

Empowering Children with Cerebral Palsy through Dikir Barat: Best Practices for Inclusive Teaching Strategies

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ABSTRACT

Dikir Barat is a popularly observed traditional Malay musical performance in Malaysia that frequently contributes to promote cultural identity and integration. Children with cerebral palsy (CP), a cerebral disorder that affects coordination and mobility may have challenges participating in this activity due to their limitations. Teachers, therapists, parents, and volunteers have worked together to develop best practices in teaching strategies that may be adapted to meet the requirements of children with CP in order to address this challenge, promoting not only their cognitive development, but also their social and emotional development. These strategies include modifying musical instruments, adapting movement and communication techniques, and providing a supportive learning environment. Case studies and testimonials from educators and parents highlight the effectiveness of these strategies in promoting the inclusion of children with CP in cultural activities such as Dikir Barat. By providing practical guidance on adapting teaching strategies to meet the needs of children with CP, this article aims to promote the importance of inclusion and equity in learning environments. Overall, the best practices presented in this article demonstrate how traditional cultural activities such as Dikir Barat can be adapted to be more accessible and inclusive, promoting cultural identity and unity while also fostering a more equitable and inclusive society for all.

Keywords: dikir barat, children with cerebral palsy, best practices

Introduction of Best Practices

With regards to the active participation of children with cerebral palsy (CP), there has been a growing recognition of the significance of inclusion and equity in educational settings in recent years (Steen and Wilson, 2020). The integration of children with CP into the world of music is one area that has attracted a lot of attention (Marrades-Caballero et al., 2018). This growing emphasis on inclusion has extended to encompass traditional Malay cultural activities, notably the widely practised Dikir Barat musical performance. This traditional art form, rooted in the rich cultural heritage of Malaysia, has drawn attention as a means of facilitating the participation of children with CP. By exploring the link between Dikir Barat and children with CP, educators and researchers are uncovering innovative ways to harness the therapeutic and according to Gemma et al., (2020), this musical tradition offers significant social advantages for fostering the comprehensive

growth and improved quality of life among children with disabilities. Dikir Barat holds significant cultural value and plays a vital role in promoting cultural identity and integration (Hakim, 2020). The utilisation of Dikir Barat in this context not only promotes artistic expression but also serves as a platform for fostering social interactions, boosting confidence and nurturing a sense of belonging among children who often face unique challenges (Olalere, 2019)

However, the coordination and mobility challenges faced by children with CP pose obstacles to their full participation in Dikir Barat (Mohamad, 2020). Teachers, therapists, parents, and volunteers have worked together to create and execute best practices in teaching methodologies that may be modified to fit the specific requirements of children with CP in order to overcome these difficulties. These strategies seek to support not only their cognitive growth but also their social and emotional health, encouraging a sense of inclusion and belonging. Making musical instruments more accessible for kids with CP is one of the important components of these best practices. For example, instruments can be adapted by adding larger handles or grips, using alternative materials that are easier to manipulate or introducing electronic instruments that can be played with minimal physical effort. These adaptations ensure that children with limited motor control can actively participate in the musical aspects of Dikir Barat, experiencing the joy of creating music alongside their peers. James et al. (2020) demonstrated the significant societal impacts that musical activities can provoke by mitigating cognitive and perceptual-motor decline. This effect is supported by functional and structural brain plasticity. Furthermore, insights from Guo et al. (2020) suggest that participation in a musical instrument program may experience improvements in verbal memory and increased neural efficiency.

Another important aspect of the best practices involves adapting movement and communication techniques. Children with CP may have difficulty with coordinated movements or may rely on alternative forms of communication, such as augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices or sign language (Zamin et al., 2019). Educators and therapists have worked together to develop strategies that accommodate these unique needs, allowing children with CP to engage in the physical movements and vocalisations of Dikir Barat in a manner that suits their abilities. Creating a supportive learning environment is also crucial for the successful inclusion of children with CP in cultural activities like Dikir Barat. This involves fostering an atmosphere of acceptance, understanding and encouragement. Educators, parents and volunteers play a vital role in creating an inclusive environment by providing appropriate support, adapting teaching methods and promoting positive peer interactions (Guo-Brennan et al., 2019). By ensuring that children with CP feel valued and included, their overall learning experience is enhanced (Cleary et al., 2019) and they can develop a sense of pride in their cultural heritage.

Case studies and parent and educator testimonies demonstrate the value of these best practices in encouraging the participation of children with CP in cultural events. The reported benefits include higher communication skills, heightened self-confidence, stronger social skills, and a deeper understanding of cultural variety. These success tales emphasise the need of employing inclusive teaching techniques that address the particular requirements of children with cerebral palsy, building a more equal and inclusive society for all. By providing practical guidance on adapting teaching strategies to meet the needs of children with CP in the context of cultural activities like Dikir Barat, this article aims to promote the importance of inclusion and equity in learning environments. These best practices demonstrate how traditional cultural activities can be modified and made more accessible, ensuring that children with CP can actively participate and contribute to their cultural heritage. In doing so, we strive to create a society that embraces diversity, celebrates cultural identity, and offers equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities to thrive and participate fully in all aspects of life.

Justification of Best Practices Implementation

The rationale behind implementing best practices for the inclusion of children with CP in cultural activities like Dikir Barat is driven by the fundamental principles of inclusion, equity and holistic development. Every child needs an equal opportunity to connect with their cultural heritage and take part in cultural experiences, regardless of their skills. The goal is to eliminate barriers and create an inclusive learning environment where all children may actively participate and contribute by changing the activities and teaching methodologies to fit the specific requirements of children with CP. By ensuring that children with CP have equal access to cultural events and are not excluded due to their physical limitations, this strategy is consistent with the ideals of equity.

Additionally, by actively participating in cultural events, children with CP can improve their cognitive abilities, form social bonds, and promote emotional wellbeing. Additionally, it protects their cultural identity because taking part in long-standing traditions fosters a sense of pride and belonging. The application of these best practices also serves as a model for more extensive inclusive education practices, inspiring teachers, therapists, and policymakers to use comparable strategies in many learning environments. The justification for implementing best practices emphasises the significance of developing a society that embraces diversity, values cultural heritage, and offers equal opportunities for all children to thrive and fully participate in cultural experiences. This is done by promoting inclusion, equity, and holistic development.

Objectives of Implementation

The objectives of implementing best practices for the inclusion of children with CP in cultural activities like Dikir Barat are:

1. To foster an environment of inclusive participation where children with CP engage in cultural activities alongside peers.
2. To enhance holistic development, cognitive and emotional growth for children with CP through inclusive Dikir Barat involvement.
3. To ensure children with CP children connect with their heritage via adapted Dikir Barat practices.

Implementation of Best Practices

1. Select Suitable Movements

- 1.1 Identify simplified Dikir Barat movements that can be comfortably performed by children with cerebral palsy.
- 1.2 Choose actions that align with their physical abilities and motor skills, focusing on gestures that allow for controlled and rhythmic movements.

2. Adapt Rhythmic Patterns

- 2.1 Modify the traditional rhythm patterns of Dikir Barat to a slower pace, enabling children with CP to grasp the rhythm and execute the movements effectively.
- 2.2 Use clear and simple beats to aid in synchronising their movements with the music.

3. Visual Instruction Cards

3.1 Create visual instruction cards or panels that depict each movement step visually.

3.2 Use large, colourful images or symbols to help children with CP understand and remember the sequence of movements.

4. Guided Practice with Assistance

4.1 Pair each child with a peer or helper who can provide physical assistance or prompts during practice.

4.2 Guide the children through the movements step by step, offering hands-on support as needed to ensure proper posture and execution.

5. Interactive Music Cueing

5.1 Incorporate interactive musical cues, such as rhythmic claps or percussion instruments, to signal movement changes and transitions.

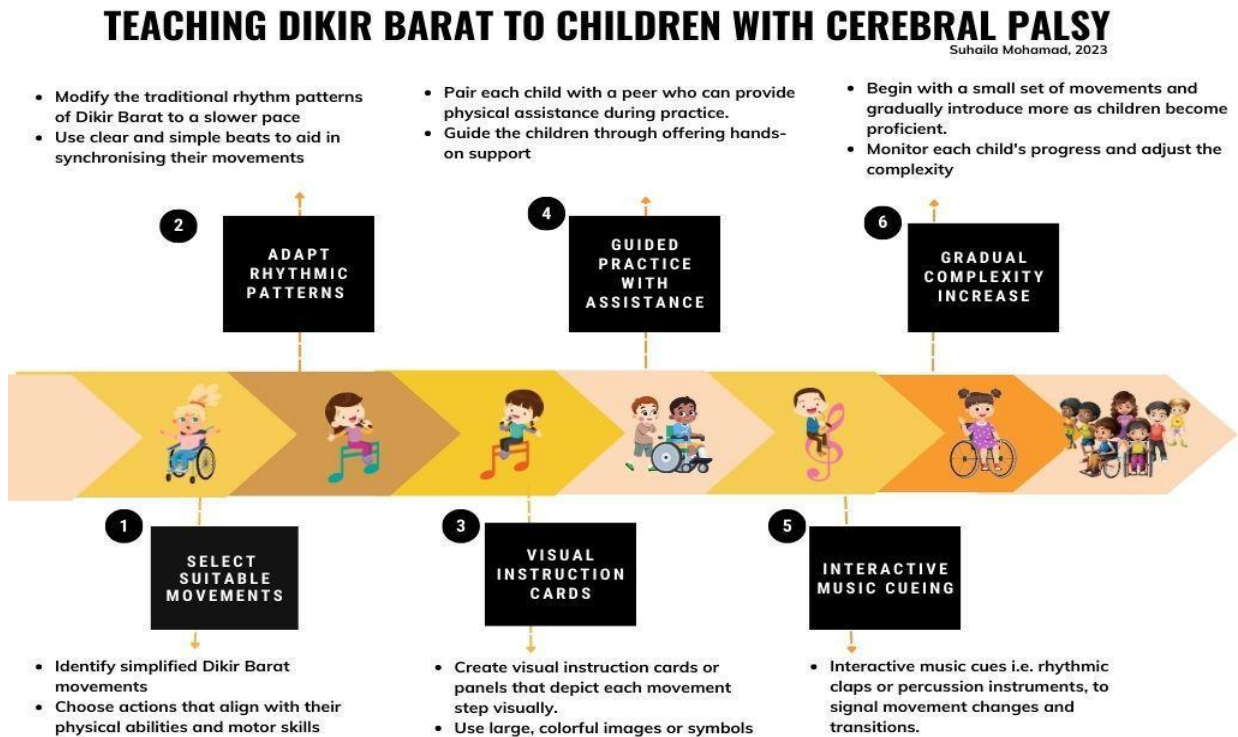
5.2 These cues help children with cerebral palsy anticipate movements and stay engaged in the activity.

6. Gradual Complexity Increase

6.1 Begin with a small set of movements and gradually introduce more as children become comfortable and proficient.

6.2 Monitor each child's progress and adjust the complexity of the movements based on their individual capabilities.

Diagram 1
Steps of the Best Practices



**Children with CP performing Dikir Barat for a performance in Malaysia National TV
Effectiveness from the Implementation of Best Practices**

The implementation of best practices in disability-inclusive education for children with cerebral palsy (CP) through Dikir Barat showcases notable effectiveness. By fostering an inclusive learning environment, CP children actively participate alongside their peers, promoting social integration and breaking down barriers. This approach not only addresses their cognitive development but also nurtures emotional growth through active engagement. Furthermore, the adapted Dikir Barat activities serve as a means for CP children to connect with their cultural heritage, fostering a sense of identity and pride. This success has even led to them being invited for a live performance in Rancangan Televisyen Malaysia Berhad, further highlighting their accomplishments and the value of inclusive practices. To witness their inspiring journey, scan the QR code below, which will lead you to the attached video showcasing their remarkable live performance.

Picture 5

*Dikir Barat Performance by Children with CP in Rancangan Televisyen Malaysia (RTM)
(video)*



This collective impact transcends the classroom, illuminating the path toward a more inclusive and understanding society. In sum, the effectiveness of these practices signifies a transformative journey toward holistic development and cultural preservation for children with CP.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The successful implementation of best practices in disability-inclusive education through Dikir Barat for children with cerebral palsy (CP) underscores the immense potential of such initiatives. This approach has effectively created an environment where CP children actively participate in cultural activities alongside their peers, facilitating social integration and erasing barriers. Furthermore, the engagement in adapted Dikir Barat routines has not only positively impacted cognitive development but also nurtured emotional growth through active involvement. To build upon this success, several recommendations can be put forth namely to increase awareness about the positive outcomes of disability-inclusive education through Dikir Barat. Share success stories, videos and insights to inspire other educational institutions and organisations to adopt similar practices. In

addition to that, specialised training and resources can be provided for educators, caregivers and therapists on adapting cultural activities for children with CP. This will enable sustained implementation and continuous improvement. Establish platforms for collaboration among different institutions and practitioners engaged in disability-inclusive education can foster a supportive community and further refine best practices. Furthermore, more ongoing research to better understand the impact of inclusive cultural activities on children with CP should be encouraged. Innovation in instructional techniques, assistive technologies, and curriculum development can enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives. Lastly, more policies that promote the inclusion of children with disabilities in cultural and educational activities can be advocated. Collaboration with governmental and non-governmental organisations can drive systemic change. In conclusion, the successful integration of disability-inclusive education through Dikir Barat exemplifies the transformative power of tailored approaches. By continuing to expand awareness, invest in training, collaborate, research, and advocate for policy changes, we can create a more inclusive and enriching educational landscape for children with CP.

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