



Inclusive Learning Strategies for Children with Special Needs at ECE Level: Transformative or Sustainable Education

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Abstract

The concept of early childhood learning continues to develop in line with the demands of the times, where education is faced with two equally important approaches, namely, transformative education and sustainable education. This paper aims to delve deeper into transformative and sustainable education concepts in applying inclusive learning for children with special needs at the ECE level. Data were collected through participatory observation in three inclusive ECEs at [research site], in-depth interviews with 15 teachers and parents, and analysis of curriculum documents. Data validation is carried out through triangulation of sources and techniques, while data analysis refers to the Miles-Huberman interactive model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion verification. The study results show that inclusive learning for children with special needs at the early childhood education level should not be trapped in the dichotomy between transformative and sustainable education. On the contrary, integrating the two approaches is an ideal solution based on the principles of early childhood learning, so that it can develop the moral and intellectual transformation of individuals oriented towards sustainability. In other words, early childhood learning must function as a means of change (transformation) based on sustainability values to create a society that aligns with education's goals. Inclusive learning practices based on transformative education and sustainable education in ECE open up great opportunities to create meaningful education for all children, including children with special needs. This approach benefits the child's individual development and shapes an inclusive and sustainable school culture.

INTRODUCTION

Transformative education is a learning approach that seeks to encourage fundamental changes in students' thinking, perspective, and behavior, so that they can understand reality critically and reflectively. At the heart of this approach lies a learning experience that challenges individuals to re-evaluate beliefs, values, and assumptions that have been held (Abdussamad, 2021). However, its implementation in inclusive Early Childhood Education (ECE) faces complex challenges, primarily when associated with research variables such as teacher readiness, curriculum design, and learning environment support. Previous studies have revealed that 72% of early childhood education teachers in Southeast Asia have not been trained in transformative methods (Sulaiman, 2019) while other research shows inconsistency between the national curriculum and the principles of continuing education (Kaowiwattanukul, 2020). This phenomenon is exacerbated by the lack of literature that integrates transformative approaches with sustainability in an inclusive setting, even though these two aspects are the key to character formation of children with special needs at the critical developmental stage (Nwagu, 2020).

Overall, the correlation between transformative education and sustainable education lies in the common goal of creating individuals with critical thinking, high awareness, and real action for sustainability. Transformative education provides a foundation in the form of a change in paradigm and mindset (Ziegler, 2019) while sustainable education provides a clear framework for achieving balance between the environment, economy, and society (Potter-nelson & Meyers, 2022). Integrating these two approaches in the education system will ensure that students have the skills and values to face various global challenges and create a more just, harmonious, and sustainable world. This gap analysis is reinforced by initial field findings at [the research site], where there is an assumption that early childhood education institutions still consider inclusive education as merely a "physical access" for children, without touching on the transformative-ecological dimension.

Transformative education is important in shaping critical thinking patterns and building social awareness. Through learning methods emphasizing discussion, open dialogue, and interaction with various perspectives, students are invited to understand global issues, such as social justice, economic inequality, and climate change. This reflective learning aims to produce individuals who can identify and overcome complex problems in real life. In other words, transformative education forms students who are not only academically intelligent but also have high social awareness (Schnepfleitner & Ferreira, 2021). Educators have an important role in supporting the social skills of children with special needs in the classroom (Santosa, B., & Hidayat, A., 2023).

Sustainable education is a learning approach that focuses on building knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to support environmental, economic, and social sustainability. This education aims to instill awareness and responsibility for sustainability in every aspect of life. Sustainable education emphasizes the need to balance meeting the current generation's needs without compromising future generations' ability to meet their needs. Thus, this approach encourages students to understand the concept of sustainability holistically and integrate it into tangible actions in everyday life (Shishakly et al., 2024).

Sustainable education is important in shaping a generation that cares about environmental sustainability and social welfare. This education helps students understand that sustainability is a shared responsibility that requires active participation from each individual. With a holistic and practical approach, sustainable education creates awareness, skills, and motivation to support

sustainable development. Ultimately, this education is key to creating a better future, where humans and nature coexist harmoniously (Vare & Scott, 2007).

Early childhood education faces various challenges, considering that early childhood education is a critical stage of education in forming the foundation for children's future development. This is compounded by various challenges for schools that are inclusive, especially for children with special needs (Rahmawati, S., & Sumarni, L. 2022) With an interactive and play-based approach, ECE supports children to grow holistically, covering physical, emotional, social, and intellectual aspects. The role of teachers, parents, and the community is needed to create a conducive learning environment. Despite the various challenges, early childhood education remains a valuable investment in producing a quality generation. (Rizki & Katoningsih, 2021).

Based on the description above, the author raised the theme of this research, considering that the transformative education approach aims to create fundamental changes in the mindset and behavior of students to be more critical, innovative, and able to respond to global challenges actively. In contrast, sustainable education emphasizes the sustainability of life in various aspects, focusing on building collective awareness to maintain long-term balance. Both have unique characteristics, but when faced with ECE learning, a dilemma arises regarding the priority of their implementation.

This research examines the intersection between transformative education and continuing education in implementing inclusive learning for children with special needs at the Early Childhood Education (ECE) level. Along with the dynamics of the times, the world of early childhood education is faced with two important approaches that are often considered separate. Therefore, this research seeks to bridge this dichotomy by analyzing how integrating the two approaches can be an ideal solution in learning practice. Specifically, this research will explore how the synergy between the values of change (transformation) and sustainability can form a pedagogical foundation that develops each child's moral and intellectual potential and actively builds an inclusive and long-term-oriented school culture. In the end, this research aims to prove that the combination of the two frameworks can create meaningful and equal educational practices for all children and a means to create a society that aligns with the noble goals of education.

METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design to explore implementing inclusive learning based on a transformative and sustainable approach in Saymara Inclusive Early Childhood Education. The selection of qualitative methods is based on the characteristics of research that seeks to understand the phenomenon of education holistically in its natural context, where the researcher plays a key role through direct interaction with the research subject. The research subjects comprised stakeholders actively involved in the inclusive education process, including seven classroom teachers, five parents of students with special needs, two child therapists, and three institutional managers. The selection criteria for participants are based on the level of involvement and experience of at least three years in inclusive education practice, considering that they already have a deep understanding of the dynamics of learning in the institution.

The data collection process is carried out through three main techniques that complement each other. Semi-structured interviews are conducted using interview guidelines that inclusive education experts have validated. Participatory observation occurs during active learning to

capture the educational interaction between teachers and students in a natural setting. Document analysis of curriculum tools, lesson plans, and student development records was used as supporting data to track the consistency of implementing transformative and sustainable education concepts. Data analysis follows a thematic analysis model that starts from transcription and data familiarization, initial code formation, identification of potential themes, theme review, and preparation of thematic reports. The triangulation process was carried out simultaneously through cross-examination between interview data, observation results, and supporting documents to ensure the validity of the findings. The validity of the research was improved through the member checking technique by involving key participants in reviewing the interpretation of the data and a peer review by other competent researchers in the field of inclusive education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Transformative Education

The concept of transformative education was first introduced by Jack Mezirow, an educational theorist, who emphasized the importance of learning through critical reflection. Mezirow argues that the transformation process occurs when individuals can question and reinterpret their understanding of the world through dialogue and experience. This critical reflection encourages learners to understand other perspectives, evaluate personal assumptions, and formulate more mature views. This process allows individuals to become more open, flexible, and able to solve problems with a more creative and innovative approach (Ndemanu & Coronel-Molina, 2022).

Implementing transformative education requires an inclusive, participatory, and democratic learning environment. Teachers or facilitators are key in creating an atmosphere encouraging students to think critically and dare express their ideas. In addition, in-depth learning experiences, such as case studies, collaborative projects, or participation in community activities, can help students apply their learning in real life. Thus, transformative education is not just a transfer of knowledge, but a process of forming character, awareness, and reflective thinking skills (Schnepfleitner & Ferreira, 2021).

Transformative education aims to create individuals who can adapt to change and participate in building a better society. This education instills values such as empathy, responsibility, and the courage to take meaningful action. Students are expected to be proactive agents of change and contribute to overcoming global challenges. Therefore, transformative education is an important foundation in preparing a future generation that is more critical, creative, and cares about the world around them (Schnitzler, 2020).

Transformative education has various types, kinds, functions, and methods that support its application in learning. Types of transformative education can be seen from their approaches, such as experiential learning, critical reflection, and dialogic learning. Experiential learning emphasizes direct involvement of students in real situations so that they can understand various perspectives and challenges in life. Meanwhile, critical reflection teaches students to question and evaluate their assumptions. The dialogic approach encourages interaction and open discussion between teachers and students to build a deeper shared understanding (Meerts-Brandsma et al., 2020).

The types of transformative education also vary depending on their focus and objectives. One is social transformative education, which emphasizes social change through education by

building awareness of issues of injustice, poverty, or the environment. In addition, personal transformative education focuses on individual development through self-reflection to change how they think and act. Another type is global transformative education, which prepares students to understand and respond to global challenges such as climate change, human rights, and sustainability. All these types have an important role in forming individuals who are aware and able to contribute positively to their environment and society (Kaowiwattanakul, 2020).

The function of transformative education is very significant in shaping critical thinking, increasing social awareness, and building relevant life skills. This education serves as a tool to empower individuals to recognize injustice and dare to take action to create change. In addition, transformative education plays a role in fostering empathy and concern for the problems faced by society. Thus, this education not only produces knowledgeable individuals, but also has character and can act by the values of humanity and social justice (Spooner & John, 2020).. In practice at Saymara ECE, several methods are often used in transformative education. The first method is experiential learning, where students learn through direct experience, such as community-based projects or real-life simulations. The second method is dialogue and discussion, which encourages open conversations between students and educators, allowing new ideas and a more profound understanding to emerge. The critical reflection method is also critical, where students are invited to evaluate and reconsider their views and understanding through introspection. In addition, collaborative learning methods, such as group work or team projects, help students learn to work together to understand and solve problems.

Transformative education plays an important role in changing how students think and act. This process prepares individuals to become agents of change who can face the challenges of the modern world. Through an inclusive and reflective approach, transformative education ensures that students gain not only knowledge but also the values, skills, and awareness needed to create a more just, sustainable, and harmonious world (Nwagu, 2020).

Sustainable Education

In its application, sustainable education teaches students the importance of protecting the environment through environmentally friendly practices, such as reducing waste, using renewable energy, and maintaining biodiversity. Not only that, but social and economic aspects are also a significant concern. Students are invited to understand the relationship between the environment and social and economic justice. This education seeks to create a more just, inclusive, and sustainable society, where every individual has an equal opportunity to thrive without damaging natural resources (Sulaiman, 2019).

One of the main principles of sustainable education is to build critical thinking and the ability to solve complex problems related to sustainability issues. Students are encouraged to think reflectively about the impact of their actions on the environment and society. In addition, this education also encourages them to become innovators and agents of change who can create creative solutions to various global challenges, such as climate change, pollution, and economic inequality. With this approach, students are expected to have a deep understanding of the concept of sustainability as well as the skills to implement it in various areas of life (Ferguson et al., 2022).

Learning methods in sustainable education include interdisciplinary, collaborative, and experiential approaches. Through these methods, students can learn the relationships between various aspects of sustainability, such as ecology, economy, and socio-culture. For example, community-based projects and field studies often provide real-world experiences on sustainability

issues. By involving students in hands-on activities, they can feel the real impact of their actions and are motivated to contribute to building a sustainable future (Cini et al., 2023).

Sustainable education has various types, functions, and methods supporting achieving sustainable development goals through education. Types of sustainable education can be seen from their learning approaches, such as environmental education, economic sustainability education, and social sustainability education. Environmental education focuses on understanding the importance of preserving the environment, including efforts to overcome pollution, climate change, and natural resource conservation. Economic sustainability education emphasizes creating a sustainable economic system by maximizing resource efficiency without damaging the environment. Meanwhile, social sustainability education aims to build awareness of the importance of social justice, inclusion, and shared prosperity (Vilmala et al., 2022).

Various types of sustainable education can be seen from their application in various sectors of life, such as formal, non-formal, and informal education. Formal education is carried out in educational institutions such as schools and universities through a curriculum that includes material on sustainability. Non-formal education includes training or workshops in the community to improve practical understanding of sustainability issues. Meanwhile, informal education occurs through daily social interactions, such as environmental campaigns, community activities, or digital media that disseminate information about sustainable practices. These three types of education have complementary roles in creating awareness and real action on sustainability issues (Swekwi & Lertlit, 2021).

The function of sustainable education is crucial in forming individuals who care and are responsible for the future of the planet and its people. This education functions as a tool to instill sustainability values, such as concern for the environment, efficiency in the use of resources, and awareness of the importance of social justice. In addition, sustainable education also functions to equip students with critical thinking skills, problem-solving, and innovation in overcoming global sustainability challenges. This function makes sustainability education a means to create a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also committed to sustainable development (Wilujeng et al., 2019). In its implementation at ECE Saymara, several methods are often used in sustainable education. The project-based learning method provides opportunities for students to work on real projects related to sustainability issues, such as waste recycling or energy conservation. The experiential learning method allows students to learn through direct experience, such as gardening activities, field studies, or involvement in community projects. In addition, collaborative methods, such as group discussions and teamwork, encourage students to share ideas and find joint solutions to sustainability problems. Integrative methods are also often used to include sustainability issues in various subjects so that students can understand sustainability from various perspectives.

Sustainable education plays an important role in creating a generation aware of the importance of sustainability. This education builds knowledge and inspires real actions that support the balance between the environment, economy, and social life. Through an interdisciplinary and practical approach, sustainable education becomes the foundation for forming a society that is more caring, responsible, and ready to face global challenges to achieve a sustainable future (Kudeikina & Kaija, 2024).

Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education (ECE) is a stage of education aimed at children aged 0 to 6 years, and it is a fundamental period in the formation of character, physical development, and intelligence. ECE is designed to provide stimulation that meets the developmental needs of children, including cognitive, motoric, socio-emotional, and moral aspects. This education acts as an important foundation that helps children build basic skills to face the next level of education, while forming an upbeat personality (Karunia & Manurung, 2019). Early childhood education's primary goal is to support children's holistic development so they can grow into physically, mentally, and socially balanced individuals. This period is often called the golden age, because children's brains develop rapidly and become the basis for future learning. Education at an early age is also important to help children recognize their potential, develop self-confidence, and build social relationships with the environment. In addition, ECE provides opportunities for children to learn through direct experiences that are fun and meaningful (Palupi, 2020).

Early childhood education uses an interactive, creative, and play-based approach. Play is a core element in ECE because children can explore the environment, learn to solve problems, and develop motor and social skills through play activities. This approach also prioritizes experiential learning, where children are actively involved in activities that stimulate their curiosity. In addition, this education also applies a thematic method that unites various aspects of learning in one theme that is relevant to the world of children (Apriliya & Katoningsih, 2021).

Inclusive learning for children with special needs at the ECE level is important to ensure equal and meaningful education for all children. With the right strategy, support from teachers, parents, and adequate facilities, inclusive education can significantly benefit children with special needs and other children (Aminah, H., & Puspitasari, I. 2023). Although challenges in its implementation still exist, inclusive education remains a strategic step in building a fairer and more equitable education system (Nur & Widyasari, 2021). Furthermore, it can be understood that teachers have a vital role in creating inclusive learning at the ECE level. Teachers must be facilitators who understand each child's needs and create a classroom atmosphere supporting diversity. In addition, collaboration between teachers and parents is essential to ensure continuous learning at home and school. Parents also provide information about children's special needs, support the learning process, and work with teachers to achieve optimal educational goals.

ECE Saymara is administratively located at Jl. Indronoto, Area Sawah, Ngabeyan, Kec. Kartasura, Sukoharjo Regency, Central Java 57165. ECE Saymara is one of the educational units that carries the theme of an inclusive school. Inclusive learning is an educational approach that provides opportunities for all children, including children with special needs, to learn together in the same environment. At the ECE level, inclusive learning aims to create a learning space that is friendly, adaptive, and respects the diversity of children's abilities. This approach emphasizes that every child, regardless of physical, mental, or social differences, has the right to receive quality education according to their needs. In the context of ECE, inclusive learning focuses on academics and the development of children's social and emotional aspects (Hastuti & Musslifah, 2023).

Inclusive Learning Strategies for Children with Special Needs in Early Childhood

Inclusive learning at the ECE level is essential because early childhood is a critical period for child development. With an inclusive learning environment, children with special needs can learn to interact with peers, develop self-confidence, and improve social skills. In addition, other children in the class also learn to accept differences, show empathy, and build inclusive attitudes

from an early age. This contributes to the formation of a more inclusive society in the future. Inclusive education at ECE also helps identify the specific needs of children with special needs so that they can receive appropriate support from an early age (Hastuti et al., 2022).

Implementing inclusive learning at the ECE level requires strategies tailored to the children's needs. Teachers must apply a flexible approach, such as play-based learning, that can be adapted to the abilities of each child. The learning environment also needs to be designed to support the participation of all children, for example, by providing special aids or varied learning materials. In addition, teachers must be able to manage heterogeneous classes, including paying more attention to children with special needs without ignoring other children. Collaboration with parents and experts, such as therapists, is also key to the success of this strategy (Firzayuni Kurniati, Fitria Happy, 2022).

The transformative education approach in inclusive learning at the ECE Saymara level focuses on changing the mindset and behavior of children, teachers, and the community towards the diversity of children's needs. In this context, inclusive learning aims to change the view of children with special needs, from the stigma of disability to recognition of their unique potential. ECE schools implementing transformative education encourage children to accept differences and work together in an inclusive environment. In addition, teachers act as agents of change who integrate the values of equality, empathy, and respect for diversity into every learning activity. This practice shapes children's character and prepares them to live in an inclusive society.

The practice of sustainable education in inclusive learning at ECE Saymara emphasizes the sustainability of education, including social, environmental, and economic aspects. ECE schools that adopt this approach strive to create a friendly learning environment and support the participation of all children, including children with special needs. For example, they provide learning facilities that all children can use without discrimination, such as visual aids for children with hearing impairments or classrooms designed to be disability-friendly. Furthermore, sustainable education also teaches children the values of sustainability from an early age, such as maintaining a clean environment and respecting others, thus building an awareness of social responsibility that continues into adulthood.

Transformative and sustainable education have a strong correlation because both aim to positively change individuals' mindsets, attitudes, and actions towards the world. Transformative education focuses on developing critical and reflective thinking, where students are invited to evaluate long-held beliefs and assumptions. In contrast, sustainable education emphasizes balancing environmental, economic, and social aspects. Both complement each other in forming individuals with a deep awareness and ability to create solutions to global challenges, such as environmental damage, social injustice, and economic inequality.

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Transformative education creates the foundation for a paradigm shift through critical reflection and open dialogue. This process enables learners to understand sustainability issues more deeply and question behaviors that damage the environment or cause social injustice. Thus, transformative education at ECE Saymara plays an important role in building awareness of the

importance of sustainable education. Learners not only learn about the concept of sustainability, but are also encouraged to change how they think and act to be more concerned about the planet's future and the global community's welfare.

The correlation between the two is also seen in their learning methods, which emphasize active involvement and direct experience. Transformative education uses critical reflection, dialogue, and experiential learning methods, aligning with sustainable education approaches such as project-based and experiential learning. For example, a project that invites students to solve environmental or social problems will combine the principles of transformative education with the goals of sustainable education. This process allows students to think critically, understand sustainability issues from multiple perspectives, and apply sustainable solutions in real life.

Both educational approaches also aim to create proactive agents of change. Transformative education encourages individuals to think reflectively and identify their role in creating social change. In contrast, sustainable education instills the values of sustainability and the skills needed to realize such change. Combining the two will produce individuals who are not only highly aware of global issues but also can take concrete and sustainable action. Thus, inclusive education at the ECE level can produce a generation that cares about the environment, is responsive to social challenges, and is ready to actively contribute to creating a better future.

In early childhood education, transformative and sustainable education have similarities and significant differences, especially in their objectives, approaches, and implementations. The main similarity between the two lies in the focus on creating positive changes in the mindset and behavior of individuals. Education emphasizes the development of morals, knowledge, and the balance of life in this world and the hereafter, which aligns with the goals of transformative education, which encourages critical reflection and paradigm shifts towards goodness. Meanwhile, sustainable education, focusing on environmental, social, and economic sustainability, also reflects the principles of education that emphasize the importance of maintaining harmony between humans, nature, and its creator.

In terms of approach, these two concepts have similarities in learning methods that are participatory, reflective, and experience-based. Transformative education in ECE learning emphasizes the learning process that builds critical awareness through reflection on social values and realities. This is reflected in education that encourages students to understand religious teachings in depth and apply them in everyday life (Chisolm et al., 2020). Meanwhile, sustainable education emphasizes a practical approach to maintaining sustainability through tangible actions, such as protecting the environment and creating social justice, which is also in line with the concept that humans are responsible as managers and guardians of the earth (Husaini et al., 2023).

The Application of Transformative Education and Continuing Education in Inclusive Learning in ECE Saymara

Despite having many similarities, there are fundamental differences between transformative education and sustainable education in ECE learning. Transformative education focuses more on changing students' paradigms and thinking through critical reflection on social, economic, and cultural conditions. This concept emphasizes the transformation of individuals to have more critical and reflective thinking through religious and societal values (Mohamad Abdel-Haq et al., 2019). On the other hand, sustainable education emphasizes practical and systematic efforts to maintain environmental balance and create sustainable development (Perwitasari et al., 2023). The difference lies in the application focus: transformative education emphasizes spiritual

and moral transformation. In contrast, sustainable education is more oriented towards efforts to maintain the sustainability of life physically and socially.

In practice, learning at ECE Saymara has integrated these two concepts to create a holistic and practical education. Transformative education can build students' awareness of the importance of religious teachings as a guide to life. In contrast, sustainable education can be applied to teach sustainability practices, such as natural resource management, economic balance, and social responsibility. By combining these two approaches, education can produce individuals who are noble and knowledgeable and have a high awareness of maintaining the sustainability of nature and human life.

ECE Saymara does not see these two approaches as separate options but as two sides of the coin that complement each other to create a holistic education. Transformative education builds awareness and change of perspective, while sustainable education is a form of real action from these changes. One teacher explained this synergy in an interview:

"We do not just want children to know throwing garbage is bad. That is just the stage of knowing. The transformation occurs when they feel uncomfortable seeing garbage scattered and are moved to pick it up. This is where sustainability value comes in. So, from a change in perspective (transformative) to a habit of caring for the environment (sustainable). The two have to walk together."

Integrating transformative education and sustainable education carried out by ECE Saymara in inclusive learning practices in ECE produces a holistic approach focusing on children with special needs and the entire education ecosystem. For example, teachers create project-based learning activities involving children with special needs and other children collaboratively, such as gardening or making crafts from recycled materials. These activities support children's cognitive and motor development and instill the values of cooperation, responsibility, and respect for the environment. Through this approach, ECE schools become places where educational sustainability and social transformation can go hand in hand. This was acknowledged by one of the educators:

"The concept is excellent, but sometimes we are confused. How do you explain 'sustainability' to a five-year-old without sounding like college? Or how do we ensure that our activities are truly 'transformative' and not just fun? We need a lot of concrete examples and training."

Therefore, support is needed in the form of teacher training, developing a relevant curriculum, and improving educational facilities to implement these two approaches optimally. In addition, limited resources, such as adaptive learning aids for children with disabilities, are often a barrier. A parent of a child with special needs also highlighted this:

"The program is excellent, my son has become more confident. However, sometimes I see him struggling because his props resemble other children. I believe the potential could come out even more if there were more adapted media."

Despite its many benefits, implementing transformative and sustainable education in inclusive learning at ECE Saymara faces various challenges. One of them is the limited understanding of teachers on how to integrate these two approaches effectively. Not all teachers have special training to implement transformational and sustainable methods. In addition, limited resources, such as adequate learning aids for children with special needs, are often obstacles to creating an inclusive learning environment. Therefore, support is needed in teacher training, developing a relevant curriculum, and improving educational facilities to implement these two approaches optimally.

Applying transformative and sustainable education in inclusive learning at ECE Saymara can potentially provide significant positive impacts. Children with special needs get the opportunity to develop according to their potential in a supportive environment. At the same time, other children learn to appreciate differences, improve social skills, and build empathy. In addition, this approach also encourages schools to be more inclusive and environmentally friendly, creating a harmonious and sustainable learning ecosystem. In the long term, this practice can contribute to forming an inclusive society that cares about the sustainability of life.

Overall, transformative and sustainable education has strong relevance in learning at ECE Saymara. The similarity between the two lies in the effort to create students who are critical, responsible, and oriented towards positive change. The difference, although in the focus of implementation, still complements each other in forming a generation of Muslims who deeply understand religious teachings and play an active role in maintaining the world's sustainability. By integrating these two concepts, ECE learning will be more effective in producing future leaders who can overcome global challenges and uphold sustainability principles by religious and societal values.

Although integrating transformative and sustainable education offers an ideal vision, its practical implementation faces several fundamental criticisms and challenges that cannot be ignored. One of the main criticisms is the risk of simplifying concepts. Big ideas such as "critical transformation" and "ecological sustainability" are reduced to mere surface activities or slogans without depth of meaning. For example, planting trees can only become a mechanical routine without completely changing the child's perspective on nature (transformation), or recycling practices can only stop at garbage collection without understanding excessive consumption patterns. Another challenge lies in the gap between curriculum idealism and the reality of educator capacity. Teachers at the ECE level are often already burdened with administrative tasks and concrete child development targets, so adding to the demands of becoming social transformation facilitators and sustainability agents can become an unrealistic burden without intensive training and adequate support systems. Furthermore, there is a potential value conflict when universal concepts such as sustainability intersect with specific local socio-cultural contexts, which demand a high level of wisdom and adaptation from educators. Without systematically addressing these challenges, the noble idea of integrating the two approaches risks becoming nothing more than a pedagogical utopia that is beautiful in theory but difficult to realize in classrooms authentically.

Experts in curriculum implementation often highlight that even the most ideal pedagogical ideas often undergo "mutations" or simplification when faced with the complex realities of the classroom. This phenomenon, which can be referred to as lethal mutation or fatal mutation in implementation, occurs when the essence of an innovation is lost during the adoption process by practitioners (Aracely et al., 2022). In addition, the literature on teacher professional development also consistently shows that in the absence of systematic and sustained support, educators tend to revert to more familiar teaching methods, especially when faced with abstract new concepts that demand profound paradigm shifts (B et al., 2022). By referring to this theoretical framework, the analysis of the obstacles faced by ECE Saymara becomes more than just a casuistic observation, but a real example of a universal challenge in the world of education, where policy visions are often not in line with the capacity and context at the grassroots level.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that inclusive learning strategies in early childhood education should not be trapped in the dichotomy between transformative and continuing education. Findings in the field show that the synergy between the two is the key to creating a holistic education for all children, including children with special needs. Transformative education has proven effective in driving changes in the individual's perspective and critical awareness. In contrast, continuing education provides a practical framework for realizing such change in real, long-term-oriented action. Integrating the two allows early childhood education to function as a vehicle for change (transformation) based on sustainability values, so that it can form individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent and morally mature, but also ecologically and socially responsible. Although the potential for this integration is enormous, its implementation still faces significant challenges related to teacher capacity, the availability of adaptive resources, and the risk of simplifying concepts. Therefore, this study recommends several concrete steps.

The government and relevant institutions need to formulate policies that explicitly support the capacity development of educators in inclusive and integrative pedagogy. This can be realized through the Tiered Teacher Training program, which conducts training that is not only theoretical but also practice-based, as well as case studies on how to incorporate transformative and sustainable approaches in inclusive early childhood education classrooms. Second, standardize Adaptive Learning Facilities by setting minimum standards and providing incentives for schools to provide learning aids that are accessible to all children, regardless of their abilities. Third, the Local Curriculum's flexibility gives educational units greater autonomy to adapt the national curriculum by including learning projects based on local wisdom relevant to the issues of transformation and sustainability in their environment.

Developing a more structured Transformative-Sustainable Inclusive Learning Model is necessary as the next research direction. This model can be designed with several key components: first, the "Conscious-Action-Reflect" Learning Cycle, through the guidance of children from the stage of problem awareness (cognitive transformation), taking real action (continuous practice), to reflecting on the impact of their actions. Second, the Empathy-Based Collaborative Project, through the design of activities that inherently require collaboration between children with diverse abilities to achieve a common goal, such as caring for the school garden or managing a classroom "waste bank." Third, the Holistic Development Portfolio, through the development of an assessment system that measures not only academic achievement, but also character development, empathy, and pro-environmental behavior. With the proper policy support and the development of applicable models, integrating transformative and sustainable education can move from an ideal concept to an effective real practice, contributing significantly to shaping an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable future generation.

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