

Cultivating Children's Social Awareness in the Multicultural and Diverse Community: A Perspective from Empathetic Teaching

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Abstract: The multicultural and social diversity urge children to build social awareness skill which drives them to consciously aware of specific range of social experience from a specific point of view. In educational setting, this becomes a concern because children spur into cultural diversity in their daily life so that teachers take a role to facilitate them with the ability to adapt with the situation. One of the ways in meeting the issue is through implementing empathetic teaching which is a concept of teachers showing their compassion to students. Therefore, the main framework of this study is to elaborate the concept and investigate further how empathetic teaching can allow teachers to cultivate social awareness to their students in the perception year. The originality of the paper lies in offering a conceptual framework of empathetic teaching through mapping the main relevant literatures and identifying and engaging with the central theoretical issues while suggesting a perceptual framing of classroom setting in childhood education. By analyzing the data using content analysis, the findings reveal that empathetic teaching practiced by teachers can be beneficial to build children's social awareness through having good perception on their exposure to the surrounding. This also allows them to have an ability to adapt in the diverse community by appreciating differences to promote a social peaceful life in this contemporary world.

Keywords: Social awareness; Multicultural; Diverse community; Empathetic Teaching; Childhood Education

Abstrak: Keberagaman social dan budaya menuntut anak mengembangkan kepedulian sosial mereka. Hal ini akan mengarahkan mereka pada kesadaran dalam memahami situasi tertentu dalam kehidupan social dengan menggunakan sudut pandang yang baik. Dalam konsep pengajaran, kepedulian sosial ini berperan penting karena anak-anak berada dalam lingkungan dimana keseharian mereka dihadapkan dengan kehidupan sosial yang beragam. Maka, guru perlu mengambil peran untuk memfasilitasi mereka dengan kemampuan adaptasi pada kondisi tersebut. Salah satu caranya yakni dengan menerapkan konsep pengajaran empati, yakni sebuah konsep yang mengajarkan para guru untuk menunjukkan rasa empati mereka kepada murid. Kerangka utama dalam penelitian ini adalah menjabarkan konsep tersebut dan menelaah lebih dalam bagaimana pengajaran empati dapat membantu guru menanamkan kepedulian sosial kepada murid. Penelitian ini merupakan kajian melalui kumpulan sumber tulisan yang sesuai dengan topik pengajaran empati, lalu diidentifikasi, dan dikaitkan dengan konsep kepedulian social pada anak. Teknik Analisa data yang digunakan adalah 'content analysis' yang menghasilkan sebuah gambaran bahwa pengajaran empati yang dilakukan oleh guru di dalam kelas akan menjadi media dalam mengembangkan kepedulian sosial anak melalui pembentukan pola pikir yang baik terhadap lingkungan di sekitar mereka. Selain itu, pengajaran empati membantu anak memiliki kemampuan adaptasi dalam menghadapi keberagaman sosial dengan memiliki kemampuan menghargai akan setiap perbedaan yang ditemukan. Kepedulian sosial ini penting ditanamkan sebagai bekal dalam menciptakan kehidupan sosial yang damai di dunia kontemporer ini.

Kata Kunci: Kepedulian Sosial; Multikulturalisme; Keberagaman sosial; Pengajaran Empati; Pendidikan Anak.

INTRODUCTION

The multicultural and diverse community allow children to experience with many differences in their social life. They can meet people with various background and cultures which can arise enculturation process because human diversity happens in almost each aspect of life. For example, in education setting, a class will probably incorporate a whole range of differences such as racial, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious, and others and it is intertwined in their daily relationship (Sinagatulin, 2003). In this case, the condition can stun children to cultural differences and expose them with the social diversity which urges them to have social awareness in facing them. Therefore, children, especially living in a multicultural society, will find the matter which also means the process of teaching and learning are unavoidably tied to issues of race and culture (Lantieri & Nambiar, 2021).

Facing the reality to the diverse world nowadays, it encourages children to be easily engaged in social diversity which allows them to have an ability for being socially aware to their community. However, another fact also reveals that the development of technology in this contemporary life sometimes effects on the level of empathy and social awareness. For instance, research conducted by Pinasti and Kustanti (2018) reveals 1.4% children in Indonesia who experience gadget addicted show low score in empathetic responses (Pinasti & Kustanti, 2018). Another data shows the level of empathy score are strongly influenced by the intensity of gadget use; higher score in empathy scale happened to people who have low use of their smartphone, and vice versa (Kurniaputri & Adyatama, 2021). Meanwhile, research from Parasumaran, et al (2017) elaborates the statistics that 84% share of global population could not go a single day without their mobile phones (Parasumaran, et al, 2017). Another data from Septiani, et al (2020) portrays 84% children in Indonesia get violence such as bullying, beating, and murder (Septiani, et al, 2020). The phenomena indicate that empathy, which is considered by Goleman (1998) as the life basic value for people having social awareness, can bring an impact to human live and change along their experiences. Nevertheless, both values become a predictor of peace, goodness, and other valuable things into human life. This is universal values that everyone presumably cultivate them into own self.

The mastery of the skills seem to be important for life because it can activate individual's cognitive ability which aims to proceed a balanced skill to express what and how people feel (Zhou, et al, 2003). Another research from O'Hara, et al (2006) in emotional intelligence, not specific for merely social awareness, reveals there is a positive relationship between productivity in a group work whose members have high score level in Emotional Intelligence (EI). Inversel, Kameen (2012) portrayed its importance into students activities because they found that low score in EI provokes a team to have further helps in conflict management while communicating, coordinating, and adapting during the work.

Empathy and social awareness skill are intertwined in daily life and become the foundation for understanding others in the diverse community. Csoti in his book *Social Awareness skills for Children* (2001) mentioned that social awareness skills allow the child to grow and understand human nature thoroughly (p. 18). This is because it includes knowledge and understanding of social expectations in certain places and within certain situations. Since human are social being and live dependently with others, children will meet various characteristics and cultures which can bring any differences and similarities. In this instance, social awareness plays an important role to bridge the gap so that children can appreciate them with appropriate behaviours. Meanwhile, empathy has also become an important issue because it will allow children to understand, validate, and empower them with a diversity of characteristics and backgrounds (Makoelle et al, 2019, p. 3).

In the education setting, empathy takes an important role to be a part of teachers' behaviours to create positive relationship and atmosphere with students for learning. Makoelle et al (2019) found that the more teachers practice empathy, the lesser are the bullying incidents in the school and in the classroom. Bullying become a case showing low social awareness among the actors, which according to Derelly and Aypay (2012) as cited in Makoelle, et al (2019) that empathetic attitudes are good values to develop students' responsibility, friendship, pacifism, respect, honesty, tolerance, and human values of collaboration and cooperation which are important for working together or team work (p. 4). Tiyas (2017) also conducted research that indicated there was a relationship between empathy and social awareness in teenagers and the result showed statistically significant. In this instance, social awareness will arise as an impact of empathetic teaching that is shown by teachers during the pedagogical practice, especially in the classroom with diverse culture and differences. Based on the previous studies, empathetic teaching may become a prerequisite to allow students having more meaningful relationship among their social life.

It sounds that empathy is highly needed to foster students' success in teaching (Meyers, et al, 2019; Kameen, 2012) and this lies a framework that how empathy is also beneficial to develop students' social awareness in their diverse society. By using literature review method, it brings a concern of empathy in teaching practice and social awareness skill in the diverse community. It concludes the concepts by drawing implications and making recommendations regarding the practice of empathetic teaching to cultivate students' social awareness.

To highlight, empathetic teaching focusing on cultivating social awareness is still limited, moreover in the perception year. On the other hand, this research also gives a wider perspective compared to previous studies. This not only focuses on the effect of empathetic teaching, but also on the elaborate perspective of students' social awareness skill in the educational setting. This research is believed to illuminate and strengthen the quality and understanding related to empathetic teaching for students in this diverse community. This aims to explore how empathetic teaching will be beneficial for teaching in cultivating students' social awareness in their surroundings. Therefore, this research wants to answer two main questions: "What is empathetic teaching in the educational

setting?” and “How can empathetic teaching be beneficial to cultivate children’s social awareness skill?” The significance of it is to develop a hidden curriculum in entailing value of social awareness among diverse society in the education setting through empathetic teaching encoded by teachers.

What is Empathetic Teaching?

The word of ‘empathetic’ is an adjective from the basic word of ‘empathy’ which first known by Carl Rogers (1969). As a prominent figure in humanistic theory, he portrayed the state of empathy, or being empathic, is to perceive the internal frame of reference of another with accuracy and with the emotional components and meanings which pertain thereto as if one were the person, but without ever losing the “as if” condition (Rogers, 1995, p. 140). Another definition comes from Bloom (2017) who says that empathy is the act of coming to experience the world as you think someone else does (p. 24). Meanwhile, Dereli, E., & Aypay, A. (2012) defines empathy as an emotional dimension which is generally described as an effective characteristic that facilitates feeling any other person’s feelings (p. 1263). Although certain definitions of empathy are argued differently but they have similar idea in which a process of mental activity involving the feeling of people’s understanding and taking a part to address own self and thought to be in that condition.

McLaren (2013) in her book ‘The Art of Empathy’ divides empathy into two; affective empathy (viscerally feeling) and cognitive empathy (objectively understanding) (p. 49). In another source, cognitive empathy is also called as ‘social cognition’ or ‘theory of mind’ whilst affective empathy as ‘emotional empathy’ or ‘social empathy’ (Bloom, 2017, p. 75; Clabough, 2019, p. 167)). To the connection of human development perspective, in psychological term, its development closely relates to the three aspects. They are cognitive, affective, and be reflected to the behavioural actions (Borba, 2016; McLaren, 2013; Dale, 2014; Krznaric, 2014; Bloom, 2017; Segal, 2018; Clabough, 2019; Azarchi, 2020). Those aspects are prominent in revealing the development of empathy towards human life.

In relation to teaching, Rogers (1969) as cited in Meyers (2019) said that ‘a high degree of empathy in a relationship is possibly the most potent factor in bringing about change and learning’ (p. 160). He also believed that when teachers have the ability to understand the students’ reaction from the inside, has the sensitive awareness of the process how education and learning seems to the students, and as an impact the likelihood of learning is significantly increased.” In addition, Westman (2021) portrayed empathizing with students in the instructional planning process is prominent because it will demonstrate teachers’ compassion for students (p. 14). From both frameworks, empathy or being empathetic as teachers become an important issue in educational setting because it will be a tool to understand, validate, and empower students with a diverse background and cultures. Consequently, it can be a hidden curriculum in which students can imitate and contextualize it into their social life.

Being empathetic as teachers is not only about listening to students but also engaging to their internal state and respond it with sensitive care (Meyers, 2019, p. 160).

They attempt to understand and have an inclination to comprehend, the lived experiences of their students (Scaszar, et al, 2018, p. 94). Within the context of education, empathetic teaching is important for teachers because their task is not merely dealing with instructional process in the classroom, but also appreciating students' activities as a whole. A study appealed that when students feel they matter, they feel a greater sense of cohesion and belonging in the school environment (Bloch, 2009). Another also found that students experience increased academic motivation, particularly facing scholastic struggles (Tucker, et al, 2010). To this instance, empathetic teaching promotes meaningful attributes between teachers and students.

Social Awareness Skill

Social awareness is derived from a part of emotional intelligences which first known by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and be popularized by Goleman through his book 'why it can matter more than IQ' (Almubarak, 2017, p. 31). This is defined as being able to take the perspective of and empathize with others through recognizing and appreciating individual and group similarities and differences (CASEL, 2005; Lantiery, 2012; Almubarak, 2017). This can be seen as an ability that will allow people to be consciously aware of specific range of social experience from a specific point of view because they realize that each individual has different experiences and cultures in this life.

In teaching, cultivating social awareness skill is important since students come from different backgrounds and individuals may be assigned on sharing characteristics such as physical appearance or accent (Moyles, 2007). Such awareness of cultural diversity can bring positive practices in which students appreciate differences among them and adapt in the diverse community and society. However, it also can be negative if students have lesser degree for the skill. Therefore, the potential link between empathy and social awareness is being underlined here because empathy is the foundation for bridging students to have social awareness towards their social life.

According to Adler in Boeree (2007), the development of social awareness is a combination from nature and nurture. It means that human have born with it and be developed during their growth from their environment. There is scientific research to support this statement conducted by Marvin L. Simner (1971) who portrayed a new born baby cried while listening to other baby's cry. As time goes by, infants have different way to show their awareness by trying to offer any toys or other things to calm other infants. This idea is similar with the value of empathy which is categorized as the life basic value for people having social awareness (Goleman, 1998). To this concern, empathy and social awareness are two things which people have brought them since born and need to be habituated during their growth in the social life.

As teachers who are ultimately responsible for pedagogy practices, social awareness is a value that needs to be inculcated to students. Their responsibility is not only to focus on students' cognitive development, but also to ensure their students have the holistic development in social and emotional dimensions as well. For instance, the situation in the classroom is a livelihood place describing the real world which consist of people with various characteristics. Since students will grow and broaden their

experiences, teachers are also responsible to emphasize the social skills which are significant for their life in the future. At this point, it seems that this concern to be prioritized because social awareness skill will allow them to face the diverse society with appropriate understanding and behaviours.

The present study employed a systematic review of literature research on the implementation of empathetic teaching to cultivate social awareness skill for students, which comprises the context in multicultural and diverse community. The significance of teachers' empathy and related qualities have been highlighted by some theoretical perspectives such as Meyers et al (2009) , Kameen (2012), Berkovich (2020), Goroshit & Hen (2016), and many others. Therefore, this entry aims to gather what have been learnt from them and make a brief description in connecting the idea with social awareness skill that is being a contemporary issue in this diverse world because in the theoretical claim, teacher empathy is positively associated with effective teaching.

The theoretical framework of empathy reveals this implementation promotes positive relationship among people in social life and this can lie a foundation to make a peace for humanity. According to the claim, this study identifies questions that have remained unanswered in prior research on the contribution of social awareness to the humanity in the diverse world. For instance, reviewing the literature enabled us to find out the effect of empathy that have been studied in the previous decade, but without any concern on the contribution to social awareness in education setting. From this study, it can be an important step to research that inevitably support teachers, educators, school psychologists, school staff, and other stakeholders in the school setting to promote empathetic teaching in cultivating social awareness to students.

METHOD

This current research employed constructivism paradigm using descriptively qualitative approach through library research. In this instance, the author used text documentation technique to collect the data to obtain the main purpose of this study, describing findings by the conceptualization of empathetic teaching and the cultivation of social awareness. It gathered the sources of data from books, journal articles, and other supported materials to produce descriptive data related to the discussion. Data consisted of primary and secondary data. The primary is from relevant articles regarding empathy and social awareness skill taken from psychology books. The secondary data is taken from other texts to give comprehensive understanding regarding its interpretations.

In finding the result from references, the author used the method of “*content analysis*” or thematic interpretation (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). It means the data was first collected by selecting the similar theme to the discussion in August 2022 without date restrictions. In specific, first was searching through the keywords in an open sources journal in Google Scholar using the keyword *empathy and teaching*, being *empathetic*, *empathy and teachers*, students and social awareness, social awareness and diverse society, social awareness and multicultural context, and *social awareness skill*. Next, the documents from journals were screened based on the abstract, heading words, tables of

contents, and key concepts were searched for the defined terms to find the relevant topic whether or not they relate to the scope of the present study without limited year of study. The following criteria are used: only empathy value in teaching and social awareness skill within the field of education. After screening the articles, 29 studies were found. Each detail step for finding the result was conducted to ensure those containing sufficient materials needed in this study.

In addition, the author identifies the studies mentioning the terms in any order and excluded the publication types of reviews, book reviews, or editorial materials. The studies are also written in English and Bahasa Indonesia, and excluded for other languages because of the limitation of author's ability to interpretate languages other than both. However, the relevant materials were mostly found in English texts. This yielded 4 records in Bahasa Indonesia and 54 in English.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the following, this section primarily describe the framework of empathetic teaching from Meyers (2019) who mentioned in detail regarding teacher empathy. It is mentioned that teacher empathy is not empathy experienced by people who happen to be teachers, but it is an integral part of the role of teaching (Meyers, 2019, p. 161). The characteristic of teacher empathy will be reflected on the way to deeply understand students' personal and social situation, and respond their matters in positive behaviours. To this context, Meyers (2019) also mentioned that it involves cognitive, affective, and behavioural components.

In teaching, cognitive empathy is portrayed to take students' perspective and understanding their personal and social situations which are different from one to another students. It means teachers are looking into students' feeling about any difficulties they have during the learning process. Meanwhile, students in one classroom are usually come from various cultures and background which sometimes are reflected on their physical appearance, such as dialect or skin colours. To this instance, teachers put themselves to understand them and react to the condition in appropriate behaviour without discrimination to one another.

The term of affective empathy is to focus on feelings or mind to what another person feels. In a classroom setting, this can be described by showing a concern and compassion to the students who experience anxiety during the learning process. Teachers can empathizes to their students by telling their negative emotions but also focusing to the positive feelings. Consequently, this will allow students to be more relaxed and calm so that teachers can be happy for this.

Behavioural components are likely the reflection of both cognitive and affective empathy. When teachers can empathize with their students, they will probably respond it with behaviours towards their students. However, the behaviours in the context of teacher empathy cannot be simply defined because it requires an effort to respond students' feelings or emotion with the appropriate ways (Inzlicht et al, 2017). As teachers are also role models for students, the behaviours are also likely a mirror for their students.

Therefore, being empathetic teachers is not only to understand students feelings, but also try to connect to the same feeling and respond it with the right positive emotions.

Along with the framework, empathetic teaching is highly important in the process of teaching and learning, especially to inculcating the values towards students' life such as respect, tolerance, care, collaboration which are regarded to the value of social awareness (Kameen, 2012; Aldrup, et al, 2021). The situation in classrooms is not only occupied by the subject contents, but it is also accompanied by social atmosphere where students interact and communicate to each other's. In this context, classroom can be described as a place where cultural transmission happens. This is a phenomenon that cannot be avoided by students, especially whom live in a multicultural country. Therefore, a demand for human diversity contribute to students' societal life and promotes them to build such awareness to understand and appreciate the differences they meet.

Furthermore, they can easily find the context of human diversity both inside and outside the classroom. Through the development of technology such as social media or open sources internet, they can stun to many sources which can expose them with the social diversity. At this point, technology brings the easy access to the world, so children can get an insight to broaden knowledge but also give an impact to meet diversity around them. However, it also allows them to be influenced with any negative impacts if they have lesser degree of social awareness, such as hate speech or bullying. Therefore, to this instance, teachers as one of role model in their life cannot simplify the effect of it.

Another concern is regarding the accessibility to the world. it allows students to grow in the diversity and grasp many cultural differences around their surroundings. This issue especially happens to students who live in multicultural and multi-ethnic countries. Considering the concern, it seems that children will experience the enculturation process that cannot be avoided in their social life (Sahin, 2013, p. 4). This phenomenon becomes a challenge for teachers because they need to tackle the process through teaching values of understanding and appreciating the differences in a child's upbringing. In addition, teachers also need to be aware of this and take responsibility and possess the skills in teaching students social awareness to deal with this condition.

Since students are easily meet the diversity in their community, teachers also need to have fundamental teaching right to educate, as well as the child's right to learn about their cultural and heritage so students can contribute to social development of the society in whole (Sahin, 2013; Stojiljković, et al, 2012). To this point, teachers play an important role to inculcate strong value of social awareness at classroom and integrated it towards students' culture beyond the class. The implementation of it should also necessarily include understanding the plurality in people tradition and the wider diversity in the modern world (Sahin, 2018, p. 17). For example, multicultural society in the education setting will give children an experience to meet a person whose different 'look' from them such as skin colours. In some cases, the difference will raise a question from children because, according to Erickson's theory, early childhood is the period of *self-understanding*, which is the representation of self, the substance and content of self-

conceptions (Santrock, 2016, p. 239). In further action, children whose lesser degree of social awareness will make it a 'tool' for bullying their friends.

Erickson also associated childhood psychosocial stage with initiative versus guilt (Santrock, 2016, p. 238). It means children have become convinced that they are in their own right to discover what kind of person they will be. This stage provokes them to spend amount of time with their peers and environment which provide a source of information and comparison about the world outside family. In other words, they are in the process of making advances in their understanding of others and the capacity to learn from others. The similar idea is also mentioned by McDevitt and Ormrod (2014) who acknowledged that cultural variations powerfully shape children's minds (p. 225). Up to this point, parents-child and teachers-students relationship introduce a mutual obligations in which they have to engage their children with positive caregiving and guiding them to become competent human beings in this diverse world.

The 'competent' here means that they have an ability to face any matters or challenges in appropriate mind and behaviours. This is a primarily goal in educating them because according to Sahin (2013), every society is given its own heritage which means a set of God's regulations (209). In other words, the cultural diversity happened in social context is interpreted by the Divinely-ordered ethical message which allows us to ethically responsible critical and open attitude within humanity. In this instance, diversity seems as something that only need to be responded by understanding in carefully investigating and analysing the world around us. As teachers, it becomes a challenge to go through the process especially during childhood whose development strongly influenced by what goes on in other social contexts (Santrock, 2016, p. 261). Considering the importance of social awareness in the context of cultural diversity, empathetic teaching has asserted a concept to acknowledge teachers or instructors to the growth of human into humanity senses (Goroshit & Hen, 2016) and it is likely a skill which according to Howe (2013) it humanizes people and their relationship (p. 3).

McLaren (2013) declares that, nowadays, empathy becomes the major topic of multidisciplinary and international interest. It reveals that it is an ideal that has the power both to transform our own lives and to bring about fundamental social change (Krzynaric, 2014; Goroshit & Hen 2016). Although empathy is more about individual emotion, it consists of a force for good in social interaction, because more empathetic people will be kinder and more caring and more moral. Otherwise, people who lack empathy are psychopaths, and those are the worst people in the world (Bloom, 2017, pp. 61-62). Based on those statements, it seems that empathy takes an important role in the human lives to inculcate good strong emotions while interacting to others.

The concept of empathetic teaching will allow teachers to educate children with the presence of understanding, sharing, and respect (Meyers et al, 2019, p. 165). As an impact, it will build a balanced and positive relationship with students and become their insight to the sense of belonging in the modern world to the other people, in which it will be beneficial for them to engage meaningfully with their social heritage and the challenging conditions in the future changing world. Therefore, according to Meyers et

al (2019), empathetic teaching becomes the fundamental ethos of the educational process to be nurtured because it will teach students the ability to socially aware with their surrounding (p. 166). Inevitably, this is a prominent skill for children to encounter the differences they meet in the social life.

Furthermore, the focus of empathetic teaching, in this context, is to build good social awareness which can be reflected on good perception regarding children's exposure to their surroundings. The good implementation of it will allow them to have the ability of reflective thinking which will also be beneficial for them to act and think more critically in the future. This issue is highly important because it can appreciate the differences and make a peaceful life to society in this contemporary world.

CONCLUSION

In education setting, teachers play an important role to deal with cultivating students' social awareness towards the diversity they face in social life. Since the contemporary world allows children to be exposed by diverse cultures and society, social awareness becomes a priority to be inculcated. One way to demonstrate it is by enabling teachers or instructors with an ability of empathetic teaching. In a brief description, empathetic teaching is prominent to transmit positive values to students that will be copied by them into their personality. In other words, the way how teachers act will be recorded by students and becomes a hidden curriculum during the learning process.

There have been many research demonstrated the significant role of empathy in building positive impacts to personal, social, moral, and academic development of teachers and students (Goroshit & Hen, 2016). However, this is an initial study to elaborate the concept of empathy in teaching towards the development of students' social awareness in the education setting. To the extension of this study, more research is required in order to examine this assumption and further understanding in the relationship between empathetic teaching and students' social awareness skill. The discussion in the present study gives a contribution to an understanding of empathetic teaching in cultivating students' social awareness skill in the growing diversity in most educational milieus. This can be an insight to put the importance skills to the hidden curriculum to improve teachers' and students' personal skills in the overall teaching and learning process.

Although the numbers of relevant literatures was limited, the fact that empathy and social awareness skill correlated was evaluated (Dereli, E., & Aypay, A., 2012; Tiyas, 2017). Therefore, the future research can address this limitation and find another result for any quantitative measurements. This instances will give more understanding of the discussed concepts towards the development of professional teaching to promote better education in this contemporary world.

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