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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Early Childhood Curriculum, Cultural Identity, Curriculum Design, Cultural Relevance, Teacher Role	This study investigates the cultural relevance of early childhood curriculum design, focusing on current educational practices that reflect and support the diverse cultural identities of young learners. Rooted in sociocultural learning theory, research examines extent to which culturally responsive curriculum promotes inclusion, boosts children engagement & strengthens their sense of belonging. A quantitative research method was adopted to administer 150 early childhood educators and curriculum developers over convenience sampling. The instrument investigated dimensions of cultural relevance, including classroom content, teaching strategies, institutional support, and teacher preparedness. The descriptive statistics were used to analyze data. Findings revealed that while educators generally recognize the value of culturally inclusive education, its practical execution remains inconsistent. Areas such as use of home languages, representation of diverse traditions, and integration of local cultural knowledge require attention. Teacher training and administrative support also emerged as critical factors influencing curriculum effectiveness. Study stressed that culturally relevant curriculum design is not an added feature but required foundation of early childhood education.  2025 Journal of Social Sciences Development
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INTRODUCTION

The early childhood curriculum (ECC) is gradually conceptualized as a dynamic cultural practice, where cultural norms, educational philosophies, social expectations intersect within and shaped by broader sociocultural values, belief systems, and ideological frameworks. The study of Yang and Li (2019) contend that curriculum should be understood simultaneously as a process and a product of

cultural meaning-making, reflecting that how societies construct and transmit their values through educational practices. Their study of kindergartens in Hong Kong and Shenzhen illustrates ECC embodies a hybrid orientation as collective harmony with progressive. This synthesis underscores curriculum reflects and mediates the evolving educational ideologies within social environments. Grounding this in [Vygotsky's \(1978\)](#) sociocultural theory and [Rogoff's \(2003\)](#) work on the cultural participation, children's learning is described within the context of their sociocultural communities. [Apeh, Hassan, Oyewole, Fakeyede and Adaramodu \(2023\)](#) and [Beribe \(2023\)](#), expand curriculum mindful of learners' cultures not only improves the cognitive and behavioral dimensions of learning, but affective realm by promoting empathy and social consciousness. This is made possible through exposure to a multitude of viewpoints focuses on equal learning chances to all children, avoiding factors which hinder their progress in learning & respecting their backgrounds, cultures, and needs ([Nieminen, 2022](#)).

By prioritizing equity, inclusivity, and responsiveness, curriculum design ensures that educational experiences are not only accessible but meaningful—empowering every learner to engage fully, achieve their potential, and contribute to a more just and inclusive educational landscape. Through inclusive curriculum design, educators strive to foster an environment where every student feels respected, supported, and empowered to succeed ([Sandoval, Muñoz & Márquez, 2021](#)). Thus, the multidimensional and holistic approach of curriculum design represents a grounded in principle of meeting the diverse academic, social, and cultural needs of all learners ([Sanger 2020](#)). Inclusive curriculum design is grounded in core educational principles like equity, diversity, representation, and culturally responsive pedagogy ([Rao, 2021; Cressey, 2020](#)). It helps to mitigate inequities by addressing biases lead to unequal disciplinary actions. Equity and access implore the engagement to be participatory and opportunistically fair, while the other elements of diversity, representation, and culturally dissociated pedagogy aim to dismantle the social, cultural, linguistic, and physical infrastructures that limit engagement in early education ([Cerna, Mezzanotte, Rutigliano, Santiago & Guthrie, 2021; Adekujajo, Fakeyede, Udeh & Daraojimba, 2023; Oyewole, Fakeyede, Apeh & Adaramodu, 2023](#)).

These principles collectively guide educators in creating learning environments that affirm and respect the cultural identities, experiences, and developmental needs of all children, they are more likely to develop self-confidence, sustain active engagement and demonstrate improved academic and socio-emotional outcomes ([Guberina, 2023](#)). Thus, inclusive curriculum design serves as both a pedagogical and ethical framework for advancing justice and belonging in the early childhood education. The diversity and representation focus on adding voices, cultures, and experiences of different groups in curriculum. When children see their culture in books, activities, and classroom discussions, they feel respected and more motivated to learn ([Farayola, Hassan, Adaramodu & Oladeinde, 2023; Shapiro, 2020](#)). It also helps the challenge stereotypes and supports children in understanding others who are different ([Cobb & Couch, 2022](#)). The culturally responsive teaching means using teaching methods and materials that match students' cultural backgrounds. It helps children feel that their culture is valued and makes learning meaningful for them ([Tai, 2022; Lau & Shea, 2022](#)). This approach builds trust, improves classroom relationships, and increases student engagement and success.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate that current early childhood curriculum design is more culturally relevant.
2. To find out relationship amid culturally relevant curriculum & children learning outcome.
3. To identify the different predictors of the culturally relevant curriculum implementation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The early years are foundational in shaping a child's sense of self, belonging, and capacity to learn. When children see their cultural identities reflected and respected in the curriculum, they are more likely to feel confident, motivated, and connected to school (Banks, 1993; Nieto, 2017). On the other hand, color-evasive, superficial multicultural approaches can unintentionally erase richness of children's lived experiences, especially from the marginalized communities. The CRC in early childhood helps mitigate inequities by addressing biases that lead to disproportionate disciplinary actions and lower academic expectations. It encourages educators to move beyond "heroes and holidays" representations of culture and instead engage deeply with realities children bring from their communities. This approach fosters not only academic achievement but also emotional and social well-being, particularly when it supports children's language, values, community histories. The curriculum design focuses on giving equal learning chances to all children by respecting their backgrounds, cultures, and needs. It removes barriers that might stop some students from learning well (Nieminén, 2022).

In early childhood, it is very important that the curriculum reflects the children's own culture and life experiences. When children see their identity in what they learn, they feel respected and more motivated. This kind of culturally relevant curriculum helps children understand & accept others, and supports better learning and behavior (Apeh et al., 2023; Beribe, 2023). Furthermore, such an approach nurtures children's moral and social development, helping them grow into empathetic, responsible, and caring members of society leads to the foundational principles of the equity, access, diversity, representation, as well as culturally responsive teaching (Rao, 2021; Cressey, 2020). This process requires deliberate removal of social, cultural, and physical barriers that may limit children participations in the early education (Cerna, Mezzanotte, Rutigliano, Santiago & Guthrie, 2021; Adekuajo, Fakeyede, Udeh & Daraojim, 2023; Oyewole, Fakeyede, Apeh & Adaramodu, 2023). When children experience such inclusion and validation, they develop a stronger sense of self-worth, sustain active engagement in the learning, and achieve better academic and social outcomes (Guberina, 2023).

Cultural Relevance in Theory & Practice

The study examines how children adaptive life skills are nurtured within the differing educational and cultural contexts of Turkey and Rwanda, illustrating how curriculum and community context influence teaching of social behaviors and decision-making. In this connection, such a comparative perspective highlights the importance of embedding culture into the contextual frameworks of the early childhood curriculum development (Veliz et al. 2025). Thus, Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003) conceptualize as teaching a cultural activity, claiming the values, norms, and expectations of the classroom, as well as its possible and probable practices, are inextricably linked to the sociocultural realities of the teacher and students. Esteban and Moll (2014) adopt the notion of "funds of identity"

referring to the cognitive and emotional resources that children draw from the personal, social, and cultural settings.

The empirical evidence from large-scale studies indicates that students' academic aspirations and achievements are deeply intertwined with levels of cultural and social capital accessible to them (Ashtiani & Feliciano, 2018; Oyefuga, 2020). For example, in rural and Indigenous communities in Australia and the Philippines, family perspectives on education go beyond a simple pathway to academic achievement or advanced studies. Parents and children also see schooling as a means for developing emotional resilience, strengthening cultural identification, and connecting with their community, land, language, and traditions (Guenther et al., 2019). This should remind us that the realities and values of local communities, and not only standardized national goals and frameworks, should inform effective curricula, as richness, diversity of cultural realities and experiences should not be ignored.

Designing Multicultural & Culturally Responsive Curriculum

The curriculum development in early childhood education reflects the deeper power knowledge relationships shaped by cultural, political, and institutional contexts. A comparative study of two arts curricula the Beijing Kindergarten Happiness and Development Curriculum and Australian Curriculum: The Arts demonstrates how educational systems in different cultural contexts shape the intended curriculum for the young children aged 5–6 years in different situations and contexts (Hamilton & Krieg, 2019). Drawing from the concept of govern mentality, this analysis interprets curriculum not just as set of documents but as system of ideas embedded in broader societal goals & power structures.

Curriculum Frameworks & Cultural Perspectives

In examining the cultural influences within early childhood frameworks, Akhlagh and Leggett (2024) highlighted that Iran's IEPF (Integrated Early Childhood Program Framework) draws from both Western and indigenous cultural elements. For instance, while creativity is linked with play & problem-solving similar to Western ideologies IEPF tends to emphasize collective play, aligning with its cultural norms, rather than prioritizing individual expression. In contrast, Examination of Australia's Early Years Learning Framework, which is from Australia, shows attention to balancing individual engagement with the group. This indicates the beginning of cross-cultural research, in context of previous works on cross-cultural research on creative development of children in early learning communities, which vary based on culture and the society (or social structure) (Akhlagh & Leggett, 2024).

Role of Teacher & Cultural Relevance in ECC

The role of teacher and cultural relevance in ECC hold a central role in implementing culturally relevant pedagogy in early childhood settings. Their responsibility goes beyond delivering content; they must understand what people, places, and experiences hold meaning for young children. This understanding enables them to create meaningful learning environments that reflect children real lives and cultural surroundings. Teachers can integrate local cultural resources such as community markets, family traditions, and local stories into classroom themes to support the engagement and

meaningful learning (Shih et al., 2022; Shih & Chen, 2020). The challenges like teacher training and lack of resources can limit effective implementation, highlighting the need for professional development and inclusive curriculum planning (Ashraf, & Bangalore, 2025). The culture deeply shapes children's developmental experiences and is embedded within early childhood curricula. Children inherit cultural values, norms over interactions within their physical and psychological surroundings including play as mirrors of culturally constructed images of childhood (Fleer, 2017; Frønes, 2009; Tesar et al., 2019). As such, curriculum design in early education are closely tied to the cultural ideologies and philosophical understandings of childhood prevalent in a given context (Ailwood, 2022).

Curriculum, as both philosophical and practical framework, reflects educational values, objectives, and expectations rooted in sociocultural contexts. Moore (2000) emphasized curriculum as a bearer of dominant ideologies, suggesting that interaction between culture and curriculum allows both top-down and bottom-up cultural transmission and meaning-making (Yang & Li, 2019a, 2019b, 2022b). Though Euro-American perspectives have historically dominated field, recent literature encourages diverse cultural input, including studies from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, offering new insights into childhood practices and curriculum reforms (OECD, 2018; Yelland et al., 2021). For instance, Alhosani (2022) highlighted the integration of Emirati cultural identity and values within the UAE's early childhood curriculum. Elements like Islamic values and heritage education are embedded in Kindergarten Curriculum framework, reflecting how macrosystem-level cultural factors shape educational content. Research highlights how factors like strong family relationships, socioeconomic status, and school-family partnerships influence children's educational experiences particularly in the underserved and culturally diverse communities (Ashtiani & Feliciano, 2018; Oyefuga, 2020).

For example, children benefit greatly from families that engage with schools and pass on cultural knowledge, aspirations, and life experiences. These efforts not only enhance students' aspirations but counter the assumption that low socioeconomic backgrounds naturally result in poor academic performance (Comber, 2021; Gouwens & Henderson, 2021). However, language barriers between teachers and students remain a challenge in many educational settings. In Ghana, for example, a mismatch amid teachers' language skills and local dialect of students is common due to ineffective teacher placement systems. This hampers communication and reduces curriculum effectiveness (World Bank, 2018). These efforts resonate with the concept of social bonding and linking capital, where strong ties between families, communities, and schools help drive academic success among marginalized students (Oyefuga, 2020). In some communities, families envision children becoming locally grounded and globally competent. This vision includes cultural competence, innovation, alliance, sustainability ideals that are deeply intertwined with a culturally relevant curriculum (Ghana, 2018).

Ecological Systems & Curriculum Hybridization

A more comprehensive understanding ecological systems and curriculum hybridization can be gained through Bronfenbrennes ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), which considers various environmental layers—

microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem, macrosystem, and the chronosystem for realizing the different leading outcomes. Building on this, Yang and Li (2019) introduced the curriculum hybridization model, where each layer the interacts dynamically to influence curriculum implementation across sociocultural contexts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This approach is suitable for the research objectives to measure how early childhood teachers and curriculum developers view regarding the integration of cultural content into the curriculum and its influence on children’s learning and development. The target population of this study includes early childhood educators and curriculum planners working in both the public and private early childhood education institutions across Punjab, Pakistan, are directly involved in the curriculum design and are therefore well-positioned to provide insights into the cultural relevance of early childhood curricula. Questionnaire data were designed with 24 Likert-scale questions that were aimed at capturing perspectives pertaining to curriculum design and its cultural inclusiveness, as well as its influence on children’s learning. Prior to respondents starting the study, confidentiality and anonymity measures were explained, the study purpose was explained, and informed consent was requested. Ethical practices were fully maintained during the entire research process. The statistical package for social sciences program was used to analyze data, and descriptive statistics were used to summarize and interpret the data in accordance with the research objectives from the provided dataset.

RESULTS OF STUDY

The purpose of data analysis and interpretation phase is to transform data into credible evidence about development of intervention and its performance. The frequencies, percentage, calculated to draw conclusion.

Table 1 Curriculum includes Topics related to Children’s Own Culture

Scale	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	SD
Strongly Disagree	10	6.6	3.70	1.02
Disagree	7	4.6		
Neutral	27	18.0		
Agree	80	53.5		
Strongly Agree	26	17.3		
Total	150	100.0		

Table 1 Indicates that 6.6% of respondents strongly disagreed, 4.6% disagreed, 18% were neutral, 53.5% agreed, and 17.3% strongly agreed that the curriculum includes topics related to children’s own culture. Mean value is 3.70 and SD is 1.02. It shows that most teachers agreed that curriculum integrates topics relevant to children culture, reflecting perception of cultural inclusivity in early childhood education.

Table 2 Children Learn about their Local Customs and Traditions in Class

Scale	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	SD
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Strongly Disagree	12	8.0	3.48	1.11
Disagree	16	10.7		
Neutral	30	20.0		
Agree	71	47.3		
Strongly Agree	21	14.0		
Total	150	100.0		

Table 2 Indicates that 8.0% of respondents strongly disagreed, 10.7% disagreed, 20.0% were neutral, 47.3% agreed, and 14.0% strongly agreed that children learn about their local customs and traditions in class. The mean value is 3.48 and the standard deviation is 1.11 as per the results from the table above. It is concluded that the majority of teachers agreed that children are taught about local customs and traditions, suggesting an emphasis on cultural heritage within classroom environment.

Table 3 Stories and Examples Used in Lessons Reflect the Students' Background

Scale	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	SD
Strongly Disagree	16	10.7	3.52	1.30
Disagree	19	12.7		
Neutral	28	18.7		
Agree	45	30.0		
Strongly Agree	42	28.0		
Total	150	100.0		

Table 3 Indicates that 10.7% of respondents strongly disagreed, 12.7% disagreed, 18.7% were neutral, 30.0% agreed, and 28.0% strongly agreed that stories and examples used in lessons reflect the students' background. The mean value is 3.52 and the standard deviation is 1.30. It is concluded that the majority of the teachers agreed that classroom content is culturally relevant, indicating that efforts are being made to align teaching materials with the students' backgrounds and experiences.

Table 4 Curriculum Respects Different Cultures in Classroom

Scale	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	SD
Strongly Disagree	10	6.7	3.59	1.19
Disagree	18	12.0		
Neutral	37	24.7		
Agree	44	29.3		
Strongly Agree	41	27.3		
Total	150	100.0		

Table 4 shows that 6.7% of the participants strongly disagreed, 12.0% disagreed, and 24.7% remained neutral on the statement that the curriculum respects different cultures in the classroom. However, a significant portion 29.3% agreed and 27.3% strongly agreed. The calculated mean is 3.59, with a standard deviation of 1.19. This suggests that most respondents feel the curriculum does

reflect respect for the cultural diversity. The overall agreement indicates a positive perception of inclusivity within classroom environment, where diverse cultural backgrounds are acknowledged and valued.

Table 5 Local Language or Mother Tongue is Sometimes Used in Lessons

Scale	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	SD
Strongly Disagree	16	10.7	3.52	1.30
Disagree	19	12.7		
Neutral	28	18.7		
Agree	45	30.0		
Strongly Agree	42	28.0		
Total	150	100.0		

Table 5 indicates that 10.7% of respondents strongly disagreed, 12.7% disagreed, and 18.7% remained neutral about the use of local language or mother tongue in lessons. On the other hand, 30.0% agreed and 28.0% strongly agreed with statement. The mean score is 3.52, and the SD is 1.30. This implies that a majority of respondents support or observe occasional use of local language in classroom settings. The findings reflect a positive inclination toward incorporating children's linguistic backgrounds into teaching, which can enhance understanding and cultural relevance in early education.

Table 6 Teaching materials (Books, Pictures) Show Cultural Diversity

Scale	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	SD
Strongly Disagree	10	6.7	3.59	1.19
Disagree	18	12.0		
Neutral	37	24.7		
Agree	44	29.3		
Strongly Agree	41	27.3		
Total	150	100.0		

Table 6 shows that 6.7% of respondents strongly disagreed, 12.0% disagreed, and 24.7% were neutral about the presence of cultural diversity in teaching materials such as books and pictures. In the interim, 29.3% agreed and 27.3% strongly agreed with statement. Mean score is 3.59, and the standard deviation is 1.19. Results suggest that respondents recognize efforts to include culturally diverse content in educational materials. This shows that classrooms may be promoting inclusivity and representation over resources that reflect various cultures, supporting culturally responsive learning environment.

Table 7 Children are Taught to Respect other Cultures

Scale	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	SD
Strongly Disagree	11	7.3	3.41	1.07
Disagree	18	12.0		
Neutral	35	23.3		
Agree	70	46.7		

Strongly Agree	16	10.7
Total	150	100.0

Table 7 shows that 7.3% of respondents strongly disagreed, 12% disagreed, 23.3% were neutral, 46.7% agreed, and 10.7% strongly agreed that children are taught to respect other cultures. The mean value is 3.41, and standard deviation is 1.07. This shows that a majority of respondents agreed with the statement, suggesting that respect for cultural diversity is commonly emphasized in the educational environment.

Table 8 Curriculum Celebrates Festivals from Different Communities

Scale	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	SD
Strongly Disagree	9	6.0	3.29	1.02
Disagree	24	16.0		
Neutral	43	28.7		
Agree	62	41.3		
Strongly Agree	12	8.0		
Total	150	100.0		

Table 8 reveals that 6% of the respondents strongly disagreed, 16% disagreed, 28.7% remained neutral, 41.3% agreed, and 8% strongly agreed that the curriculum celebrates festivals from THE different communities. The mean score of 3.29 and a standard deviation of 1.02 indicate a moderate level of agreement, suggesting that while many respondents acknowledge cultural celebration in the curriculum, a substantial number remain neutral or express reservations as evident from results of current study.

Table 9 Children Enjoy Learning more when their Culture is Included

Scale	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	SD
Strongly Disagree	17	11.3	3.53	1.32
Disagree	12	8.0		
Neutral	41	27.4		
Agree	35	23.3		
Strongly Agree	45	30.0		
Total	150	100.0		

Table 9 shows that 11.3% of respondents strongly disagreed, 8% disagreed, 27.4% were neutral, 23.3% agreed, and 30% strongly agreed with statement that children enjoy learning more when their culture is included. The MV of 3.53 and standard deviation of 1.32 reflect overall agreement, indicating that most respondents believe cultural relevance in the curriculum enhances children's learning enjoyment. A notable proportion remained neutral, disagreed, telling varying perceptions on this issue.

Table 10 Children Feel Confident when See their Culture in School Lessons

Scale	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	SD
Strongly Disagree	21	14.0	3.45	1.36

Disagree	12	8.0
Neutral	41	27.3
Agree	31	20.7
Strongly Agree	45	30.0
Total	150	100.0

Table 10 shows that 14.0% of the respondents strongly disagreed, 8.0% disagreed, 27.3% were neutral, 20.7% agreed, and 30.0% strongly agreed that children feel confident when they see culture reflected in school lessons. The mean value is 3.45, with a standard deviation of 1.36. These results indicate that many parents believe cultural representation in the classroom boosts children's confidence. Although responses vary, mean suggests a general agreement with the statement. The relatively high standard deviation reflects diverse parental experiences & school practices related to cultural inclusion.

FINDINGS OF STUDY

1. About 6.6% of respondents strongly disagreed, 4.6% disagreed, 18% were neutral, 53.5% agreed, and 17.3% strongly agreed that the curriculum includes topics related to children's own culture
2. About 8.0% of respondents strongly disagreed, 10.7% disagreed, 20.0% were neutral, 47.3% agreed, and 14.0% strongly agreed that children learn about their local customs and traditions in class.
3. About 10.7% of respondents strongly disagreed, 12.7% disagreed, 18.7% were neutral, 30.0% agreed, and 28.0% strongly agreed that stories & examples used in lessons reflect the students' background.
4. About 6.7% of participants strongly disagreed, 12.0% disagreed, 24.7% remained neutral on the statement that the curriculum respects different cultures in classroom. Still, a significant portion 29.3% agreed and 27.3% strongly agreed.
5. About 10.7% of respondents strongly disagreed, 12.7% disagreed, 18.7% remained neutral regarding the use of local language or mother tongue in lessons. 30.0% agreed and 28.0% strongly agreed with the statement.
6. About 6.7% of respondents strongly disagreed, 12.0% disagreed, and 24.7% were neutral about presence of cultural diversity in teaching materials like books & pictures. Meanwhile, 29.3% agreed and 27.3% strongly agreed with the statement.
7. About 7.3% of respondents strongly disagreed, 12% disagreed, 23.3% were neutral, 46.7% agreed, and 10.7% strongly agreed that children are taught to respect other cultures in the diverse circumstances.
8. About 6% of the respondents strongly disagreed, 16% disagreed, 28.7% remained neutral, 41.3% agreed, and 8% strongly agreed that the curriculum celebrates festivals from the different communities.
9. About 11.3% of respondents strongly disagreed, 8% disagreed, 27.4% were neutral, 23.3% agreed, and 30% strongly agreed with the statement that children enjoy learning more when their culture is included.

10. About 14.0% of respondents strongly disagreed, 8.0% disagreed, 27.3% were neutral, 20.7% agreed, and 30.0% strongly agreed that children feel confident when they see their culture reflected in school lessons.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study affirm that incorporating the cultural relevance into early childhood curriculum is essential for fostering children's identity, active engagement, and positive learning experiences. When the educational content and classroom practices genuinely reflect the cultural backgrounds of the learners, children are more likely to develop a stronger sense of belonging, confidence, and motivation to participate. Although most educators acknowledge the importance of culturally responsive education, the results indicate inconsistency in its practical application. In this drive, many classrooms still lack the integration of local languages, traditions, and community-based knowledge. Also, the access to professional development in culturally responsive teaching varies widely among the educators, reflecting the absence of a standardized approach to training and development.

This research highlights that curriculum development is influenced by more than just pedagogical strategies; it is deeply shaped by broader ecological systems. Factors such as family engagement, leadership support, and national education policies all interact to affect how cultural elements are included in early learning environments. The use of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and curriculum hybridization model proved effective in illustrating these multi-level influences. In summary, a culturally responsive curriculum is fundamental to achieving inclusive and equitable early childhood education in diverse contexts. However, for such curriculum to be implemented effectively, it requires coordinated efforts, ongoing teacher training, institutional commitment, and well-aligned policy frameworks that prioritize the cultural inclusion as a core component of the early learning.

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