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José Manuel Ortiz Marcos,
University of Granada, Spain

REVIEWED BY

Liza Lee,
Chaoyang University of Technology, Taiwan
Francisco Manuel Morales,
University of Granada, Spain

*CORRESPONDENCE

Yi-Huang Shih
✉ shih262@gmail.com

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Learning for children in an educational enrichment: a perspective derived from Taiwan's Early Childhood Education & Care Curriculum Framework

Yi-Huang Shih*

Center of Teacher Education, Minghsin University of Science and Technology, Hsinchu, Taiwan

Anchored in the educational philosophy of "benevolence," the Taiwan's Early Childhood Education & Care Curriculum Framework establishes nine learning goals and emphasizes the cultivation of six core competencies in young children. Recognizing that young children have potential for development, imagination, and creativity, the framework encourages young learners to engage with their surroundings, exhibit curiosity, and explore through play. The curriculum framework highlights the multifaceted roles of teachers, including their roles in shaping class culture and learning environments, partnering in the lives and learning journeys of children, guiding in their educational development, and collaborating with families. This curriculum framework emphasizes a child-centered approach to course development, integrating diverse activities that are reflective of and relevant to children's life experiences. It prioritizes maintaining the physical and mental health and safety of young children and introduces them to the meaning of life and the phenomenon of multiculturalism. The type of this study is a conceptual analysis, and it is a study from a reflective model on the implementation of the curriculum in Taiwan. Through this curriculum framework, children are encouraged to appreciate life's beauty and interact with others effectively and empathetically. Therefore, the curriculum framework emphasizes life education, multicultural education, aesthetic education, and moral education as essential components in the holistic development of young children. The curriculum framework is an educational enrichment for children's learning. This study explores the concept of early childhood learning as conceptualized by Taiwan's Early Childhood Education & Care Curriculum Framework. It is hoped that such an exploration can broaden young children's learning horizons, and enhance the quality of early childhood education.

KEYWORDS

aesthetic education, early childhood education, life education, moral education, multicultural education, young children

1 Introduction

In children, substantial brain development occurs in the developmental period from birth to 6 years old, and this period represents a crucial window for educational interventions. Optimal early childhood development, characterized by health, safety, and effective learning, provides the foundation for children to realize their full potential in adulthood and contribute to economic, social, and civic spheres. Early childhood

education and care (ECEC) plays a pivotal role in promoting equity, social justice, inclusive economic growth, and sustainable development, substantially benefiting children and society (UNESCO, 2024; Wang and Shih, 2023). Internationally, different curricula for early childhood education have been observed (Vallberg Roth and Palla, 2023). In Taiwan, ECEC is recognized as an instrumental tool for promoting equity and social justice (Chou, 2017; Shih, 2022b; Ministry of Education, 2023).

The continual and mutual influence of education and the political discourse has been observed. The landscape of ECEC is changing in Taiwan, reflecting diverse policy objectives and educational philosophies regarding early childhood. The enactment of Taiwan's ECEC Act on June 29, 2011, which became effective on January 1, 2012, denotes the commitment of Taiwan to enhance the quality of early childhood education. In addition, Article 12 of this act mandates that the "ECEC curriculum framework (ECECCF) and service implementation guidelines for preschool education and care activities shall be prescribed by the central competent authority" (Ministry of Education, 2012; Shih, 2020a,b; Chang et al., 2021; Early Childhood Educare, 2024; Giroux, 2024). In 2012, the Taiwanese government consolidated the kindergarten and daycare systems, introducing the ECECCF to guide quality of early childhood education programs (Chang et al., 2021).

The Interim Outline for Early Childhood Education & Care Curriculum Framework, initially released on October 5, 2012, underwent a 4-year revision process and was officially published as the ECECCF curriculum framework on December 1, 2015, taking effect from August 1, 2017 (Shih and Chang, 2023).

The ECECCF (hereinafter referred to as the curriculum framework) serves as a blueprint for educators to draft curricula tailored to the needs of preschoolers. Preschool teachers can apply the principles of the framework to design effective learning activities, and this framework also provides insights into the evolving nature of early childhood learning, and develop the learning for children in a mutual cultural and educational enrichment. In Taiwan therefore, examining the curriculum framework is essential. The study findings can serve as a reference for other countries striving to enrich early childhood learning experiences.

2 Cultural changes and globalized contexts: revision background of the curriculum framework

2.1 Establishment of comprehensive ECEC services in cultural and global changes

Historically, Taiwan's early childhood education was characterized by the coexistence of two systems. However, this longstanding "separation of early childhood education and childcare" was identified as a considerable impediment to the development of early childhood education (Ministry of Education, 2017; Shih and Chang, 2023).

International trends in preschool education and care have revealed a shift toward integrated services across multiple departments, thereby enhancing the quality and accessibility of

ECEC. These global changes have led to an increasing focus on early childhood education in the academic sector in Taiwan (Chou, 2017; Ministry of Education, 2017; Shih, 2022a; Lee et al., 2023).

Recognizing the necessity for efficient resource allocation, the Executive Yuan stated in 1997: "In order to achieve the most effective use of the country's overall resources, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Education are requested to carefully study the integration problem" (Ministry of Education, 2017; Shih and Chang, 2023). This directive underscores the necessity for a more unified approach to ECEC.

After extensive deliberation, on June 20, 2005, the Executive Yuan directed the Ministry of Education to be the administrative unit responsible for integrated kindergartens and childcare centers, catering to children aged 2 to 6 years (Ministry of Education, 2017; Shih and Chang, 2023). This decision by the Executive Yuan marked a significant step toward unification.

The passing of the ECEC Act was a landmark event on June 10, 2011, by the Legislative Yuan of the Republic of China, which was driven by national policy directions. Subsequently, the President promulgated this act on June 29, 2011, with its provisions coming into effect on January 1, 2012. The implementation of this act effectively resolved the longstanding debate over childcare challenges and positioned Taiwan as the first Asian country to transform from the dual-system to an integrated system in ECEC (Ministry of Education, 2017; Shih and Chang, 2023).

2.2 Improving the quality of ECEC in a globalized context

Prior to the integration of kindergarten and daycare systems in Taiwan, the Kindergarten Curriculum Standards, established in 1987, were applied as the regulatory standards for kindergartens. For nursery education and care, the guiding document was the Nursery School Education and Security Manual, which was introduced in 1979 (Ministry of Education, 2017; Shih and Chang, 2023).

Given the fundamental dependence of high-quality educational care services on curricula and teaching methods that cater to children's developmental needs, the integration of childcare and early childhood education emerged as a crucial step. This integration was executed for the development of a curriculum that aligns with children's needs and societal expectations. A paramount objective of creating a high-quality educational and care environment is to ensure a healthy and joyful childhood for children, enabling their happy growth. The government has substantial responsibility for enhancing the quality of early childhood education, reflecting its duty to the populace and its commitment to future generations in a globalized context (Ministry of Education, 2017; Shih and Chang, 2023).

2.3 Promoting diversified development in early childhood education

In Taiwan, a notable disparity exists between public and private preschools, particularly in terms of the professional

backgrounds of preschool teachers. This variation has led each preschool to develop its own curriculum according to its specific educational philosophy. For years, devising child-centered curricula that cater to the individual needs of young learners represents a substantial challenge in the evolution of early childhood education (Ministry of Education, 2017).

The conceptual framework of early childhood education in Taiwan has undergone a gradual shift. The focus has shifted from primarily knowledge-based instruction to embracing the concepts of free play and guided learning. Correspondingly, the perception of young learners has evolved from “listening attentively,” namely being passive recipients of information, to being recognized for their “confidence, initiative, ability to cooperate with others, concern for the living environment, courage to face problems, and ability to solve problems” (Ministry of Education, 2017).

As society progresses, fostering a diverse array of abilities in children has become increasingly important. In early childhood education, the unique developmental needs of young children must be considered during curriculum planning, and continuity across various learning stages should be ensured to support future learning endeavors. The curriculum framework serves as a vital communication platform for the planning and implementation of early childhood curricula. It not only provides children with meaningful learning experiences but also assists preschools in devising specialized courses (Ministry of Education, 2017).

2.4 Developing local engagement with a global perspective

Globalization has led to increased interdependence and connectivity among nations. Globalization has exerted homogenizing effects, indicating the importance of local distinctiveness. Based on this global-local dynamic, Taiwan’s preschools should emphasize local identity and traditional culture. In this era of increasing localization, learning about nature, participating in societal activities, understanding diverse cultures, and accepting diversity emerge as pivotal educational objectives. Preschool education and care services must be effectively integrated with family and community engagement in early childhood education (as the foundation of all learning). This approach enables children to develop a strong sense of local identity and cultural understanding through the exploration of their living environment. Moreover, it fosters their growth into active, contributing members of society through participation in community life. Thus, adopting a locally rooted approach while maintaining a global perspective represents the most advantageous direction for Taiwan’s early childhood education, thus preserving the unique cultural heritage of Taiwan (Ministry of Education, 2017; Shih, 2022a).

3 Learning for children in curriculum framework in a cultural context

3.1 Discussion of the connotation of the curriculum framework

3.1.1 Purpose of the curriculum framework in Chinese culture

The curriculum framework is based on the educational concept of “benevolence.” This concept draws from the cultural values of filial piety, brotherhood, and benevolence, aiming to nurture children to love themselves and others, care for the environment, face challenges, and engage with cultural practices. The framework’s primary goal is to lay the foundation for lifelong learning and to shape children into future social citizens who are communicative, rational, thoughtful, confident, and tolerant (Ministry of Education, 2017).

3.1.2 Significance and scope of preschool education and care services

In alignment with the objectives of the ECEC Act, preschools are tasked with implementing education and care services. These services should be tailored to the developmental characteristics of children aged 2 to the pre-elementary school age. Preschools are encouraged to collaborate closely with families and communities to support the healthy development of children (Ministry of Education, 2017).

Preschool teachers play a crucial role in designing group activities that help children learn to navigate social and cultural contexts. By participation in these activities, children should not only achieve favorable physical and mental health but also learn to interact harmoniously with others. They should be encouraged to exhibit concern for their living environment and to cultivate a passion and motivation for the people, events, and objects in their surroundings (Ministry of Education, 2017).

In preschool settings, teachers must establish a deeply trusting relationship with young children and must create a nurturing educational and care environment that supports and promotes children’s growth. Moreover, as preschools represent a microcosm of a diverse society, teachers can provide various social and cultural activities. These activities enable children to experience diverse cultural phenomena in their everyday environment, starting with their own culture and then learning to tolerate, respect, and appreciate other cultures, recognizing their value and importance (Ministry of Education, 2017).

3.1.3 Overall goals

Early childhood education provides a foundation for all subsequent educational phases. The curriculum framework serves as a guideline for preschool curricula in Taiwan. This framework specifies several goals for children: supporting physical and mental health; developing habits; enriching life experiences; promoting

ethical understanding; cultivating social habits; expanding aesthetic experiences; encouraging creative thinking; assisting in the formation of early childhood cultural identity; and inspiring environmental stewardship (Ministry of Education, 2017; Shih, 2020a).

3.1.4 Basic philosophy of the curriculum framework

The curriculum framework is predicated on the interaction between individuals and their environment, focusing on shaping children's minds. It considers two key aspects: the holistic development of children and the value system of their cultural environment. The framework thus delineates specific areas for children's learning (Ministry of Education, 2017).

3.1.4.1 Perspectives on children

Preschool educators play a vital role in the development of children (Lee and Chao, 2023). Children have high potential for development in terms of their imagination and creativity abilities. They exhibit a natural inclination to engage with people, objects, and their surroundings. Their curiosity drives them to ask questions, explore, and play freely. Additionally, children are drawn to elements of order, rhythm, and beauty. The physical, cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and aesthetic development of growing children are interconnected and mutually influential (Ministry of Education, 2017; Lee and Chao, 2023).

Each child is a unique individual, and their distinctiveness is expressed through various cultural connotations, social customs, and life experiences (Ministry of Education, 2017).

3.1.4.2 Perspectives on children's learning and development

Children exhibit a natural curiosity and strong motivation to explore their environment. Their learning process involves constant questioning, active experimentation, and solution-seeking. They are compelled to personally participate and interact with people, objects, and their surroundings, engaging in observation, feeling, appreciation, and understanding. Children persistently observe and explore the natural and humanistic phenomena in their environment, actively trying to understand, think about, and interpret these phenomena. They explore the relationships between different phenomena and attempt to solve the problems they encounter. Playing is a natural and enjoyable activity, and it is fundamental to children's active, healthy, and happy development. Through play, children spontaneously explore, manipulate, and discover their surroundings (Ministry of Education, 2017; nidirect government service, 2024).

While playing, children learn to interact with others and explore the properties of materials. Based on previous experiences and through participation in various activities, they can construct new knowledge and learn to play appropriate roles in groups. By engaging in social and cultural activities, children actively interpret the messages in these situations. They internalize information, recombine it, and create new knowledge, establishing an interactive relationship with the external environment. Concurrently, culture and society, in their historical evolution, continue to shape the living environments of children (Ministry of Education, 2017).

3.1.4.3 Perspectives on teachers

The implementation of education affects a country's development and success, and a key component of an effective education system is the cultivation of high-quality teachers. The quality of education often depends on the quality of teachers, and teachers' professional development is closely linked to teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes (Wang and Shih, 2022).

The teaching and learning processes in preschool is a dynamic cycle of interaction between teachers and children and among the children themselves. In educational and care activities, interactions between teachers and children are rich and diverse. Teachers must consistently reflect on their roles, observe and fulfill the needs of children, and adapt to different roles in response to these needs (Ministry of Education, 2017).

3.1.4.3.1 Teachers as designers of classroom culture and learning environments

In collaboration with children, teachers create a harmonious and nurturing class culture. They build trusting relationships with each child, fostering a sense of security and belonging. Furthermore, teachers select materials from preschool, families, and communities to provide diverse social culture and natural experiences, encouraging children to experiment and acknowledging their efforts. As planners of learning situations, they design meaningful learning environments for young children (Ministry of Education, 2017).

3.1.4.3.2 Teachers as partners in life and learning

In school environments, teachers are integral to the classroom, living and playing alongside children. They are attentive listeners, sharing life experiences and arranging varied learning scenarios for direct experiential learning. Teachers participate in children's explorations and play, sharing in their joy, observing their progress, understanding their needs, and fostering their creative expression (Ministry of Education, 2017).

3.1.4.3.3 Teachers as guides of children's learning

Teachers must be cognizant of children's prior experiences, and they must provide learning experiences that align with their lives. They guide children in connecting past and present experiences and in synthesizing these experiences. For guiding children, teachers observe their current abilities, identify the skills that children are required to cultivate, assess the skill gap, and organize scaffolded activities. They also provide opportunities for peer interaction and learning through negotiation (Ministry of Education, 2017; Wang and Shih, 2022).

3.1.4.3.4 Teachers as partners with families

Teachers proactively establish partnerships with families, embracing respect, cooperation, and negotiation to jointly fulfill educational and caregiving responsibilities. They facilitate families' engagement in children's learning and development, encourage parents to share insights about their children, and provide diverse opportunities for parental involvement. Families in the community play invaluable roles in curriculum development, and teachers can collaborate with them through active community engagement. This

collaborative approach provides a supportive network for children's development and learning (Ministry of Education, 2017; Wang and Shih, 2022).

3.2 Core concepts of the curriculum framework for children's learning

3.2.1 Emphasizing the subjectivity of children

In early childhood education, the curriculum is not merely an external set of "indoctrination" content to be imparted to children but a resource that fosters their growth. This approach emphasizes the subjectivity of children and prioritizes their social participation. A child-centered perspective is adopted in early childhood education, focusing on children's life experiences and promoting their active participation in various community activities. Through interactions with their living environment, children grow into healthy individuals capable of social interaction and cultural experience or creation (Ministry of Education, 2017).

3.2.2 Promoting physical, mental health, safety, and multicultural understanding

When implementing educational care and services, schools prioritize maintaining the physical and mental health and safety of children as the primary goal. This goal forms an essential part of children's learning activities. Teachers are tasked with creating a healthy and safe learning environment and fostering children's knowledge in areas such as self-care, self-acceptance, safety, and interpersonal skills. In addition, they provide opportunities for young children to understand the meaning of life, experience cultural diversity, and develop moral character (Ministry of Education, 2017).

Life education for children fosters an understanding of how they exist in the world and shaping the type of world that would benefit both individuals and society. The ECECCF in Taiwan is based on the principles of interaction between individuals and the environment, the shaping of children's minds, the holistic development of children in terms of their cultural value system, and the planning of each child's learning process. The curriculum design must consider the developmental needs of children and incorporate social and cultural activities (Shih, 2022a,b).

3.2.3 Planned learning opportunities by teachers

Teachers, guided by educational concepts and curriculum orientations, are responsible for planning educational and care activities. Curriculum goals can be achieved by providing children with well-planned learning opportunities that are tailored to their abilities and interests. For example, real-life experiences and objects should be used as themes to promote children's natural curiosity about their environment, transforming everyday life into a learning classroom. Taking the establishment of mathematical concepts as an example, the curriculum should be designed based on children's abilities and interests. Instead of starting with the recognition of numerical symbols, children should be encouraged to learn counting and number concepts through practical life experiences.

Rigid teaching of numerical symbols without context can lead to disinterest among children and can diminish their enthusiasm for learning mathematics (Ministry of Education, 2017; Chang, 2024).

3.2.4 Diverse activity design for children

The early childhood curriculum should involve various teaching approaches such as large group, small group, and individual activities. During early childhood, children develop a range of motor skills foundational to their future physical activity, health, and competence. Therefore, curriculum design should emphasize both outdoor and indoor learning activities. This approach to activity design can substantially enhance children's learning motivation and interest. Teaching activities should be interconnected, with planned lessons adjusted flexibly based on the dynamics of children's interactions and the learning environment (Maude, 2010; Frost et al., 2012; Ministry of Education, 2017).

3.2.5 Valuing "difference" in teaching activity development

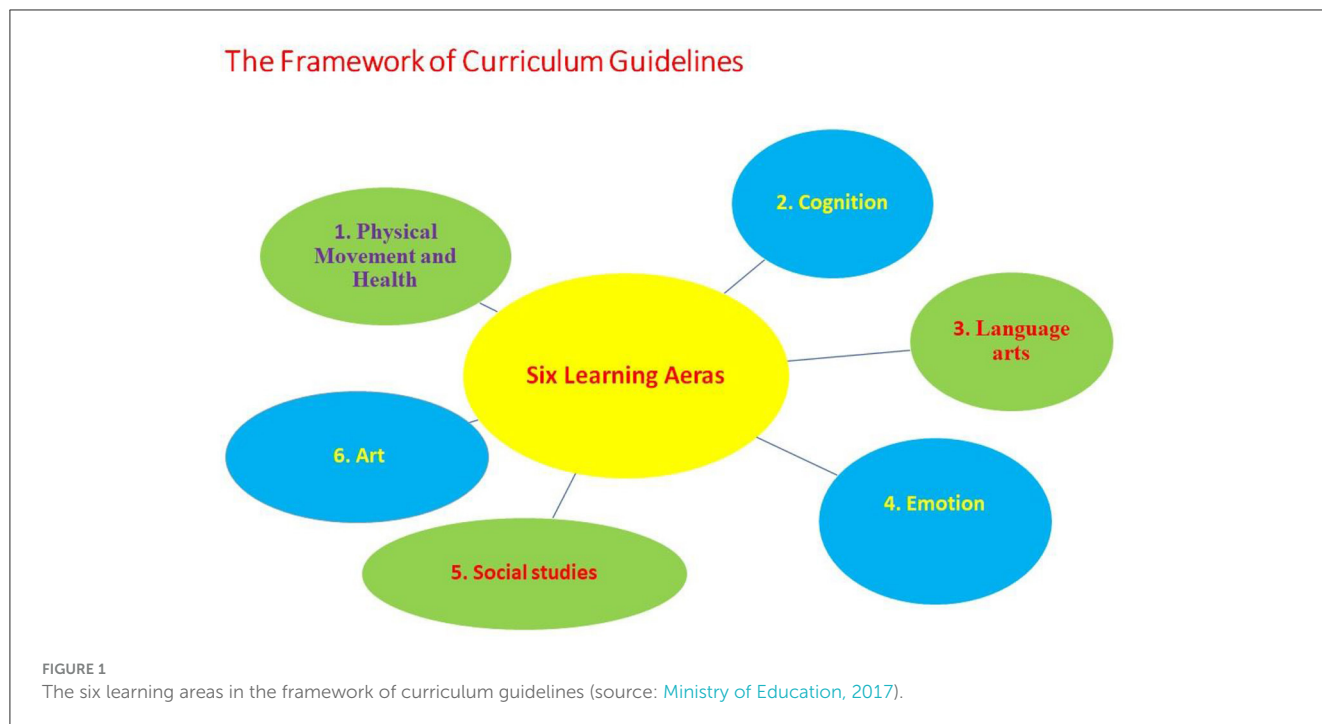
In the diverse living environment of children, various differences occur, including those in gender, age, socioeconomic background, races, and physical and mental states. Teachers should view these "differences" as valuable resources when developing teaching activities. Incorporating this diversity into curriculum planning can substantially broaden children's learning horizons and provide a more inclusive and enriched learning experience.

3.2.6 Six major areas of the curriculum framework

Teachers are essential for children's learning. A child's behavior in any school program is guided and influenced by their teachers (Lee, 2023). The curriculum framework mainly incorporates "children's development" and "social and cultural expectations," and it is divided into six learning areas: physical movement and health, cognition, language arts, emotion, social studies, and art. The six learning areas are displayed in Figure 1.

This structure aims to construct "children's images" in a social-cultural context and cultivate six core competencies in children: awareness recognition, expression and communication, care and cooperation, reasoning appreciation, imagination creation, and self-management. These six areas are not only interconnected in terms of learning but also in their area capabilities, forming a closely knit web. The implementation of the curriculum framework requires a cross-area integrative approach. This approach supports comprehensive development and learning among children through their participation in social and cultural activities (Shih, 2020a,b; Lee, 2023; Lee and Liu, 2023; Early Childhood Educare, 2024).

Therefore, during the planning and implementation of ECEC, various areas should be considered, continuity in course objectives and learning indicators should be maintained, and coherence between activities should be maintained. This approach supports the development of the six core competencies in children (Shih, 2020a,b; Early Childhood Educare, 2024).



3.2.7 Integrated planning of children's learning activities

Curriculum planning for children must be comprehensive, integrating learning experiences from various fields. Such planning requires a “systematic and purposeful” approach, with the integration of education and care activities based on the curriculum orientation. Teachers should tailor teaching activities in accordance to the curriculum; establish coherence between the daily routine, diverse learning activities, and whole-preschool activities; and cumulatively enhance children's learning experience (Ministry of Education, 2017).

3.3 Key themes in the curriculum framework

3.3.1 Multicultural education in the curriculum framework

Immigration and international marriage have transformed Taiwan's demographic into a multicultural society. The resulting diversity in the cultural backgrounds of children in preschool classrooms denotes the importance of emphasizing cultural identity and acceptance (Chou, 2017; Chen, 2019; Kim, 2020). Hence, incorporating multicultural education into the curriculum is essential.

“Building children's cultural identity” is the eighth point in the curriculum framework, which encourages children to connect with their local environment and to engage in creating new cultural expressions through “social and cultural activities.” This approach nurtures a local cultural identity while also addressing the ninth goal “inspiring a caring environment for children,” which aims to “help children learn to understand nature, participate in society, understand culture, and accept diversity.” The curriculum

framework emphasizes local and global cultural integration, fostering the development of global citizens who possess both a strong local identity and a broad world view (Smith, 2002; Smith and Sobel, 2010; Chou, 2017; Kim, 2020; Shih, 2020a,c).

Teachers engage in teaching activities for children to explore multiculturalism: guiding them to understand customs, cuisines, festivals, and other aspects of different cultures. This is achieved through activities such as reading picture books, watching multicultural videos, and participating in cultural festivals.

3.3.2 Emphasis on life education

The curriculum framework is based on the educational concept of benevolence, and this concept promotes the values of filial piety, benevolence, and love. It aims to instill in children the capacity to love themselves and others, care for the environment, confront challenges, and engage in cultural practices, and it establish a foundation for lifelong learning. Curricula based on this framework strives to educate young children to be social citizens who value communication, reason, thinking, and cooperation. It also emphasizes the development of confidence, tolerance, and the ability to cultivate harmonious relationships. The curriculum framework addresses life education by encouraging self-awareness, empathy, interaction with others, self-love and affirmation, care and respect for the living environment, and appreciation for multiculturalism and life (Ministry of Education, 2017; Shih, 2022b).

Teachers can develop life education curriculum to assist young children in establishing positive interpersonal relationships and emotional management skills. Through methods such as role-playing, team games, and emotional storytelling, teachers can cultivate children's social skills and emotional expression abilities, and enhancing their sensitivity to life.

3.3.3 Focus on moral education

The curriculum framework emphasizes moral education, facilitating the development of an ethical framework or sense of morality among children. This aspect is designed to foster children's connections with themselves, others, and their environment. As a society functions through a network of interpersonal interactions, individuals construct norms and value systems through active engagement. Children learn values, beliefs, and actions through interpersonal exchanges and interactive experiences within their environment. Therefore, the curriculum framework addresses moral education as a key component (Ministry of Education, 2017; Shih, 2022c).

Teachers can develop story- and picture-book teaching activities for children's learning. By telling educational stories and reading age-appropriate picture books for children, teachers can convey moral values to children and guide them to understand good and evil, right and wrong. In addition, through role-playing, children can experience moral choices in different situations and help them develop the literacy of correct moral judgment. Finally, develop the activities for children's play. Let children learn in play and cultivate the concepts of sharing, cooperation and respect for others (Shih, 2022c).

3.3.4 Emphasis on aesthetic education

The curriculum framework incorporates aesthetic education as a fundamental part of the curriculum. This framework is a guideline for preschool curricula in Taiwan and aims to expand children's aesthetic experiences. One of its six domains pertains to aesthetics, emphasizing aesthetic education in early childhood development. Preschool education in Taiwan should thus support and foster aesthetic education (Ministry of Education, 2017; Shih, 2020a).

Teachers develop teaching activities in arts and creativity to facilitate children's learning: providing diverse artistic experiences such as painting, sculpting, music, dance, etc., encouraging children to express their ideas and emotions. Creativity and imagination in children can be nurtured through avenues like art classes and workshops (Shih, 2020a,b).

3.3.5 Incorporation of environmental education

Environmental education in the curriculum framework is centered on the cultivation of environmental ethics. The ultimate goal is to cultivate individuals who possess ethical beliefs, favorable attitudes, and values toward the environment and who demonstrate ideal environmental behaviors. This extends to ecological conservation and environmental protection. The framework serves as a guide for preschool curricula in Taiwan and aims to inspire children to care for their environment. It highlights environmental education as a crucial element of early childhood learning (Ministry of Education, 2017; Shih, 2020a).

Teachers can guide children in activities of natural exploration: leading them to get close to nature, exploring plants, animals, astronomy, etc. Developing outdoor activities, observing insects, stargazing, etc., can inspire children's curiosity about the natural world where they live (Ye and Shih, 2020).

4 Discussion

In times of uncertainty, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, the lives of families and children have been profoundly affected. Substantial inequalities were more obvious during the pandemic, with disadvantaged and vulnerable families and children being affected the most. During such crises, access to education is crucial. For some parents, early childhood education settings provided a safe environment for their children. Teachers had considerable responsibility for maintaining the quality of education during turbulent times, creatively supporting children's learning and development (Karlsson Lohmander, 2022). In Taiwan, the curriculum framework supports and enhances the learning and development of children and fulfills their educational needs (Shaw et al., 2024).

The revision of the curriculum framework was conducted based on the need to establish comprehensive education and care services, improve the quality of ECEC, foster diversified development in early childhood education, and develop local engagement with a global perspective. In the framework, which is rooted in the educational concept of "benevolence," six goals have been established, and the framework cultivates six core competencies for young children (Ministry of Education, 2017; Shih, 2020a).

In the learning process for children, teachers play multiple roles: they are the architects of the class culture and learning environment, partners in life and learning, guides for children's learning, and collaborators with families.

The core idea of the curriculum framework is to emphasize the subjectivity of children, advocating for a child-centered approach to curriculum development. This approach places children and their rights at the forefront of the design process, ensuring that their voices are heard and their needs are met (Ministry of Education, 2017; Shaw et al., 2024). The curriculum framework emphasizes the integrated, child-centered development of courses, incorporating diverse activities focused on children's life experiences. It highlights the design of courses that resonate closely with these experiences, underpinning a design approach that places children and their rights at the forefront and thus elevating their voices.

A key aspect of this framework is the maintenance of the physical and mental health and safety of children while also introducing them to the concepts of the meaning of life and the phenomenon of multiculturalism. Through this approach, children can learn to appreciate the beauty of life and interact with others in a reasonably. Hence, the curriculum framework underscores the importance of life education, multicultural education, aesthetic education, and moral education.

Ultimately, early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) has been constructed as a new site for educational, sociocultural, political, and economic investment. Coupled with such a growing and popular recognition of ECEC as a significant period of children's learning and development (Lee, 2012). Early childhood education aims to foster the holistic growth, development, and learning of children from birth to 6 years of age. This involves a comprehensive approach that encompasses various interlinked care and education areas such as health, hygiene, nutrition, early stimulation, learning guidance, and development activities (Kim and Umayahara, 2010). Taiwan's curriculum framework mirrors this approach, integrating these crucial care and education areas.

The goal is to nurture well-rounded individuals and provide insights that can serve as a reference for other countries developing concepts for children's learning. This framework seeks to enable children worldwide to learn and grow in happy environments, ultimately laying the groundwork for bright futures.

5 Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study involves a conceptual analysis focusing on the implementation of the preschool curriculum in Taiwan, and using a reflective model on the preschool curriculum. This type of research typically involves critically examining and synthesizing existing theories, concepts, and practices to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic. In the context of preschool curriculum implementation, a reflective model would likely involve analyzing how educational theories are applied in practice, and suggesting improvements.

Through this curriculum framework, children are encouraged to appreciate life's beauty and interact with others effectively and empathetically. Therefore, the curriculum framework emphasizes life education, multicultural education, aesthetic education, and moral education as essential components in the holistic development of young children. The curriculum framework is an educational enrichment for children's learning.

5.2 Recommendations: integrating sustainable development goals into the curriculum framework

The adoption of the United Nations' sustainable development goals (SDGs) in September 2015 marked a critical evolution in international developmental priorities. These 17 goals, building on the eight millennium development goals in 2015, outline a comprehensive international political agenda focused on attaining peace, prosperity, and wellbeing for all by 2030 (Raman et al., 2023).

To successfully achieve SDGs, collaborative efforts are required among United Nations member states to address synergies and resolve trade-offs (Kroll et al., 2019). Education, particularly quality education, is integral to SDGs, which aim to promote sustainable development and eradicate poverty, hunger, and inequality (Radha and Arumugam, 2023). In this context, discerning the connection between the curriculum framework and the SDGs is a crucial task for teachers.

For example, SDG item 4 focuses on quality education; thus, teachers should consider how they can contribute to the

development of high-quality early childhood education. Gender equality is the fifth SDG item, and this item can guide teachers for providing gender equality education and thus fostering respect for different genders among children.

SDG item 14, which emphasizes the protection and conservation of marine resources, has particular relevance for Taiwan, an island nation with diverse coastal topography and ecological environments. The ocean plays a vital role in Taiwan's history, culture, geography, and environment and is important in the country's development. Teachers play a pivotal role in helping children understand and appreciate the ocean, teaching them about conservation and sustainable use. Finally, given the importance of implementing culturally and contextually appropriate childhood education programs, this special themed issue sought to interrogate educational practices and policies that factor the effects of heritage cultures on child development in contexts of children's global rights (Nganga et al., 2020).

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