brainstorm when introducing new topics! All ideas should be welcome and documented, .e.g., teacher can write them on the whiteboard, encourage self-expression on the topic. Quantity over quality- all ideas are welcome!

Offer multicultural topics for brainstorming.

Persona Dolls

Use a doll (or puppet), as your persona doll. Assign that doll with any diverse trait (e.g., ethnicity, religion, social class, gender, handicappism, race). This doll can be used in learning stories that the teacher creates and tells. You can use this doll to give the perspective of someone with the diverse trait that your doll possesses.

II. Projects

Celebrations from Around the World

Involve parents in birthday celebrations! Ask parents to share how birthdays are celebrated in their native country (including Finnish children), and try to reenact them at your school. If reenactment is too time-consuming, ask the parent to bring pictures

of such celebrations, and display them in your classroom for the week.

Other celebrations and holidays: Ask parents to bring pictures of such events, and using those pictures, construct a *classroom holiday timeline*- including each countries' celebrations.

International Pen Pals

Try to find another early childhood establishment abroad that is willing to act as pen pals to your own. As both establishments benefit from the exchange, this should be relatively easy to secure.

Dwellings

Explore dwellings around the world- mud huts, tents, apartment buildings, etc. Have a group of 2-3 children pick one type of dwelling to create. Depending on capability, you could have them each make their own version of the same dwelling, or work on one together. Dedicate time to first explore *why* that kind of dwelling is popular in it's native country. Ask children what materials they will need to build their dwellings. After materials have been collected, spend time during the day working on their dwellings.

Choose one dwelling to build, life-size, in the classroom, e.g., a teepee or igloo.

Classroom Cookbook

Send a letter to parents explaining the Classroom Cookbook Project. Ask parents about recipes traditional to their culture, compile those recipes and build a classroom cookbook. Use a blank notebook and assign pages to each family. The children can illustrate the recipe (either drawing and coloring the final product, or the steps).

Talk about similarities within the recipes, such as common ingredients or cooking methods.

Optional: Select one recipe a week to try to make and eat with the students. Be sure to credit the family the recipe came from. Invite parents to participate!

Classroom Quilt

Discuss the tradition of a quilt. Construct a classroom quilt made out of paper plates. Each child can make three plates, one with their portrait, another depicting their favorite activity, and the last one with their favorite story or character. String them all together, and display on a wall for everyone to see their part in the classroom quilt.

Multicultural Games

Ask students (and/or parents, depending on student's age) to share their favorite games. If possible, make a version of the

game using craft supplies and make it available for students to play with. Keep instructions for the games in a binder.

Add games or dances from other cultures as well (not present in the classroom), Some examples include: Ghana- *The clapping game*, Jamaica- *Sally Water*, Chile- *Guessing game*, Taiwan- *Clapstick blind man's bluff*, and Brazil- *Bossa Nova**

*These games can be found in: Nelson, W., Glass, B. 1992. *International Playtime: Classroom games and dances from around the world*. IL: Fearon Teachers' Aids

Multicultural Month + Lunch

Dedicate one month out of the year to exploring the cultures present in your classroom/school. Encourage parents to come in and share anything they find important within their culture. Celebrate the end of the month with a Multicultural Lunch, wherein parents (and teachers) of the kindergarten bring in traditional food dishes for students, teachers, and other parents to try.

"Where did I come from?"- Genealogy project

Involve parents in filling in a questionnaire with their child at home, documenting their origins as far back as possible. The questionnaire can be formed as such:

Where did my family come from?

My father came from_____.

and my mother came from_____.

My grandfather came from_____,

My grandmother came from_____.

Explore the locations on your world map. Mark where each child's ancestors originated.

International Garden

Find out which vegetables and/or flowers can be grown, or started, indoors. For example, lettuce can be grown indoors year round. Of course, if you have the ability to grow outdoors there will be an abundance of choices. There are plenty of multi-cultural flowers, herbs, and vegetables to choose from. For example, tomatoes are native to Peru and zucchini is native to Italy. When it is time to harvest, use the vegetables yielded from the garden to make a salad for the class/school.

Recycling

Every country calls earth home. It is so important that children understand the importance of caring for our planet. Spend the month of Father's Day dedicated to recycling. During this month, plan trips to the local recycling center, set up recycling bins made out of cardboard boxes in the classroom- turn sorting into a game, discuss the benefits of public transportation as opposed to a personal automobile, and talk about the current state of the earth and climate change.

At the end of the month, organize a Father's Day Exhibition that will showcase projects made out of recycled household items, made by the child and their dad (or other guardian figure).

Notify parents ahead of time, and allow them to complete their projects at home. On the day of the exhibit have children bring in their projects, and set up a museum style exhibition for everyone to enjoy.

III. Activities

"Me" Collage

Have children bring pictures of themselves, their families, and any important events in their life. There are no rules as to which pictures they should bring, anything that they consider important to them is sufficient.

You can either outline squares on the walls of the classroom with tape and let children make their collages within each square (using tac to attach the pictures), or you can provide a piece of card-stock, or cardboard, for them to attach the pictures to.

Let them draw, decorate, and cut out the letters of their name, and put them above their collage.

Manners and Gestures

Explore manners and common gestures in other cultures. For example, in Korea or Japan, it is rude to point using your index finger, and it is customary to bow when greeting someone. Pick a day to spend observing the gestures and manners of another country in your own classroom.

What is Fair?

Discuss inequality with the children by discussing situations that they felt were unfair (replace the word *inequality* with *fair/unfair*). Make a list of incidences the children felt were unfair. Talk together with them about why it was unfair. Use role-play to let them act out what they consider to be fair.

Celebrations

Brainstorm what a celebration is.

Have each child write down (or draw) the 3 most important celebrations for their family.

Talk about *why* it is observed, *how* is it observed (what do people do for the celebration), *who* celebrates it (adults, children, or both), and *where* is it celebrated (home, church, temple, etc.).

Children can draw pictures of their favorite celebration. Pictures can be displayed in the classroom, under the heading of “Celebrations around the world”. This can be added to the aforementioned celebration project as well.

Welcome!

Make a “Welcome!” sign for your classroom. On the sign, include translations of, “Welcome”, written in every language present in your classroom. During the making of the sign, ask children to ask their parents for their native language translation of “Welcome”.

Classroom Paper-figure Chain

Look up instructions for making a paper figure chain, as it involves some folding and cutting. Make sure to make as many paper figures as there are children in the classroom. Let each child decorate their own paper figure. Hang the chain up in the classroom for display.

Animal Metaphors

“If I were an animal, I’d be a _____ because _____”. Encourage children to pick an animal they would like to be, and explain why they picked the animal.

Toys from Around the World

Discuss how children around the world make their own toys. For example, Ugandan children make dolls out of leaves and fabric, and children in England turn poppy flowers into dolls. Af-

ter reviewing different types of homemade toys from around the world, split the children into groups of 2-3. Let them choose which toy they would like to replicate, or they can use their own ideas for making a homemade toy. Make sure to provide each group with all materials needed.

Classroom Nation

What is a nation? Have the children brainstorm what a nation is made up of- government, history, language, and culture. Talk about the importance of a constitution and what it entails. Have the children make their own constitution for the classroom. Put the “laws” they create onto a display board as an art project, and display them in the classroom as the classroom rules

They can also name their “country” (classroom). This can be done at the beginning of the year, and could even be their group name. Involving children in making classroom rules is beneficial in behavior management.

In connection with this, children can make their own flags, national animal, national emblem, and create a national anthem in their music class.

If I was in charge of the world...

Let each child come up with endings to the sentence. Use variations of the sentence as well, e.g., If I was the principal of this school..., If I was a teacher..., If I was the president..., If I was an adult..., etc.

International Collections

- I. Start collecting items from different countries in the world. Encourage children to bring items from home to add to the collection, but also have children search for international items, such as pictures when looking through a magazine or newspaper. Items can also be acquired through the international pen pal program.
 - II. Set-up a mini-museum using those items acquired in the collecting portion of this activity. Make exhibits and displays to use for the museum, and pick a day when another class (or parents) can come visit the museum.
-

Translate names into other languages

Start with the cultures present in your classroom. Use those languages and translate the names of the children in your classroom. They will be excited to use their “new” names for the rest of the hour/day.

Discover Names

- I. Find out the origins of each surname in the classroom. Involve the parents to try to uncover the origins. Mark the origins on the class world map.

II. Research what each given name in the classroom means, and have children draw a picture to illustrate what their name means.

I. *Discuss how families are unique*

Discuss with children what a family is. What does family mean to them? You will see there are cultural deviations regarding the definition of family.

Discuss different *kinds* of families. Be sure to talk about families where one parent is present, parents are same sex, or only grandparents are present, as to make each child comfortable in making their family tree regardless of having a traditional family structure. Be *sure* to not attach any negative connotations to any family structure.

II. *Make a family tree*

Send a letter home with parents explaining the family tree activity, ask them to make a list of the family members that their child can use for the family tree.

Provide each child with an outline of a tree (suitable for the assignment), and let them fill in their family members. Display their trees in the classroom.

Self-Portraits

Create self-portrait using materials such as skin colored paints, buttons, yarn, strips and shapes of paper, etc.

Height and Weight Similarities

Measure the height and weight of each child, document the findings, and find/discuss similarities with the children.

Additionally, you can prepare a graph showing the physical characteristics about each child. Include the height and weight measurements, and add aspects such as hair and eye color, skin color, size of hands and feet, length of hair, etc.

“This is Me” Book

Let each child create a book dedicated to themselves. Include a self portrait drawn by the child, drawings of favorite sports and games, birthday information, favorite food, favorite color, etc.

Food Diary /favorite food

Ask each child to record in their diary what food they have eaten throughout the day. This could be a weeklong assignment. When they bring the diary in, go over the entries in the classroom. Talk about the different eating patterns, foods, routines. Make a graph to show favorite food in the classroom, and learn the names and ingredients of any ethnic dishes that come up.

Breakfast Plates

Breakfast is usually a fairly traditional meal. Give each child a paper plate, and ask them to draw what they usually eat for breakfast. You can graph the results to show commonalities. Discuss new and interesting food!

Eating customs

Starting with the cultures in your classroom, talk about the different customs people practice during mealtime. Ask the children about their meal-time customs. Depending on the age of the child, you may want to ask the parents for their input. Spend meal time practicing the eating customs of another culture (once a week, or once a month). Take this opportunity to use any phrases or words that are traditional to mealtime for the country in question. *Bon Appétit!*

Map origins/Immigration

Ask children to talk to their parents about where they are from. Talk to parents as well to let them know you are collecting information for a mapping exercise (if your class has already completed the genealogy project, use the information from the filled in questionnaires).

Introduce a large world map to your classroom. Explain that we are all on the same planet, but live in different countries. Put a push-pin in Helsinki to show we are all present here now.

Each child tells the class where their ancestors came from. Help the child to find their country on the map, and mark it with a pushpin. Connect all of the pushpins to Helsinki with some yarn. Depending on age, you can introduce the concept of immigration, by talking about *moving*. People *move* in search of things, we have all *moved* at some point in time- whether to a new house or new country.

Explore Languages

Learn common words and phrases in other languages. Start with the languages present in your classroom. You can also learn how to count from 1-10 in another language. Let the children teach their own languages to each other (and to the teacher), encourage each child to think about what they would like to teach when it's their turn. *As-salamu alaykum!*

Share traditional children's folklore

Talk with parents to learn which fairytales or folklore are popular for children in their native country. Invite parents to come to the classroom and tell a story to the kids. If parents are unable to visit the classroom, ask the child if they would like to tell their classmates the story. If the child cannot remember or isn't able to re-tell well, simply ask the parents for the name of the story

so you can search it on the internet, and share it with the children- with the help of the child connected to that country.

Explore different forms of literature, e.g. Haiku

Share different forms of literature with the class, from the simple to the complex (e.g., Arabic *ghazal*, Japanese *haiku*, Greek *epic*). Of course, remember to pick appropriate content, and choose just an excerpt to read from lengthy works. You can ask children to create their own works following the simpler forms, such as the Haiku.

Learn arts and crafts from other countries

During arts and crafts session, be sure to include multicultural art forms on a regular basis. This is an area that is really easy to infuse multicultural content into.

Some examples of multicultural art activities include Kente cloth strips, replications of multicultural music instruments (e.g., African shakere, Australian didgeridoos, Middle Eastern drums, South American rainsticks, Asian string instruments, Latin American guitars and tambourines), Japanese fans, and Japanese Koru art,.

Multicultural Art Material

Use materials commonly used for art in other cultures. Such materials include dry gourds, dry coconut shells, beans, seeds, leaves, feathers, clay, colored beads, strings, straw, sticks, twigs raffia, sea shells, dry fish scales, coral rocks.

Group Self Portraits

Separate children into groups of 3-4. Give each group a cutout of an oval (the face). Then provide children with cutouts of different shapes- squares, triangles, rectangles, circles. Each child helps to create the face by glueing the shapes onto the oval. Display the finished products in the classroom.

Rhyme: "We're so Alike"

We are so alike!

(children face each other and point to the face parts mentioned)

Eyes I have and so do you.

I have a nose and so do you.

You and I have a mouth to say HELLO!

And ears we also have.

Wow we are so alike and how! (look surprised)

Activity + Song: "We Are All Alike"

Discuss our favorite things to do, and find commonalities amongst the children's favorites. Follow up with the song, "We Are All Alike", to the tune, Frere Jacques:

We're alike, we're alike.

Yes, we are. Yes, we are.

(Name of child) can dance and jump (substitute with other actions the children had in common)

And so do I.

We're so much alike.

Oh, that's nice!

"Me" Bags

Each child gets a brown paper bag. Have the child paste their picture on the front of the bag, and fill the bag with a few objects, drawings, or words that make them unique.

Each child presents their bag. The results can be documented on a "Facts About Me" chart that includes all of the children in the classroom. Afterwards encourage the children to discuss their commonalities.

IV. Multilingual Classrooms

- ➡ Learn phrases, songs or greetings in other languages. Encourage parents of culturally diverse children to come to teach your class some phrases in their native language.
- ➡ Keep (and use!) bilingual books in the classroom.
- ➡ During moments when you can play music, utilize world music.
- ➡ Learn to count in another language.
- ➡ Label some classroom items in a foreign language (languages relevant to your students).
- ➡ Learn to pronounce the names of foreign story characters (this can be done during presentations of native folklore and fairytales).

V. Teacher Tips

- ★ Encourage cooperative learning amongst your students.
- ★ Allot time to have monthly individual sessions with each child (even 5 minutes is sufficient if time does not allow for more). Take that time to acknowledge the successes and work that the child has put in.

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- ★ Focus on positive aspects that the child has contributed, such as efforts and accomplishments.
 - ★ Use learning centers in your facility. Stock those centers with multicultural materials.
 - ★ Develop supportive strategies to help all students complete their tasks. If they struggle to complete tasks on their own, pair them with a more capable child.
 - ★ Tailor assignments (to an acceptable extent) in order to best suit the child. If you know the child will not be able to complete the assignment, assign portions, provide support, or allocate classtime to finish the assignment.
 - ★ Make children aware of inequality.

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