Research Article

The Evaluation of the Cultural Diversity Effect by Using Picture Books with a Preschool Teacher

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Cultural diversity is endorsed by many educators as a major teaching concept due to its significance for the achievement of social equity in education. Recently, the use of picture books to promote principles related to cultural diversity has become a rising trend in early childhood settings. This study examined Chinese preschool teachers' attitudes toward using picture books to teach cultural-diversity-related topics and their reported practices. Seven preschool teachers from four institutions located in Shanghai, China were surveyed and semiinterviewed. The study identified three key findings: (1) teachers interpreted cultural diversity in a restricted way and were usually unaware of themselves teaching the concept of cultural diversity; (2) teachers adopted a multifaceted approach of selecting picture books used for teaching cultural diversity and conceived illustrations as the most important book selection criteria; and (3) teachers often supplemented picture book sharing with first-hand experiences. The study results have important implications for preschool teachers, curriculum designers, and organizations that provide training for preservice and in-service early childhood educators. The analysis results show that the proposed system has a great and positive impact on the early childhood education of students and is helpful for the teachers to teach cultural diversity-related topics to their students in an easy and effective way.

1. Introduction

With the process of globalization, cross-cultural contacts have increased connectivity among people whose national and regional boundaries are shrinking day by day [1, 2]. In a globalized society, tolerance for the rich cultural diversity of the world should be fostered in all people for high-quality intercultural communications. An essential tool for facilitating cross-cultural tolerance is multicultural education, which is defined as a culturally responsive pedagogy that builds upon the ideals of freedom, justice, and equality [3–5]. Multicultural education has a variety of obstacles, including overcoming societal injustice and embracing and respecting the diversity that students, instructors, and communities represent [6]. In recent years, a more progressive approach to multicultural education has moved beyond increasing student understanding of a diversity of cultural forms from throughout the world to influencing social action. As elaborated by Banks [7], the endeavor of social change

empowerment starts with instructing students to understand and question cultural diversity issues. It also assists students in gaining the information, attitudes, and abilities necessary to engage in civil choices and activities aimed at achieving social equality and justice [7].

Even though the benefits of infusing multicultural education practices into classroom instruction have been empirically documented, teachers often deem it as supplementary rather than an essential component of the curriculum in actual practice. Multicultural education is often regarded as a distinct program and a distinct course to be added to the school's curriculum [8, 9]. Even among teachers who accept multicultural education, not many of them believe in the feasibility of its implementation [8]. There are two main reasons for this lack of attention to multicultural educational practices. First, teachers understand multicultural education in a way that is more restricted than the widely accepted interpretations which include ethnic, religious, linguistic, gender, social class, race, ability, and age

differences [10]. In reality, teachers tend to interpret multicultural education as the process of designing and delivering curricula about or to minority ethnic groups. When students from nondominant ethnic groups are nonexistent in their classrooms, which is very likely to happen in a Chinese educational context, teachers tend to neglect the tremendous potential that multicultural education could have on benefits of every member of the learning community. Second, in many school curricula, not much content on cultural diversity is included. The limited multicultural content that the schools offer is presented in sidebars and special sections [11]. Teachers, unless highly motivated to teach such content with a strongly compelling objective, are unlikely to deal with them seriously.

Picture books, which are described as books in which the text and graphics work together to convey a story, are ubiquitous tools that are used to enrich curricula across China and the United States [12]. It is especially advantageous in supporting student acquisition of literacy [13–15] and cognitive skills [16], both of which reliably predict future academic performance. Additionally, picture books cultivate social qualities such as friendship, cooperation, accountability, and empathy as well as communication skills such as active listening and awareness of others [16, 17]. They are all conceived as essential building blocks for cultural competence. In recent years, the use of picture books in the multicultural curriculum has become a rising trend. Picture books have demonstrated remarkable abilities to foster cultural diversity in young children. First, picture books with authentic representations of diverse cultural groups disrupt dominant discourses to embrace cultural diversity. Macfarlane [18] argues that, "Individual distinctions, cultural identities, and culturally favored values and behaviors run the risk of being neglected or disregarded when the powerful dominant culture argues that all children are the same." As a result, minority students are forced to conform to the norms of a dominant culture. When there is a serious lack of representation of cultural diversity in picture books, then the differences and diversity are overlooked and cultural assimilation is accelerated [19]. On the other hand, the use of picture books that reflect cultural diversity challenges the predominant values inherent in much of the dominant discourse [20]. In a study done by Colby and Lyon [21], through extensive exploration of multicultural picture books, students acquired the ability to point out the problematic portrayals of minority groups captured in their curriculum materials. Second, picture books outperform other cultural diversity teaching tools as they provide students with immersive cultural experiences. Gay [8] criticizes the multicultural teaching approach of drilling into students' heads facts about major events involving ethnic groups. Picture books, on the other hand, allow students to see into the lives and professions of others while also inviting them to become a part of the author's narrative [22]. Students gain the ability to think critically and analytically about a variety of cultural events, offer alternative solutions to social issues, and exhibit comprehension via a variety of literary mediums. Third, picture books may allow students to authenticate their cultural identities [23]. Students from both dominant and nondominant cultural backgrounds can create and embody a sense of inclusion and belonging to the learning community by reading picture books that reflect their identities [24]. Not only that, the presentation of picture books that reflect the cultural experiences of underrepresented groups helps nurture students' interconnectedness to the cultural identities of others [24]. Either of the situations improves multicultural awareness in students who have their cultural identities securely situated.

In multiple research articles, teachers reported applying different picture book selection strategies to teach cultural diversity, and these are guided by sets of evaluation criteria developed either by themselves or by leading researchers in this area [25, 26]. In general, the strategies used in selecting picture books for teaching cultural diversity are very similar to the ones applied for other educational purposes in that they both take into consideration the following picture book factors: author, story, character, setting, plot, theme, illustrations, and developmental appropriateness [27, 28]. Besides, both selection processes involve consultation of resources such as websites, picture book apps, school and community libraries, colleagues, and curriculum directors. However, the selection of picture books for multicultural education moves one step further from the general selection strategies to include a critical examination of the multicultural aspects of picture books that assist teachers in achieving objectives and outcomes for cultural consciousness. For example, picture book texts and illustrations are checked for authenticity and accuracy, ensuring that they provide realistic historical facts and life experiences with which children can identify [29, 30]. In addition, in dealing with tough topics, stories should present the complexity of issues and provide multiple perspectives for students to obtain a full picture of the major conflicts encountered by specific cultural groups.

However, researchers have discovered barriers that prevent instructors from picking high-quality picture books that align with the multicultural curriculum's aims and ethos. The first barrier lies on the teachers' side. Teachers' limited knowledge and experience in multicultural literature result in their limited abilities in examining cross-cultural issues from perspectives other than their own and initiating classroom critical conversations on these issues [31, 32]. The second obstacle is the disproportionately monocultural collections of picture books in [32] classroom book corners, which stems from a lack of knowledge of multicultural literature in educational practices [21]. When books that represent various cultures are absent from classroom libraries, dominant values and ideologies are normalized. Monocultural children's literature fails to bridge the gap between understanding one's own identity and the identities of those who are culturally diverse [1]. The third barrier has to do with the over-reliance on a single text to provide an appropriate representation of one culture or more cultures. Providing a person's single story cannot help students with the whole story of the cultural group to which that person belongs [33, 34]. To make it worse, when a single piece of literature portrays a minority cultural group in a stereotypical or

outdated way, the incomplete story one hears becomes distorted. Mistakes in transmitting the ideologies, values, and practices of a particular culture lead to further misunderstanding and prejudice [35]. In many recent studies, mere exposure to culturally authentic picture books has a limited impact on promoting cultural consciousness and sensitivity. Therefore, teachers ought to offer strategic guidance in supporting children's exploration of these picture books. According to Davenport, students' awareness of cultural diversity will undoubtedly be widened and deepened when educators give evidence-based instructional supports in cultural diversity courses that incorporate picture books. However, teachers are usually unaware of the importance of introducing multicultural principles in the classrooms nor are they conscious of their book-sharing practices [32]. In Adam's study [19], most teacher participants shared picture books without a particular focus on cultural diversity, which in the long term normalized the dominant cultural perspectives. Even among the few teachers who taught cultural diversity using picture books, they approached the theme from only two aspects: cultural celebration and language preservation [19, 20]. Both concentrations divert from the foundational value base of multicultural education to highlight the special nature of cultural diversity. They reflect a superficial and conservative understanding of multicultural education as education about "celebrations of the joys of diversity."

Generally, teachers demonstrated a lower confidence level in using picture books to address the topic of cultural diversity compared to when they use picture books for other purposes. A major explanation for this phenomenon has to do with the "insider/outsider status," which essentially claims that only cultural insiders can present their cultural experiences and oppositely that cultural outsiders can hardly empathize with the experiences of people who are different from them [17]. To compensate for this perceived limitation, teachers, as cultural outsiders, reach out to cultural insiders to provide students with immersive cultural experiences. Through cultural immersion engagement, students get in touch with individuals whose experiences are different from their own. By engaging in meaningful conversations with members of diverse cultural groups, students gain a deeper understanding of other cultures, the ability to challenge existing stereotypes about these cultures, and improved cross-cultural competence [36, 37].

The intention of this study is twofold. First, there is a dearth of literature on teachers' book-sharing practices in promoting the principle of cultural diversity. Even among all the works in this research niche, most of them were completed in a Western context. This research study was intended to fill this research gap by investigating preschool teachers' attitudes toward using picture books to teach cultural-diversity-related topics and their reported practices. Second, the study area was in Shanghai, China, known as an intoxicating mix of ancient Chinese and East-meets-West culture. It is interesting to see how the unique culture influenced teachers' educational ideologies related to diversity. The research findings and implications can be used in comparative studies on relevant topics.

This study uses surveys and interviews to explore the overarching question: How do preschool teachers teach cultural diversity using picture books? Three themes have emerged from the research findings to assist in answering the subquestions which are as follows:

(i) What are preschool teachers' attitudes toward teaching cultural diversity using picture books?

(ii) What are their criteria for selecting a picture book?

(iii) How do preschool teachers incorporate the selected picture books into their multicultural-themed instruction?

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 describes the methodology followed in the proposed work. This section further discusses different participants, data collection methodology, and different data analysis techniques that can be applied to the collected data. Section 3 is about the quantitative data analysis, while Section 4 is about the qualitative analysis of the collected data. The discussion and limitations of the proposed study are given in Section 5. Section 6 finally concludes the whole theme of the paper.

2. Methodology

This research takes a constructivist and interpretative approach to research, based on the premise that reality is a finite subjective experience with numerous interpretations leading to multiple versions of reality [38]. In the research process, the inquirer makes sense of the participants' versions of reality by collecting empirical evidence within the context of the investigation [39]. At the same time, the inquirer, from his/her lens through which he/she views social phenomenon, interprets the world of lived reality and the situation-specific meanings constructed by the participants.

2.1. Participants. A total of seven Chinese preschool teachers participated in this study. They were recruited from four preschool institutions, with one of them from a bilingual Reggio-inspired preschool, two from a monolingual public preschool, one from a bilingual Montessori-inspired preschool, and three of them from a monolingual private preschool. The demographic information of the seven participants and the participants' classroom information is listed in Tables 1 and 2.

Among all the seven preschool teachers, five of them have students who belong to cultural minority groups. When being asked to define all the minority groups to which their students belong, four of these five preschool teachers created a list of national minorities, including Malaysian, American, and French. Only two teachers described her minority students as having disabilities (autism) and as from single-parent families.

2.2. Data Collection. Surveys and semistructured interviews were employed to address the research questions. A participant initially completed a survey that mostly

Table 1: Summary of participants' demographic information.

Characteristics	Number	Percentage
Gender		
Male	0	0
Female	7	100
Education		
Associate's degree	1	14.29
Bachelor's degree	5	71.43
Master's degree	1	14.29
Years of teaching	2	28.57
1-2	1	14.29
3–5	1	14.29
6–10	2	28.57
11–15	1	14.29
>20		
Years of teaching preschoolers		
1-2	1	14.29
3–5	2	28.57
6–10	1	14.29
11–15	2	28.57
>20	1	14.29
Grade levels	2	28.57
Junior kindergarten (Xiaoban)	4	57.14
Middle kindergarten (Zhongban)	1	14.29
Senior kindergarten (Daban)		

Table 2: Summary of participants' classroom information.

Characteristics	Number	Percentage
Number of students		
11–15	1	14.29
15–20	3	42.86
20–25	3	42.86
Number of students who belong to cultural minority groups[1]		
0	2	28.57
1–5	5	71.14

[1]Within this research context, the term cultural minority group is most appropriately defined by Wirth (1945) as any category of people who, because of their cultural characteristics, are singled out from the other members of the society and are subject to unequal treatment and collective discrimination. Such examples might be students with hearing disabilities, students belonging to nonHan ethnic groups, and students living in single-parent families.

consisted of quantitative, factual questions and then took part in a one-on-one interview to learn more about the narrative behind the numbers. The quantitative and qualitative data provide validation for each other and form a solid foundation for drawing conclusions about preschool teachers' picture book usage patterns in cultural diversity classrooms.

Based on the answers to the survey and interview questions, participants were divided into three groups: (1) participants who have never taught/introduced/discussed the concept of cultural diversity in their classrooms; (2) participants who have taught/introduced/discussed the concept of cultural diversity in their classrooms but have never done so using picture books; and (3) participants who have incorporated picture books into their cultural diversity lessons. To accommodate the condition of each group of participants, three versions of survey and interview questionnaires were designed. Skip logic and branching were employed to direct participants through one of the three paths in the survey.

All surveys were completed on an online crowd .sourcing platform in mainland China. The survey is comprised of five sections. The first section collects background information on the participants and their classrooms. The second section begins by asking participants whether they have taught/ introduced/discussed the concept of cultural diversity in their classrooms and whether they have done so using picture books. If participants answered "Yes" to both questions, they were directed to the first track in which they were further asked the frequency of conducting a cultural diversity lesson using/without using picture books and the typical length of such a lesson. A "Yes" on the first question and a "No" on the second led participants to the second track in which the frequency and length of a lesson on cultural diversity and the reasons why they used instructional tools other than picture books were asked. For participants who answered two "Nos," reasons for not teaching the topic of cultural diversity in their classrooms were explored. At the end of this section, all participants were invited to rank ten

teaching activities in terms of the effectiveness of promoting the concept of cultural diversity. The third section aims to understand participants' attitudes toward teaching cultural diversity using picture books. Specifically, participants were asked to rate three statements: (1) If used appropriately in a lesson that revolves around the topic of cultural diversity, picture books can lead to enhancement of students' understanding of cultural diversity; (2) using picture books is a necessary tool in teaching cultural diversity; and (3) teaching cultural diversity using picture books will (or have the potential to) benefit all students in the classroom. The fourth section was designed exclusively for participants who answered two "Yes" on the second section questions with the goal of documenting the strategies and criteria participants typically used for selecting picture books for teaching cultural diversity. The last section of the survey looks at how picture books may be used to promote ethnic diversity. It mainly asks participants about the time spent on picture book sharing sessions and follow-up activities as well as the frequency of using (un)intentional activities during instruction.

Semistructured interviews took place in the preschool institutions from where nine participants were recruited. The interviews spanned from 10 to 40 minutes. The interview structure is in alignment with the structure of the survey to ensure a high level of consistency. Its questions are all open-ended, and they are categorized into three sections. The first section seeks participant opinions on the importance of picture books in promoting the principles of cultural diversity. The second section consists of five questions, with four of them designed to help participants elaborate on their responses regarding their picture book selection process. One question asks participants to identify the similarities and differences in the book selection processes for teaching cultural diversity versus for other teaching purposes. The third section, also built upon the survey responses, invites participants to describe their most successful cultural-diversity-theme picture book lesson. Ten prompts were given to enrich their narratives. For participants who have no experience in teaching cultural diversity, whether using picture books or not, alternative questions were provided to gain insight into either factor that has led to their reluctance to teach cultural diversity (using picture books) or challenges that have hindered them from delivering lessons on cultural diversity (using picture books). During the interview process, participants were encouraged to elaborate on their responses by providing concrete teaching examples. At the end of the interview, participants were invited to make additional comments on the questions. All interviews were recorded for further data analysis.

2.3. Data Analysis. In this study, the quantitative and qualitative data generated from the survey and interview were analyzed separately but discussed together to yield more complete evidence of the attitudes and practices participants adopted in teaching the concept of cultural diversity in preschool classrooms.

Survey results were analyzed using a program-embedded analysis tool, which generates a representation of numerical data in the form of charts and graphs. For questions that ask numerical values, mean, mode, standard deviation (SD), and percentages of answers for each question item were calculated. For ranking questions, ranking scores (A ranking score is calculated using the following formula (1))

$$\frac{x^1 w^1 + x^2 w^2 + x^3 w^3 + \cdots + x^n w^n}{\text{total response count}}, \tag{1}$$

where w is the weight of the ranked position (the largest weight is given to the first slot, and the value decreases by going from the first to the last slot in ascending order), and x is the response count for answer choice. The answer choice with the largest ranking score is the most preferred, which was applied to understand how preferable an answer choice is.

The qualitative data collected from the semistructured interviews and the open-ended survey questions were interpreted using an inductive approach, which allows research findings to "without the constraints imposed by formal approaches, develop from the frequent, dominating, or noteworthy themes present in raw data" [40]. Braun and Clarke's [41] five stages of thematic analysis approach was adopted to examine the raw data and identify common themes or topics and patterns of meaning that have emerged repeatedly. Following this process, the semistructured interview recordings were transcribed, and the responses to the open-ended survey questions were documented in the same file. The transcripts and the responses were read multiple times, and the interview recordings were listed several times to ensure the accuracy of the transcription. In the next phase, the initial codes were generated to identify features of the data that are relevant to the research questions. Then, by classifying codes that have similar patterns, frequent dominant themes were formed. They were then refined by ensuring that (1) the coded data formed a coherent pattern and (2) the themes were in close relation to the data set as a whole [42]. Finally, the themes were defined and named by capturing the essence of what each theme is about and what aspects of the data each theme captures. Under each individual theme, a detailed analysis was provided using extensive participant quotations.

3. Quantitative Data Analysis

3.1. Teaching Cultural Diversity Using Picture Books: Basic Information. All participants in this study have either taught, discussed, or introduced the concept of cultural diversity in their classrooms. In the previous semester (or over the past four months if the school does not use a semester system), five teachers (71.43%) often conducted lessons on cultural diversity while two teachers (28.57%) rarely did so. Over half of the teachers (57.14%) have designed/taught a curriculum unit devoted specifically to cultural diversity or related topics, but 42.86% of the teachers have never done so.

Six of the seven teachers (85.71%) have used picture books in teaching cultural diversity. Among them, four teachers (66.67%) claimed that they sometimes used picture

books to teach cultural diversity in the previous semester/ over the past four months, and the other two teachers described their frequency of incorporating picture books into cultural-diversity-themed instructions as "rarely" and "often," respectively. For five of the six picture book users (83.33%), each cultural diversity lesson spans from 10 to 30 minutes, and the other teacher claimed that her typical cultural diversity lesson was less than 10 minutes. The one teacher who has never taught cultural diversity using picture books has planned to teach a lesson on cultural diversity using picture books in the future, but the plan has never been executed.

3.2. Teaching Cultural Siversity Using Picture Books: Teachers' Attitudes. Overall, teachers conceived picture books as an effective tool in teaching the theme of cultural diversity. In a 0-to-10 rating scale question that asked about the value of using picture books in promoting the principle of cultural diversity, the average rating score is 8.71 (SD = 1.58). Specifically, four teachers (57.14%) rated a 10 (extremely effective), and the other three teachers rated an 8, 7, and 6, respectively. In addition, among the various teaching methods that are commonly used in cultural diversity instructions, the use of picture books, with a ranking score of 8.5, was nominated as the teachers' second favorite choice. Other top selected teaching approaches include games (8.67), role-playing (6), classroom discussion (4.33), and field trips (4).

Teachers' overall perception of the use of picture books as an effective/useful teaching tool in facilitating the concept of cultural diversity can also be revealed in their high levels of agreement with the following three statements: (1) Picture books can help pupils better grasp cultural diversity if they are utilized effectively in a lesson on the topic; (2) using picture books is a necessary tool in teaching cultural diversity; and (3) teaching cultural diversity using picture books will (or have the potential to) benefit all students in the classroom. By evaluating the teachers' responses using a 1–5 Likert scale that uses the categories of strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree, the first statement has received five "strongly agree" responses and two "agree" responses. The second statement has received two "strongly agree" responses, four "agree" responses, and one "neither agree nor disagree" response. The third statement has received two "strongly agree," four "agree," and one "neither agree nor disagree." All these statements along with received responses are shown in Table 3.

Table 4 displays the ordinal values that can be assigned to these categories.

The first, second, and third statements, respectively, obtained mean scores of 4.71 (SD = 0.45), 4.14 (SD = 0.64), and 4.14 (SD = 0.64) as shown in Table 5.

For all three statements, no responses of "disagree" or "strongly disagree" were collected, implying that they have received a high level of acceptance. Among them, the first statement is the most acceptable, given that it received the most "strongly agree" and the least "neither agree nor

disagree" responses. The second and third statements each received one "neither agree nor disagree" response, which can be potentially due to the fact that for some teachers, their acceptance is restricted to certain conditions.

3.3. Selecting Picture Books in Teaching Cultural Diversity. In finding picture books that are used to teach cultural diversity, excluding the one who has never used picture books to fulfill this educational need, all the six teachers referred to online resources (e.g., Taobao, picture books websites, and picture book apps) as their primary source (100%). Other than that, home (16.67%), classroom book corners (66.67%), school libraries (66.67%), and community libraries (16.67%) are alternative channels for finding suitable picture books. Also, not all teachers consulted other people for recommendations before selecting picture books to teach cultural diversity. Other instructors (100%) and curriculum directors (100%) are the most prevalent sources of advice for the five persons who responded in this way. Other human/nonhuman resources they would also utilize during the book selection process include school librarians (40%), parents (20%), picture book merchandisers (40%), live chat representatives (20%), and online information (80%).

The quality of texts and illustrations were equally emphasized when teachers selected picture books in teaching cultural diversity. In examining texts, the quality of plot and story were what the teachers paid the most attention to. When teachers were asked to state their picture book selection preference within the text-vs-illustration dimension, 66.67% of them believed that texts and illustrations are equally important when selecting picture books to teach cultural diversity, while 33.33% of them believed illustrations to be the single most important consideration. No teachers selected "texts" and "neither texts nor illustrations are important" as their responses to this question. Inconsistent with the results, teachers strongly agreed with the following statement (M = 4.33, SD = 0.47), "when selecting picture books to teach cultural diversity, I would always examine the quality of both texts and illustrations." Four teachers (66.67%) selected "agree" and only two (33.33%) selected "strongly agree." Then, teachers were asked to rank a collection of factors in order of importance when they select picture books to teach cultural diversity, including theme, story, setting, plot, illustrations, developmental appropriateness, author, and characters. According to the results, illustrations, which obtained a ranking score of 4.67, were ranked as picture book selection criteria. Plot and story, as two important elements of texts, were ranked in the first (6.67) and third (4.33) places, respectively.

At the end of this section, two questions were asked about the number of picture books teachers would typically select to capture the experience of one cultural group. For the statement, "there exists a single book about a group that can adequately portray that group's experience," half of the teachers agreed (50%), only one teacher strongly agreed (16.67%), and two teachers stayed neutral (33.33%). In the next question that asked the teachers the number of picture books they thought to be adequate to help their students

TABLE 3: Received response for each statement.

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Picture books can help pupils better grasp cultural diversity if they are utilized effectively in a lesson on the topic	0	0	0	2	5
Using picture books is a necessary tool in teaching cultural diversity;	0	0	1	4	2
Teaching cultural diversity using picture books will (or have the potential to) benefit all students in the classroom.	0	0	1	4	2

TABLE 4: Cardinal values for the given categories.

Categories	Ordinal value	Categories	Ordinal value
Strongly disagree	1	Disagree	2
Neither agree or disagree	3	Agree	4
Strongly agree	5		

TABLE 5: Mean score and standard deviation for each statement.

Statements	Mean score	SD
Picture books can help pupils better grasp cultural diversity if they are utilized effectively in a lesson on the topic	4.71	0.45
Using picture books is a necessary tool in teaching cultural diversity	4.14	0.64
Teaching cultural diversity using picture books will (or have the potential to) benefit all students in the classroom	4.14	0.64

thoroughly explore a cultural group, divergent data have been collected, with two of them (33.33%) selecting "1," one teacher (16.67%) selected "2–3," and three teachers (50%) selected "more than 5."

3.4. Approaches to Teach Cultural Diversity Using Picture Books. In this section, questions helped the researcher acquire basic information about the frequency of delivering a lesson on cultural diversity using picture books, the time spanned for each lesson, and the general use pattern of planned/unplanned follow-up activities. Data were collected from the six teachers who claimed to have used picture books in their cultural diversity lessons.

The first part of this section inquired into the teachers' time spent on each picture book sharing section (no other activities involved, only the time teachers spend reading the picture book with their students). The majority of teachers (83.33%) spent 10 to 30 minutes sharing a picture book with their students. There was also one teacher (16.67%) who finished book sharing within 30 to 60 minutes.

The second part addressed the teachers' usage pattern of follow-up activities. Four teachers (66.67%) often incorporated follow-up activities into their picture book lessons to extend and deepen their students' understanding of the topic while two teachers (33.33%) rarely did so. Five teachers (83.33%) spent 10 to 30 minutes on activity relevant to the picture book, and one teacher (16.67%) spent 30 to 60 minutes on it.

Follow-up activities can be categorized into planned and unplanned activities. Based on the survey results, teachers carried out planned activities more often than unplanned activities. More teachers claimed to use planned activities often (66.67%) than those who claimed to use unplanned activities often (50%). Moreover, one teacher (16.67%) claimed to have never used any unplanned

activity in her cultural diversity lessons, while none of the teachers reported that they have never used planned activities in their lessons.

4. Qualitative Data Analysis

4.1. Data Analysis. Qualitative data refer to the written materials used in the research. It is a material composed of words and sentences of a language. It is a written description or representation of a phenomenon. Different techniques can be used to collect qualitative data such as observation, interviews, voice, questionnaire, and so on. Different materials can be used as qualitative data for a project including novels, publications, papers, speeches, communication words, and compositions.

We take a p-value for the proportion of preschool teachers using drawing textbooks. Because the value of p is between 0 and 1, it is inappropriate to assume p as a linear function, quadratic function, or polynomial function of BMI. For this kind of regression problem, people usually assume a function $f(p)$ of p as a linear function, quadratic function, or polynomial function of BMI. People usually take the function $f(p)$ as

$$f(p) = \ln \frac{p}{1-p}. \tag{2}$$

It is called the logistic transformation of p. We know that $p/1 - p$ is the advantage of "event occurrence" over "event nonoccurrence"; therefore, the logistic transformation has a good statistical explanation. It is the dominant logarithm. The value of p is between 0 and 1, but the value of $f(p)$ of the logistic transformation of p is between $-\infty$ and ∞. Therefore, $f(p)$ can be assumed to be a linear function, quadratic function, or polynomial function of BMI.

Figure 1 shows the average perceived value of each measurement in terms of students' roles when teachers use

drawing teaching materials at a specific time of the survey whether children submit data by themselves or by other children's team members.

As shown in Figure 1, there is a significant difference between students who use drawing textbook data and students who do not use drawing textbook data. Therefore, the confidence intervals between the two groups of students do not overlap. In addition, the p-value of knowledge and experience is less than 0.001, and the p-value of confidence is less than 0.05. In the survey, the perception rate of teachers who use drawing teaching materials is significantly higher than that of teachers who do not use drawing teaching materials. This strongly supports that students using drawing textbooks have more initiative, that is, learning while doing. Compared with others, students who actively participate in specific tasks think they have learned more and gained more experience and confidence.

Figure 2 shows students' cognitive analysis of data creation and data analysis ability according to logistic regression.

As shown in Figure 2, there is no significant difference in students' perception of "experience" and "confidence" after using the drawing textbook in the way of logistic regression. Confidence intervals, therefore, overlap; in addition, p-values (0.123 and 0.086, respectively) were greater than 0.05. However, there are differences in their cognition of "knowledge"; that is, after using drawing teaching materials, students can perceive their own knowledge better although there is no significant difference (p-value = 0.036). Therefore, it can be seen that students who use drawing textbooks have a higher perception of "knowledge" and "experience" than students who do not use drawing textbooks but lower perception of "confidence."

Figure 3 shows the average perceived value of students according to the school to which the drawing textbook belongs.

Figure 3 shows the significant differences in data creation and data analysis abilities between students with and without drawing textbooks. Therefore, the confidence intervals do not overlap; in addition, the p-value is less than 0.05. Therefore, it can be seen that for all measurements (knowledge, confidence, and experience), the perception of students who use drawing textbooks is higher than that of students who do not use drawing textbooks, and the biggest difference lies in their confidence level (p-value = 0.0004).

4.2. Teachers' Attitudes toward Teaching Cultural Diversity

4.2.1. Restrictive Understanding of Cultural Diversity. Teachers in this study exhibited a limited understanding of the concept of cultural diversity. Three of the seven teachers explicitly stated either before or during the interviews that the term "cultural diversity" mainly refers to the existence of nonHan people within a societal group, and thus the term "cultural minority group" is roughly equivalent to "ethnic minority groups." During the participant selection process, one teacher displayed a reluctant attitude toward participating in this study by explaining that, "I'm afraid that I am

not able to provide you with sufficient details on this matter (teaching cultural diversity using picture books) since I do not have much experience with foreign students." Further, when teachers were asked in the survey to list all the cultural minority groups to which their students belong, most of them mentioned exclusively their students' countries of birth. Only two teachers referred to disability (autism) and family structure (single-parent families).

However, there were still two teachers who considered cultures from a multifaceted perspective. One teacher, who earned her master' degree in a British university, believed that culture is "ubiquitous," and that diverse cultures "exist whenever differences, even the most subtle ones, among a group of people can be detected." To further illustrate her point, she cited an example of a child in her classroom who once pointed at an African American teacher and called him "brown." Following this example, she concluded that, "Children are sensitive beings. Even children younger than one show preference toward certain groups of people that are similar to themselves and curiosity and even revulsion toward those with traits different from them. My personal goal as an educator is to create a classroom environment in which every culture or difference can be embraced. I never thought it to be too early to engage children in educational experiences that celebrate multiple culturalisms."

Some teachers saw the attention to diversity as relating to the preservation of a local minority group's customs and beliefs. One teacher mentioned in the interview that, "The primary goal of teaching cultural diversity is to help students gain a more vivid understanding of the language, clothing, food, and customs of different ethnic groups." In addition, teachers displayed a high level of confidence about addressing cultural diversity by concentrating on different nature, usually the celebrations, of "nonmainstream" cultures. For instance, when being asked to describe their most successful cultural-diversity-themed picture book lessons, one teacher was highly motivated to share her lesson plans on cultural celebrations and festivals: "Among all of the lesson plans that I've created, I think that the one about Christmas and another one about the Thanksgiving are very successful because the picture book stories most effectively cultivate mutual respect and intercultural awareness among my students." However, when being asked to give another successful lesson plan example on topics other than celebrations, the teacher hesitated for a while before explaining that to think of example lessons on noncelebration topics are difficult because the celebration topic is what she spent almost all her time on. The confidence displayed when the teacher shared experience of teaching celebrations of other cultures contrasted drastically with the hesitance when talking about teaching other aspects of cultural diversity.

4.2.2. Cultural Diversity as a Peripheral Theme. Cultural diversity is treated as an afterthought in the preschool curriculum. Two teachers who serve in a monolingual public preschool told me during the interview that their preschool has a detailed curriculum framework, but none of the teaching themes required in this framework concentrates on
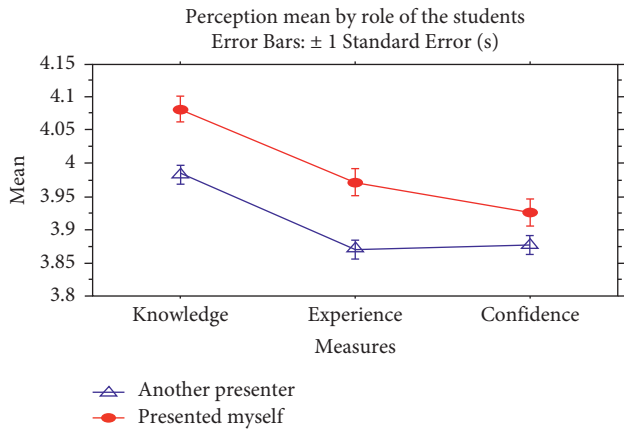
Perception mean by role of the students
Error Bars: ± 1 Standard Error (s)

FIGURE 1: Perception means in terms of students' roles.

Analysis of Logistic
Error Bars: ± 1 Standard Error (s)

FIGURE 2: Analysis of logistic regression.

Perception mean by school affiliation
Error Bars: ± 1 Standard Error (s)

FIGURE 3: Perception means in terms of school affiliation.

cultural diversity." They further explained this phenomenon by saying that, "I think that the curriculum directors did not place much value on cultural diversity because this school does'nt recruit foreign students." This explanation has been restated by another teacher who works in a monolingual private preschool: "Under the contemporary (Chinese) educational context, the majority of preschoolers that we teachers serve come from the identical cultural background—they are born and raised in the same country, speak the same language, and think in the same way. Teachers have been immersed in the monocultural environment for such a long time that their abilities to detect differences among their students have been diminished. Just chew on this: how could a teacher deliver a lesson on celebrating differences when his/her students demonstrate sameness?"

Teachers displayed a negligent attitude toward teaching the theme of cultural diversity by misinterpreting the research question "how do preschool teachers use picture books to teach cultural diversity" as "how do preschool teachers use picture books in their classrooms." For example, in answering the question "why do you think that using picture books to teach cultural diversity in the preschool setting is important," four of the seven teachers spoke generally of the advantages of using picture books while overlooking the specific setting (teaching cultural diversity) in which picture books are used. In contrast, only two teachers discussed the benefits of using picture books in both cultural diversity lessons and lessons around other topics.

4.2.3. Teaching Cultural Diversity as Unintentional. Even though the theme of cultural diversity has been considered as additional to rather than an essential part of the curriculum, all the teachers being interviewed have taught, discussed, or at least introduced topics under the overarching theme of cultural diversity in the past. While some teachers were mindful of such practices, others were not. In the interviews, several teachers claimed initially that they have seldom/never taught cultural diversity but were turned out to be very experienced in addressing this topic. For example, a teacher stated at the beginning of the interview that, "I don't think my classroom has a particular emphasis
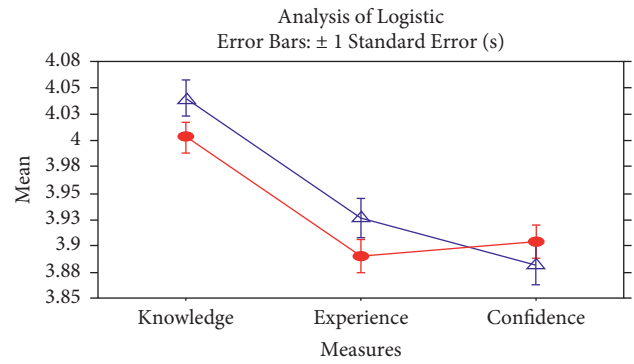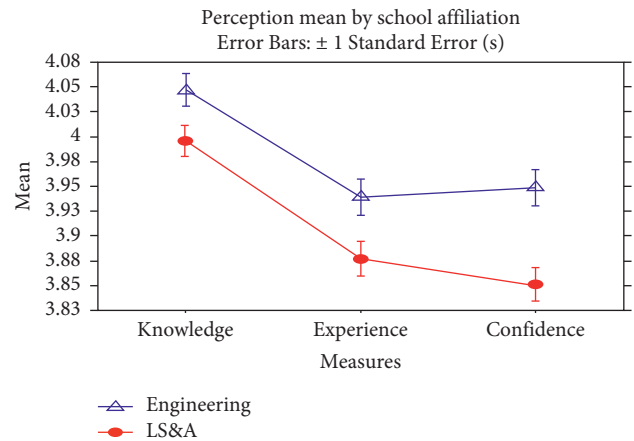
on cultural diversity. But I did design a month-long course unit on world-famous landscapes. Oh, and there's also a unit on accepting differences. (stop for a moment) I'm not sure whether they are supposed to be cultural diversity lessons?"

One teacher, by participating in this study, came to a realization that she has plenty of experience teaching cultural diversity. She shared how her definition of cultural diversity has been broadened after participating in this interview and how that extended definition has transformed her into a conscious educator. Below is a piece of vignette of her talking about her drastic shift in perspective on teaching culturally diverse students after the interview (this unrecorded short talk was recalled by the researcher, written down in Chinese, and then translated into English).

When I was notified to participate in a research study on cultural diversity, I was a little bit surprised and confused given that my school is not specialized in teaching foreign students and that I am not at all the best speaker on this topic. Also since I can't speak English and other languages fluently, I am not able to teach these foreign students any content in their home languages. But then you (the researcher) told me that cultural diversity is about the diversity of all kinds of cultural groups, including foreign students. This is definitely a new thing for me. Guided by this new definition, I reexamined my past teaching experience and by doing so I discovered that a lot of my past lessons could be

counted as cultural diversity lessons. Last year, for example, we spent a month talking about the importance of respecting elders and individuals with disabilities. Now I am fully aware that 'elder people' and 'people with disabilities' belong to cultures different from our own and lessons focusing on these people are considered as cultural diversity lessons.

4.3. Selecting Picture Books for Cultural Diversity Lessons

4.3.1. Multifaceted Considerations in Selecting Picture Books for Cultural Diversity Lessons. Teachers took various factors into consideration when selecting picture books for cultural diversity lessons. The following three dominant factors have emerged from the qualitative data: (1) children's background, (2) repleteness of picture books around one topic, and (3) teachers' interest.

4.3.2. Children's Background. Teachers generally believed that children's interests should be placed in the central position when selecting picture books not only for cultural diversity lessons but also for lessons on other topics because "active learning can initiate only when these young children feel innately motivated to explore the picture books that we chose for them." According to two teachers, interests can be categorized into "communal interests" and "individual interests," and they need to be addressed separately. Teachers deliver whole-group education interlaced with discussion prompts that target the students' community interests in order to meet students' communal interests. To fulfill students' individual interests, teachers carefully select picture books that are liked by each student and add them into the classroom reading corner for students to check them out. Student interests can be acquired through "teacher-led classroom discussion" as well as "taking observation notes during student-led activities."

In addition, teachers preferred selecting picture books that depict cultural groups highly relevant to students' collective experience. One teacher mentioned in the interview that, "When a picture book centers on the story of someone who belongs to a cultural group that my students have experience with, students would feel more emotionally connected to that protagonist and would love to listen to this person's story." To substantiate her argument, she cited a time when she shared a picture book about a boy with autism who becomes a world-famous artist, which echoed the experience of a child in her classroom that was diagnosed as autistic: "My students fell in love with that story because they can relate the story to the child with autism."

However, another teacher believed that sharing picture books on cultural groups that students have encountered is unnecessary unless she has observed her students treating other minority students with derision or disrespect. Teaching a classroom that has students with physical and mental disabilities, she has never thought of incorporating books about these disabilities into the current curriculum since the classroom environment "seemed harmonious so far."

4.3.3. Repleteness of Picture Books around One Topic. In selecting picture books that are used in cultural diversity lessons, teachers exhibited a strong preference for topics that have been exhaustively explored. When being asked to explain such a preference, one teacher offered two reasons. First, picture books with popular subjects like festivals are simple to come by since there is a great demand for them on the market. Second, when there is a rich repertoire of picture books on a certain topic, it will make teachers' lesson design process much easier since these books allow us to approach one topic from different angles. Another teacher elucidates this phenomenon in a different way: "Generally speaking, what's being fully exploited in the picture book is typically the central theme under a certain societal context. For example, diversity is the central theme of American society and thus is fully represented in picture books and other written media. As a teacher, I want my students to get an idea of what's going on in society and what's being most popularly discussed in society. In the past, I used picture books to fulfill this educational objective."

4.3.4. Teachers' Interest. According to Blakeney-Williams and Daly [43], teachers tend to choose picture books with strong personal resonance because it models students' personal engagement and attachment with books and conveys to students how important books can be in people's lives. Similarly, instructors in this interview cited personal interests as a major influence in selecting cultural-diversity-themed picture books. One teacher reported that if a teacher has a lot to say about a picture book, she/he could largely enrich his/her teaching by providing in-depth discussions on topics relevant to the picture book and providing various creative opportunities for students to respond to the picture books. Another teacher offered a complementary explanation by saying that if a teacher knows nothing about a picture book, she/he will not make it appealing to students.

4.3.5. Illustrations as the Most Important Selection Criteria. In the interviews only, teachers rated the quality of illustrations as the most essential picture book selection criteria. Several teachers discussed the benefits of visuals in improving pupils' cultural diversity awareness. According to one instructor, drawings in picture books can be a student's first visual education of the outside world since they allow pupils to see themselves and others with diverse qualities being accurately portrayed. When illustrations shed light on the commonalities and differences among these book characters, the essential idea that "differences need to be endorsed and appreciated" can be highlighted, and the theme of mutual respect can be adequately introduced.

Another two teachers pointed out that in picture book illustrations, the cultural elements that garnished the scenes (e.g., furniture, landscapes, and architecture) "authenticate the cultural settings" and "help reinforce young readers' immersive book reading experience." Also, the medium used in creating these illustrations conveys affluent information about the cultural setting of the story. For example, in the

picture book *Goodbye, Grandma Erma*, all the illustrations are created from photographs, which "add authenticity by truthfully reproducing the scene of the life of a typical Western middle-class family." Through examining the rich details presented in these illustrations, students "gain a deeper understanding of the core differences between the eastern and Western cultures, namely, their different funeral customs, lifestyles, and attitude toward life and death."

4.4. Teaching Cultural Diversity Using Picture Books

4.4.1. Picture Book Sharing Practices in Whole-Group Instructions. Picture book sharing sessions and accompanying activities were used in whole-group, teacher-led cultural diversity lessons. In each picture book sharing session, both planned and unplanned supports were provided to help students in grasping the essence of the cultural-diversity-related themes. In terms of planned support, teachers invited students to carefully examine the ways a picture book portrays a certain cultural group from the aspects of characters (physical appearances, clothing, languages and accents, and behaviors), architecture, and cultural decorations. Then, teachers tapped into students' personal experiences by inviting them to state how the cultural experience portrayed in this picture book is different and similar to the experience of theirs own. However, not all supports for promoting the principle of cultural diversity were explicitly stated in the lesson plans. For example, one teacher mentioned an incident in which a student, whose dad is from France, shared excitely with the whole class how his family celebrated Christmas last year. The teacher seized this valuable teaching moment by initiating a discussion on the different ways people from diverse family backgrounds celebrate Christmas.

The follow-up activities, delivered either within the same instructional period or on the next day, deepened student understanding of the themes by motivating students to participate in immersive cultural experiences designed around the picture book content. Unlike the juxtaposition of both planned and unplanned instructional supports in picture book sharing sessions, the majority of teachers only used planned activities. Most follow-up activities echoed the concept of "learning by doing," thus putting students in control of their own learning. More details about this are illustrated in the following two sections.

4.4.2. Limitations of Using Picture Books during Whole-Group Instructions. While all the seven teachers recognized children's literature as a valuable resource for promoting principles related to cultural diversity, they were at the same time fully aware of its limitations. The most significant limitations identified were "deficiency of first-hand experience" or the "isolation of students from the culturally diverse society." One teacher paraphrased it by stating that, "While students are still benefiting from the language of the story, they could barely obtain direct experience with written words. These students will not get any chance to interact with those from different cultural backgrounds." Another

teacher summarized that "students are now remembering and recalling cultural facts; they are not truly experiencing cultures."

Some teachers provided concrete examples of how the only presence of second-hand experience in picture books hinders students' understanding of cultural diversity. One teacher pointed out that without the incorporation of activities such as field trips to consolidate their memory, the book plots will not last very long in students' minds: "For example, one day I read to my students a picture book about respecting elder people. I tried my best to help students comprehend and remember the plots but when I asked them to recall the plots for me on the next day, not many students could do so. After that field trip to a local nursing home, I reread the picture book to my students. This time, students seemed to be more interested in the story and some of them could link the story to their field trip experience. When I did the same recalling activity on the next day, most students could confidently retell the story with enriched details." Another teacher offered another perspective: "If my students have never encountered people with disabilities, they will not feel empathy for the protagonists, like they will never know why Elmer (the protagonist of the Elmer picture book series) is unhappy (when he found his body patterns different to all the other elephants)."

4.4.3. First-Hand Experience Offsets the Limitations of Using Picture Books during Whole-Group Instructions. In offsetting the limitation of using picture books in preschool classrooms, teachers tend to use first-hand activities to engage students in authentic cultural experiences. For example, one teacher described how the use of simulation activities and the involvement of families to participate in the classroom immersed her students in a traditional cultural event: "When I used the picture book *The Nian Monster* to teach traditional Chinese Spring Festival customs, I designed a simulation activity in which students wore on firecracker costumes and decorated their costumes with red sticky notes or red paper cut-offs. Then with musical accompaniment, students shook these decorations off to simulate the firecracker banging ceremony. In addition to that, on a parent-opening day, I invited students' families to join our classroom and celebrate Spring Festival with their children. My students love that kind of activity because they enjoyed a lot being immersed in an intense festive atmosphere of the Spring Festival." Furthermore, another teacher used dramatic play as a sliding glass door by stepping into which students take on a first-person exploratory journey through the lives of people with disabilities: "I believe that cramming and direct experience are very different methods of teaching—cramming leads to passive learning while direct experience leads to active learning. In my classroom, I used dramatic play a lot to offer my students a direct active learning experience. In these dramatic plays, each student was assigned a type of disability and they need to act like a person with that disability. I want them to experience the feelings of people with disabilities so that they will learn to respect them."

4.4.4. Picture Book Sharing Practices in Independent Reading Sessions. On a daily basis, students were given time to explore the classroom reading corner independently. Time for independent reading sessions was flexible, depending on the schedules of whole-group events. Typically, there were two independent reading sessions a day, with each session spanning from 15 to 30 minutes.

In facilitating the concept of cultural diversity in preschoolers, some teachers added what they perceived as multicultural literature to the book corner. Usually, these pieces of literature centered around the topics of cultural events and celebrations. One teacher specifically mentioned that every time when a major festival or cultural event was approaching, she would pick out books around that topic and display them on a separate shelf. Before an independent reading session, she would encourage students to check out these books and students always loved to do so.

4.4.5. Challenges in Promoting the Principle of Cultural Diversity during Independent Reading Sessions. Teachers have encountered unique challenges in promoting the principle of cultural diversity during independent reading sessions. Two teachers mentioned that one of the main challenges comes from the linguistic and cognitive developmental level of students:

(1) "Most students of this age have difficulties recognizing characters, not to mention reading short stories. All they could do at this stage is pretend reading."

(2) "I've seen some students giving all of their attention to some irrelevant details when they were reading picture books on cultural diversity. When this happened, I used prompts to guide them toward understanding the main plot, but they seemed to be ineffective. I could only see their look of confusion. What I try to say here is that some students need more intensive support when they are reading independently since they are not cognitively developed enough to comprehend the text."

Another two teachers conceived the large classroom size as a challenge as it makes individualized instruction almost impossible:

(1) "I have about 20 students in my classrooms, which means that I can't provide all students instructions based on their individualized learning needs when they are reading independently."

(2) "The primary goals of teaching cultural diversity are to enhance each student's sense of identity, and foster inclusion in the classroom community. Teaching in such a paradigm carries considerable responsibility and thus our teachers need to bring students into an in-depth examination of the topic. It would be a huge waste when cultural diversity picture books are used merely to teach content knowledge. Therefore, in teaching such picture

books, teachers need to provide extra guidance and skillfully designed prompts so that the essence of these picture books can be adequately captured. But the problem is that we got too many students in our classrooms and providing such exhaustive instruction is not usually realistic. We just do not have that much energy and time to do so."

4.5. Restrictive Understanding of Cultural Diversity. The study results present a distinction between an oversimplified perspective and a more comprehensive perspective to understanding cultural diversity. The first perspective, endorsed by most of the teachers, interprets cultural diversity as the existence of variance of ethnic minority groups within a given society. The second perspective transcends the oversimplified understanding of cultural diversity by taking into account the multiple aspects of cultural features including language, ethnicity, religion, gender orientation, socioeconomic class, family structure, age, and (physical and mental) health conditions.

The predominant endorsement of the first perspective as teachers' interpretation of cultural diversity can be explained by three factors. First, in multiple Chinese official documents, the term cultural diversity is defined as relating to people from different ethnic backgrounds. According to *Chinese Terms in Urban and Rural Planning* [44], cultural diversity is defined as the presence of diverse forms of cultural representations that are unique to an ethnic group or geographic region. In *Chinese Terms in Pedagogy* [45], "multicultural education" is defined as a range of educational strategies educators used to enhance students' understanding of foreign cultures and adaptability to these cultures. Second, the hybrid use of "cultural diversity" and "ethnic diversity" in multiple Chinese scholarly articles suggests that even the most authoritative figures in this field interpret the terms "cultural diversity" and "ethnic diversity" as roughly equivalent [24, 46–49]. Even so, in recent years, Chinese researchers made a conscious effort to extend the understanding of culture concerning people who have been historically marginalized though such endeavor has not been influential enough to change the nature of the discourse [6, 50]. Third, within the Chinese context, the concept of multicultural education was first raised as a response to the large influx of ethnic minority students into large cities as a result of urbanization [51]. The emergence of a large number of migrant minority students in the once Han-culture-dominated classrooms created an urgent need for teachers to adapt their teaching strategies to the learning needs of students from different ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, a particular emphasis on teaching ethnic diversity results in teachers' partial understanding of that term.

To promote culturally responsive teaching, teacher training programs should develop teachers with multicultural awareness, which involves a greater sensitivity and appreciation of even the most subtle cultural differences. This requires teachers to engage in a reflective process through which they develop the willingness to acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge, identify themselves and their students by

a whole set of identity markers, and contemplate the ways cultural identities have put them and their students into advantages and disadvantages. This way, teachers will acquire a new perception of themselves and their students as individuals acculturated into various cultural identities in obvious and less obvious ways. They will understand how different cultural identities have positioned students into either superior or inferior status and teach culturally responsible to eliminate the unequal power status among students.

4.5.1. Teaching Cultural Diversity as Teaching "Otherness". In teaching cultural diversity using picture books, teachers focused on the exotic nature of nondominant cultures. This was obvious in the interview when instructors described cultural diversity as a unique aspect of the preschool curriculum that focuses on the preservation of minority cultural beliefs and practices. Rather than being an intrinsic part of the curriculum, this topic was only introduced at a special time, usually when a cultural festival was approaching. This is in alignment with multiple research findings [19, 20]. Some scholars warn against such practice as it has the potential to contribute to a sense of othering for students from minority cultures [16]. The othering of children from minority groups is further promoted when teachers could not recognize the need to honor cultural differences in the classroom as a result of which cultural identities and practices of the minority groups are marginalized and cultural homogenization and assimilation are justified [18, 52]. However, contrary to the findings in the Adam [19] article, while teachers in this study tended to present cultural diversity as outside students' lived experiences, this is not at the expense of enhancing students' discovery of the similarities among people with different cultural identities. Instead, when sharing picture books with students, some teachers orally prompted students to thoroughly compare and contrast the protagonists' experiences and experiences of their own.

4.5.2. Teaching Cultural Diversity as Unintentional. Based on the survey results, the majority of teachers sometimes addressed cultural diversity using picture books, while one teacher claimed to have never done so. This finding does not hold true in the interview as teachers who initially claimed to teach cultural diversity using picture books not very often have turned out to be very experienced in teaching such a topic. Besides, the one who claimed to have no such experience has at least introduced picture books around diversity-related topics in the past. The following two explanations might be made for this unintended addressing of the issue of cultural diversity in the class.

First, in the preschools from where the seven teachers were recruited, "cultural diversity" is not always identified as an exclusive unit topic in the curriculum framework. About half of the teachers have never conducted a lesson unit devoted specifically to cultural diversity. In addition, while most teachers believed that their schools value cultural diversity, but not many of them mentioned specifically in the interview that their school curricula identify cultural diversity as a teaching theme. It can be deduced that while these schools strive to create a positive environment in which teachers and students respect people from all walks of life, they do not necessarily believe that in order to foster an inclusive school culture, the concept of cultural diversity must be explicitly taught in the classroom. However, this does not mean that the topic of cultural diversity was left unaddressed. Rather, the topic of cultural diversity was broken down into branching topics such as embracing differences and mutual respect, which were then thoroughly explored within a series of lessons. In other words, cultural diversity was considered by the schools and teachers as a topic worthy of promoting, though it was not explicitly mentioned in the teachers' and schools' efforts to respond to diversity-related topics.

Further, the teachers' perception of cultural diversity as a peripheral theme also contributed to the unawareness of having prior experiences in teaching cultural diversity. As mentioned in the previous section, teachers generally adopted a restricted understanding of cultural diversity by seeing cultural diversity lessons as lessons delivered exclusively to, or about international students. With this understanding, plus the fact that most teachers in this study do not have many international students in their classrooms, teachers naturally believed that the concept of cultural diversity is too far away from their students' lived experiences, thus peripheralizing it in the curriculum.

4.5.3. Multifaceted Considerations in Selecting Picture Books for Cultural Diversity Lessons. Most teachers in this study had a well-thought-out plan to guide their picture book selection process. In looking for appropriate picture books for their cultural diversity lessons, they thoroughly utilized both human and nonhuman resources. Nonhuman resources included online websites, classroom book corners, school libraries, home libraries, and community libraries. For human resources, these teachers consulted other teachers, curriculum directors, school librarians, parents, picture book merchandisers, and live chat representatives for recommendations. In addition to this, teachers considered multiple factors when selecting cultural-diversity-themed picture books, which included student backgrounds, the richness of picture books around one topic, and their own interests.

4.5.4. Advantages. Such a multifaceted systematic picture book selection process has been proved by other researchers as beneficial as it ensures that student engagement with these carefully selected picture books can be maintained at a high level. First, a teacher's enthusiasm for a book inspires his/her students to read the book and seek out other materials on the book's topics [43, 53–55]. When the book topic is on cultural diversity, students are likely to be motivated to search for more information about an unfamiliar culture. Second, when students themselves are interested in exploring cultures represented in their classrooms and communities, this will also lead to deep student involvement with picture books that reflect these cultures. It can be deduced that a high level of student engagement in cultural-diversity-themed picture book lessons arises from a match between teachers' and students' interests.

As teachers consulted multiple resources when selecting picture books, they made sure that only books that meet the requirements for high-quality multicultural literature were selected. This process can be enacted in the following ways. First, teachers could invite cultural insiders to evaluate the authenticity of cultural representation in a picture book. For example, a colleague from Italy should be the ideal person to give feedback on a picture book that talks about Italian culture. Moreover, teachers could also check out the same picture book from different libraries and e-book websites to see to what extent and in what ways this book is recommended. Finally, they could seek advice for using their selected picture books in the classrooms from other teachers.

4.5.5. The Pitfall of Colorblindness.

Some teachers in the interview claimed that they selected picture books on the basis of personal preference. Some researchers caution against this practice by asserting that it can result in a disproportionate amount of picture books that reflect only the teachers' beliefs and perspectives [19, 56]. When these teachers fail to make a conscious effort to check on the inclusivity of their selected pieces of literature, they are easy to get trapped into the pitfall of selecting books that are counterproductive to the principles of diversity, namely, books in which certain cultural groups are absent or underrepresented [19]. A result of such would be the marginalization of minority student groups and their forced integration into the mainstream culture.

The colorblind sentiment can be also found in the evidence that one teacher in the interview perceived the provision of books that reflect on the cultural experiences of the minority student groups in her classroom as unnecessary unless these minority students have been observed to be bullied or teased at. However, as stated in various research articles, silence on cultural diversity issues would only create potential violence as it "precludes meaningful and informed involvement in our democratic society, which includes a diversity of (even disagreeing) viewpoints" and "sends a clear message to the students that discussing these matters in school is prohibited" [57]. After all, unless efforts are taken to counter stereotypes and biases toward certain cultural groups, teachers can still contribute to the promotion of cultural discrimination though they might claim to have done so intentionally [57].

4.5.6. The Pitfall of Using One Book to Introduce the Experience of a Cultural Group.

Research has pointed out the pitfall of using a single book to portray a cultural group's experience by arguing that a person's single story is by no means the whole story of the cultural group to which that person belongs [33]. The danger of a single story is also highlighted by Adichie [58]: "Stereotypes are formed as a result of a single narrative, and the problem with stereotypes is that they are incomplete rather than inaccurate. They turn one narrative becomes the only one available." To prevent telling a single story, teachers need to create a book collection that provides an undistorted mirror and window [33]. Even when the insufficient time and deficiency of resources have limited teachers' ability to present the experiences of a particular cultural group using multiple books, they should always figure out ways to extend students' understanding of that cultural group beyond the single story.

4.5.7. Illustrations as the Most Important Selection Criteria.

In the survey, illustrations were nominated as one of the top three most important picture book selection criteria. Indeed, the critical role of illustrations in picture books has already been illuminated in an extensive body of literature. According to these research articles, picture book illustrations, when being used appropriately in the classroom, can enhance students' critical and creative thinking skills, assist emergent readers to capture language nuances, foster students' understanding of the written text, facilitate students' aesthetic appreciation of art and beauty [59, 60]. In summary, as Giorigis [61] suggests, "a picture book is a unique art form, and every aspect of it is meaningful" (p. 4).

Additionally, while most teachers in the survey believed that texts and illustrations are equally important in picture books, for some teachers, the importance of illustrations even surpassed the importance of texts. This is in accordance with Kelly-Ware and Daly [62]'s argument that illustrations, rather than simply an addition to verbal language, are a language in their own right given that they can sometimes provide a visual narrative that tells a complementary or different story to the text. The role of illustrations as an independent literacy tool is also recognized in Olshansky [51]'s book: "As a visual language, that runs parallel to our own verbal language, it is possible to teach the very same literary elements through the language of pictures as through the language of words." Furthermore, Olshansky [60] advises that more teachers' attention should be given to teaching illustrations as they are the most informative tell about the characters, the settings, the problems, and the solutions.

In the interview, teachers recognized illustrations as the most important selection criteria for the reasons that (1) illustrations allow students to see themselves as well as those from different cultural backgrounds being reflected, and (2) other than the portrayal of characters, the background scenes convey rich cultural messages by examining which students achieve a deeper understanding of the cultural groups being depicted in the picture books. The teachers' reasonings are substantiated by the research finding that high-quality illustrations are effective tools in ensuring that multiple cultural perspectives are made explicit in the early childhood settings [62]. In particular, in echoing the first reasoning, Bishop [25] purposed that illustrations can act as a mirror in which students from different cultural backgrounds find their identities being honestly reflected, a window that gives students a glimpse into the lives of people that are different from their own, and a sliding glass door by stepping into which students "become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author." Invalidating the second reasoning, Kelly-Ware and Daly [62] draws on the significance of authenticity of illustrations in

sending messages about diverse cultural perspectives by stating that authentic illustrations immerse students into the world of people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Besides that, inauthentic representations of cultural groups in the picture book illustrations generate teaching opportunities as teachers and students collaborate to debunk the illustrators' stereotypical and tokenistic understanding of cultural diversity.

Given the important roles illustrations have played in transmitting the values of cultural diversity, further studies are needed to explore and innovate pedagogical practices for supporting students' engagement with picture book illustrations that highlight issues of diversity. These studies should look specifically into the teachers' preferred approaches to assessing the quality of illustrations and hopefully propose an evidence-based evaluation guideline to refine their practices. Further, studies should investigate and suggest ideal teaching strategies to guide students into a critical examination of the following questions: (1) How are diversity and inclusivity represented in the illustrations in the selected picture books? (2) How does the illustrator represent diversity in his/her illustrations? (3) Whose voices are reflected and whose are silenced? (4) How authentic are these illustrations [62]?

4.5.8. First-Hand Experience Offsets the Limitations of Using Picture Books in Preschool Classrooms. One of the major themes that emerged from the qualitative data is the teachers' use of first-hand experiences to compensate for the dearth of first-hand experience in picture book sharing. Specifically, teachers claimed that the mere provision of literacy experiences isolated students from the culturally diverse society, which might contribute to the formation of prejudicial thoughts about unfamiliar cultures in students. To promote student interaction with diverse cultural groups, teachers offered first-hand experiences that took the forms of simulation activities, field trips, and dramatic plays, which, as reported by the teachers, were effective tools in improving narrative recall and enhancing student understandings of cultural diversity.

A substantial body of research has proved the effectiveness of first-hand experiences or the experiential learning approach in enhancing the multifaceted development of students of all ages [63–65]. Considered by many scholars as more advantageous than learning from second-hand experiences whereby students gather information and file them in a memory bank for later reference, experiential learning enables students to grasp an experience using their prior knowledge and then transform it into an application or result [22, 65]. This kind of approach, therefore, results in more meaningful learning experiences as students are never disconnected from their own world of knowing [66].

5. Discussion

Experiential learning is especially efficient in promoting a culturally sensitive disposition that is critical for students living in our diverse society. As one of the main types of experiential learning, cultural immersion allows students to interact with individuals from a diverse range of cultures. According to some research articles, cultural immersion engagement that is achieved through association with groups toward whom students are unfamiliar, or have negative attitudes, leads to knowledge about other cultures, elimination of preconceived stereotypes, and more global understandings [36, 37]. This is evident in the teacher's use of a field trip to a local nursing home to facilitate a shift in student perspectives of elder people. Another type of experiential learning is simulation/role-playing, which was also used by teachers in this study as a compensatory tool to teach cultural diversity. Research articles have highlighted the advantage of such an immersive activity in helping students develop long-lasting emotional connections to the cultural groups different from their own [67]. In conformity with this argument, teachers in this study demonstrated the role of dramatic play in facilitating student empathy for people with disabilities by emphasizing the immersive nature of the dramatic play that allows students to take on the roles of people with different types of disabilities. Such an authentic cultural experience triggers a new consciousness that enables students to re-examine the relationships between self and others [68]. It also affords students the potential to view themselves and other cultural groups from a more sophisticated, multifaceted perspective [69].

To provide students with a rich variety of direct experiences geared to enhance cultural understanding, teachers should build a resource pool from the wide range of cultural expertise within their communities. This resource repertoire can include cultural facilities that commit to cultural inclusion and social equity and members of cultural groups that students have little or no prior knowledge with. Aligning and utilizing these resources can maximize effectiveness in promoting the concept of cultural diversity in young children. However, not all teachers have the adequate knowledge and skills to reach out to community resources and connect students with these resources [51]. Therefore, I suggest that the current teacher education programs should support teachers' resource outreach by linking them up with community resource specialists and enhancing their sensitivity to both ordinary and unconventional community resources. Also, such programs should give these pre-service or in-service teachers opportunities to explore the diverse ways of utilizing these community resources to fulfill their educational objectives.

The small size of the sample (seven participants from four preschool institutions) limits the generalizability of the results. Nevertheless, the rigor of the study and the in-depth investigation into the participants' picture book sharing behaviors lead to findings that are valid for answering my research questions.

Another limitation results from the demographics of the sample. All seven of the teacher participants work in preschool institutions located in Shanghai. Five of them work in private institutions that mainly recruit students from middle or higher class. This limits their exposure to students from diverse cultural backgrounds, which then contributes to

their negligent attitudes toward cultural diversity. However, if selecting teacher participants from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds from institutions across the country, this finding may not hold true. In addition, the preschool institutions from which the teacher participants were recruited should adopt similar philosophies, follow similar policies, and use similar curriculum frameworks. These similarities give rise to alike attitudes towards cultural diversity and picture book sharing practices observed in the surveys and interviews.

6. Conclusion

The use of picture books in multicultural education has been increasingly popular in recent years. The ability of picture books to develop cultural variety in young children has been given a high priority. To begin with, picture books that include realistic depictions of many ethnic groups challenge hegemonic discourses in order to promote cultural diversity. Picture books are in fact books in which the text and visual information are combined to tell a story and are widely used to supplement curricula in China and the United States. It is particularly beneficial in assisting students in developing literacy and cognitive abilities, both of these are reliable predictors of future academic achievements. Picture books also help the children to develop social skills like friendship, collaboration, accountability, and empathy, as well as communication skills such as active listening and awareness in others. They all are considered the necessary components of cultural competency. This study examines seven Chinese preschool teachers' attitudes in teaching principles of cultural diversity, using picture books and their reported practices. This study found that (1) teachers held a restricted knowledge of cultural diversity and were unaware of the concept of cultural diversity; (2) when selecting picture books, teachers considered multiple factors, especially illustrations; and (3) teachers typically used first-hand experience to supplement their picture book sharing sessions. The findings of this study inspire the teaching practices and make better use of children's literature to support principles of cultural diversity. The findings of this study have important implications for preschool teachers, curriculum designers, and teacher training providers.

Data Availability

All data are available in the paper.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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