

EDF5025

Assessment Task 2

Submitted by:
Namrata Adsul
Student ID - 28201620

Gathering information:

- Kindergarten Context – Year 4 and 5 Sessional Kindergarten program, 3 days a week, 20 children in the Blue Room, 5 children with Language background other than English, Alfarabi's (focus child) family has recently moved from Indonesia.
- Kindergarten Philosophy – “Children develop confidence, resilience and positive self-esteem through a supportive and secure environment.”; “We implement an inclusive approach to positively support children’s growth of identity, self-esteem and critical thinking and encourage each child to reach their full potential in accordance with their individual ability.”; “We will support children in becoming active citizens of their educational community as they gain their own unique sense of belonging, being and becoming.”
- Observations of Teacher practices –
- See Appendix 1 – Overall plan, play experiences.
- Educators frequently remind children about respecting others, accommodating others’ interests when playing in groups.
- Educators explore dynamics of groups as they bond with each other and ensure children learn to share spaces within the kindergarten.
- Encourage children to co-construct through play, craft, etc.
- Observations of focus child – See Appendix 2 – (Alfarabi).
- Focus child did not meet the learning outcome after assessment according to mentor.

Evaluate your implementation of this policy:

- As Alfarabi became part of this group play experience, he started to feel comfortable but sometimes encouragement made him feel pressured to interact.
- He also felt overwhelmed at times when he wanted to say something but could not find the right words to communicate. I did ask him if this is what he wanted to say but that only led to children following my lead.
- As a result, his contributions to the group were only possible because other children listened to me, not him as an independent entity.
- Support did not cater to building independence, wherein, he initiates play experiences and actively participate in conversations.

EYLF
OUTCOME 2: CHILDREN
ARE CONNECTED WITH
AND CONTRIBUTE TO
THEIR WORLD

2.1: Children develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities and an understanding of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary for active community participation

Question:

- What does this information tell us about Alfarabi's learning and development?
- How does current plans, practices and teaching strategies affect him?
- What does this information tell us about Alfarabi's sense of belonging, connectedness and wellbeing?
- How can we support Alfarabi find effective ways of communicating his concerns and to collaborate with others?
- In what ways are we supporting children's understanding of interdependence and how can we facilitate this sense of ownership and belonging within the program?
- How can we further support Alfarabi in transferring and adapting learning to support his agency and interactions?

Implement:

- I actively started to encourage Alfarabi to join a group to play, especially when their play was related to his interests like superheroes.
- Once part of the group, I became part of the play experience and prompted him to share his ideas by asking him open-ended questions such as “What do you think?, How about you two think about a plan to defeat the enemies?”
- Also, I suggested they create the “Avengers Headquarters” together as a team. They all got on board right away. As everyone started to negotiate responsibilities, I asked Alfarabi if he was interested in taking care of a specific part of the project in order to help him overcome his discomfort and hesitation. I explicitly modelled how he could communicate his intentions.
- While they constructed the headquarters, I reminded children to wait for their turn, share, listen and accommodate each others’ ideas. Alfarabi was encouraged to express his intentions.

Plan:

- Provide support for language and socialisation skills to ensure that he has the skills to participate and contribute to group play and projects - model language that Alfarabi can use to express ideas, negotiate roles and collaborate to achieve goals.
- Plan opportunities for children to participate in meaningful ways in group discussions and shared decision-making about rules and expectations- Meaningful learning relationships.
- Imaginative play experiences that will allow children to bond with each other. They take on characters and play with others through the character so it is not as confronting as trying to start conversation with someone you don't really know.
- Give children an opportunity to build on social skills such as taking turns when washing hands, listening to others during circle time, following the lead or taking the lead, negotiating and collaborating.

In relation to the implementation of Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) Outcome 2.1, I used data to firstly, inform my understanding based on existing practices in the kindergarten (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009). Then, I analysed its impact on the focus child. A significant barrier in this analysis was lack of consideration of the child's developing bilingual social identity within the Blue Room community. In addition to fulfilment of political agendas, further reflection led me to uncover hegemonic intentions influenced by integration or assimilation of Alfarabi (pseudonym) (an Indonesian with developing English language capabilities) into the dominant discourse of the classroom which was dominated by native English speaking white Australians. While my intentions to help him build communication skills to function in that particular social context were in his best interests, they did not cater to the need for him to authentically 'Belong' in the broader community.

The learning outcome promotes building children's autonomy within a community through active participation. However, adhering to the National Quality Framework (NQF) (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority [ACECQA], n.d.) Standard Element 5.2.1 compelled me to take away his fundamental rights as a member of the community by overshadowing and forcing him to collaborate and give in to the dominant discourse in order to fit in. As the NQF philosophy stems from Eurocentric developmentalism theories, it does not take into account broader socio-cultural implications (Robinson & Diaz, 2006). Also, due to the politics of 'Belonging', I misinterpreted the concept instead of viewing it as the development of identity through encounters of diversities and differences (Giugni, 2011).

Social inclusion agenda aims to 'build a stronger, fairer Australia ... in which all Australians feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in the life of our society', (Wong & Turner, 2014). The 'social inclusion' I aimed to implement was based on normalisation which supported hegemonic power. Unfortunately, the critical feature of inclusion is that if implemented to avoid exclusion, which I did, it can conjure deeply held fears of 'not belonging' and the desire to 'fit in' leading to reinforcement of

powerlessness (Wong & Turner, 2014; Silver, 2010). As a result, Alfarabi felt even more ignored when he was part of the group only in the physical sense and had to follow directions or orders when told to be accepted.

Similarly, people can 'belong' in many different ways and to many different objects or attachments – this is particularly relevant to bilingual children (Sumsion & Wong, 2011). Yuval-Davis (2006) suggests the importance of context when conceptualising 'belonging'. Thus, in this case, my efforts need to be reframed to accommodate Alfarabi's background rather than deem it irrelevant in the social setting of the kindergarten. Positioning Alfarabi as an ESL student individualised his identity, making me want to integrate him into the community. It was no different to what he was doing before when he used transactional means to make new friends. I should emphasise on acceptance of his bilingualism as a strength represented as a language of the Australian community instead of viewing him as deficient of something.

Discursive and political use of language, power relations and equity issues arose in the multi-cultural multi-lingual kindergarten setting. Power imbalances between adults and children, adults and adults, and children and children, particularly in the context of cultural, racial, linguistic and social differences are acknowledged by adults as well as children (Taylor, 2007). Concerning the focus child, he was aware of the social dynamics. As a result, in the process of social construction of 'himself', he followed widely-accepted ways of communication modelled in the dominant language to meet the demands of the social context (Robinson & Diaz, 2006). However, Alfarabi was observed deferring to all the decisions made by the dominant boys' group. I planned to foster collaboration with equal participation but he submitted himself to them and his marginalised identity was outcast.

As structural changes occur in the Australian society due to immigration, the emergence of a new economy with a diverse cultural backdrop makes it critical for educators to establish equitable, socially just inclusive learning environments, especially during the formative years of schooling (Herbert, 2013). Globalisation is increasing the diversity in our classrooms; thus, current educative practices that negatively impact the minority need to be reviewed as their voices go unheard (Harper & Dunkerly, 2009). Therefore,

as a revision to my plan, I would make available opportunities for the use of his home language in play experiences with other bilingual children or educators and engage in bilingual programs. These could also include inviting Alfarabi's parents to share cultural experiences through storytelling. In this process, all children start to respond to diversity with respect and become aware of fairness (DEEWR, 2009).

Another aspect of the same political argument is related to NQF Standard Element 1.2.1, which relates to Intentional teaching (ACECQA, n.d.). My objective was to ensure children practice basic principles of working in a team but the stand-alone practice of intentional teaching strategy stopped Alfarabi from exercising his rights as a child – “children have the right to enjoy and practice their own culture, religion, and language without fear of persecution or discrimination; and their right to privacy, protection and autonomy” (United Nations, 1989). It is true that the role of adults supporting children's agency is complicated, so, there is a need for a comprehensive explanation of its application across contexts because it affects social and emotional wellbeing and that cannot be ignored (Ballet, Biggeri & Comim, 2011; Tisdall & Punch, 2012; Valentine, 2011).

Petrowskyj (2010) and Carrington (2007) argue supporting diversity and providing equitable opportunities is to value children's sense of belonging and being. ESL learners, children with disabilities and learning difficulties, are often marginalised based on assumptions of difference as deficit and acceptance of the role of class teachers for diversity as narrow (Conway, 2008). I believe these assumptions were prominent in my implementation plan as I emphasised equality (able to do as others do) rather than equity and shallow focus on need (help with social skills) rather than rights. One way to ensure equity in the future is through designing play spaces that accommodate his cultural and social interests.

Children need to be given opportunities to practice their agency through active participation in the creation of their 'becoming' identities instead of growing into existing ones (Giugni, 2011, Taylor, 2007). Hence, for the educator, it is essential to support them with the creation of new shared understandings influenced by inclusive ways of thinking and knowing when to let go of ownership and control

(Kilderry, Nolan & Scott, 2016). In the future, I also plan to take into consideration the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2005), which encourages linguistic diversity and incorporates traditional pedagogies into the education process intending to preserve and make full sense of culturally appropriate methods of communication (UNESCO, 2009).

Lastly, assessment of children's abilities against this EYLF Learning Outcome is unfair and unjust if social dynamics are not considered. Learning needs to be examined from two perspectives, namely, the individual and the social environment the child 'belongs' to, which is influenced by political, economic and societal factors (Buzzelli, 2018). Hence, exploration and examination of explicit and implicit assumptions embedded in policy is needed to ensure inclusion, social justice and equity as they ultimately impact children's learning and development (Lea, 2013).

References:

- Adler, A. (2001). Racial and Ethnic Identity Formation of Midwestern Asian-American Children. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood Education*, 2(3), 265-294. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.2304/ciec.2001.2.3.2>
- Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (n.d.). National Quality Standard. Retrieved from <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-quality-standard>
- Ballet, J., Biggeri, M. & Comim, F. (2011). Children's Agency and the Capability Approach: A Conceptual Framework. In M. Biggeri, J. Ballet & F. Comim (Eds.), *Children and the Capability Approach* (pp.22–45). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Buzzelli, C. (2018). The moral dimensions of assessment in early childhood education. *Contemporary issues in Early Childhood*, 19(2), 154-166. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1463949118778021?journalCode=ciea>

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2009). *Early Years Learning Framework*. Retrieved from https://www.coag.gov.au/sites/default/files/early_years_learning_framework.pdf

Giugni, M. (2011). 'Becoming Worldly with': An Encounter with the Early Years Learning Framework. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 12(1), 11 – 27. Retrieved from <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.monash.edu.au/10.2304/ciec.2011.12.1.11>

Harper, H., & Dunkerly, J. (2009). Current Issues in Comparative Education. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 12(1). 56-65. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ879769.pdf>

Herbert, J. (2013). Interrogating Social Justice in Early Years Education: How Effectively Do Contemporary Policies and Practices Create Equitable Learning Environments for Indigenous Australian Children? *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 14(4), 300 – 310. Retrieved from <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.monash.edu.au/10.2304/ciec.2013.14.4.300>

Kilderry, A., Nolan, A., & Scott, C. (2017). 'Out of the loop': early childhood educators gaining confidence with unfamiliar policy discourse. *Early Years*, 37(4), 341-354. DOI: 10.1080/09575146.2016.1183595

Lea, S. (2013). Early years work, professionalism and the translation of policy into practice. In Z. Kingdon., & L. Gourd. (Eds.). *Early years policy: the impact on practice*. Retrieved from <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com>

Mac Naughton, G., Hughes, P., & Smith, K. (2007). Early childhood professionals and children's rights: tensions and possibilities around the United Nations General Comment No. 7 on Children's Rights. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 15(2), 161-170. DOI: 10.1080/09669760701288716

- Davis, N. (2006). Intersectionality and Feminist Politics. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 13(3), 193-209. Retrieved from <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-00571274/document>
- Petriwskyj, A. (2010). Who Has Rights to What? Inclusion in Australian Early Childhood Programs. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 11(4), 342 – 352. Retrieved from <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.monash.edu.au/10.2304/ciec.2010.11.4.342>
- Robinson, K., & Diaz, C. (2006). *Diversity and Difference in Early Childhood Education: Issues for theory and practice*. England: Open University Press.
- Silver, H. (2010). Understanding Social Inclusion and its Meaning for Australia. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 45(2), 183-211. Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/j.1839-4655.2010.tb00174.x>
- Sumsion, J., Wong, S. (2011). Interrogating 'Belonging' in Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 12(1), 28 – 45. Retrieved from <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.monash.edu.au/10.2304/ciec.2011.12.1.28>
- Taylor, A. (2007). Playing with Difference: The Cultural Politics of Childhood Belonging. *The International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations*, 7(3), 143-149. Retrieved from
- Tisdall, E. & Punch, S. (2012). "Not So 'New'? Looking Critically at Childhood Studies." *Children's Geographies*, 10(3), 249–264. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2012.693376>.

United Nations (1989). *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Retrieved from www.unicef.org/crc/crc

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (2009). Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0017/001778/177849e.pdf>

Valentine, K. (2011). "Accounting for Agency." *Children and Society*, 25(5), 347–358. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1099-0860.2009.00279>.

Wong, S. & Turner, K. (2014). Constructions of Social Inclusion within Australian Early Childhood Education and Care Policy Documents. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 15(1). 54-68. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.2304/ciec.2014.15.1.54>

Appendix:

Appendix 1 –

Play Space	Interpersonal Focus - Interactions
Visual Arts	• Co-construction of learning from others by working in small groups • Moving towards and participating on collaborative work.
Puzzles	• Assisting each other • Working collaboratively to complete puzzles
Dramatic Play Spaces	• Role playing
Books	• Reading/looking at books together • Sharing ideas • Reading to others • Listening to others • Extending thinking together through discussions about the story
Construction	• Watching and learning from others in the same area • Collaborative work with others • Sharing ideas • Assisting others
Outdoor play	• Collaborative play • Turn taking • Sharing of equipment
Group meetings	

Cubbies continue to develop outdoors. This week the children made one huge cubby that many could share. It has been interesting to observe the shift in social dynamics since we have returned from holidays. All of a sudden it is as though something has clicked and the children are working a much more collaborative manner. The cubby created this week had many children enter it at some stage throughout the day. There was no sense of ownership over it and at one time, twelve children were in there having their snack together! They created a space for shoes to keep the cubby clean, a space for sleeping, a space for games, and made sure they all kept the space tidy for each other. This was all child-initiated and there was a real feeling of shared enjoyment in their adventure.



Another area where collaboration has really been evident has been in the development of obstacle courses. We have some children that need to exert their energy but our garden is not conducive to running. We also want the children to be challenged rather than simply running up and down so I set them the challenge of trying to create a hard obstacle course for themselves. Immediately a group took on the task and began to move around the loose parts in the garden. They worked together to strategically place objects, discussing what and where to put them, and deciding that they were not allowed to touch the ground. This in itself increased the degree of difficulty for creating the course as well as being able to complete the course because the children were required to place objects in position, test how it worked, and then modify them in order to be able to complete the course without touching the ground. There was a huge amount of discussing, experimenting, modifying, testing, modifying again until they had the desired result which all of the children got to enjoy for the rest of the week.



The children's learning in the experience

The children created their own play and confidently presented their opinions and ideas to develop the play better. They designed the background of their play with simple materials around them, a stick and string. Based on the idea, they organised their fishing trip with joyful conversation.

The children showed their ability to respect their friends. They listened and suggested ideas with positive comments. They created their play with relevant ideas so that other children could expect what they needed to do in the play which made the play last with joy.

Appendix 2 –

Observation 1 –

Alfarabi is a 4-year-old, who has just moved to the Kindy Room this term. He is used to bringing his favourite toys from home. Familiar objects around him make him feel. This morning, Will (another child) saw his Benten watch and asked him if he could play with it. Alfarabi immediately said "Yes, but can I play with you?" Will agreed and they continued playing together for a few minutes, mostly enacting scenes from the cartoon series. After the excitement of the watch wore off, Will moved on to play with other children. Alfarabi started playing alone with construction blocks after he saw Will was not interested in playing with him anymore.

The next day Alfarabi brought the Benten watch again and Will played with him while he wore the watch. This time they played a bit longer as their pretend storylines developed further. Throughout the play experience Will was wearing the watch. I asked him, "Now that Alfarabi has let you wear the watch for so long, don't you think it's time he also wears it and pretends to be Benten for a while?"

(Will was pretending to be Benten, the main character and directing the scenarios. I thought of checking how Alfarabi would react to taking over the directing part as it involves a lot of communication and expression through language)

Will gave the watch back to Alfarabi but went and joined another group of children.

Observation 2 –

This afternoon it had rained outside, so, Ian, Levi, Mack, Alfarabi and Mackenzie gathered around a puddle and started to explore objects that could float. Ian, Levi and Mackenzie chatted about how their objects were reacting in response to the water. They shared ideas with each other as they worked to construct a boat. Through these conversations, the boats evolved and changed from just being able to float to having propellers, sails, etc.

In this picture below and in numerous other instances, Alfarabi engages in parallel play, especially when in groups of more than two children. When prompted to explain his intentions to another child in order to strike a conversation, he hesitates and continues playing without any response.

