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Utilization of Natural Environment to Improve Early Childhood Creativity

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Abstrak

Lingkungan alam merupakan salah satu media yang bisa dimanfaatkan dalam meningkatkan kreatifitas anak usia dini. Lingkungan alam menyediakan beberapa bahan alam yang bermanfaat dalam pembelajaran serta bernilai kreatif. Tujuan dibuatnya artikel ini adalah untuk mengetahui bagaimana cara memanfaatkan lingkungan alam ini sebagai media dalam meningkatkan kreativitas anak usia dini. Dengan lingkungan alam ini anak usia dini bisa mengenal lingkungan alam disekitarnya. Metode yang digunakan dalam artikel ini adalah *Library Research* (penelitian kepustakaan), karena data yang diteliti berupa naskah-naskah, buku-buku yang bersumber dari kepustakaan. Hasil penelitian ini adalah bagaimana cara untuk memanfaatkan lingkungan alam untuk meningkatkan kreatifitas anak yaitu dengan cara memanfaatkan lingkungan alam secara langsung dan tidak langsung. Adapun beberapa faktor pendorong dan penghambat dalam meningkatkan kreatifitas anak usia dini.

Abstract

The natural environment is one of the media that can be used in increasing the creativity of early childhood. The natural environment provides several natural materials that are useful in learning as well as having creative value. This article aimed to find out how to take advantage of this natural environment as a medium in increasing the creativity of early childhood. With this natural environment, early childhood can get to know the natural environment around them. This article used Library Research method, because the data studied were in the form of manuscripts, books that are sourced from libraries. The result of this research is how to take advantage of the natural environment to increase children's creativity by utilizing the natural environment directly and indirectly. There are several driving and inhibiting factors in increasing the creativity of early childhood.



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INTRODUCTION

Humans were born with different backgrounds and talents. Early childhood education is one that pays attention to the development of knowledge, attitudes and skills or creativity. The success of education at an early age is the basis for further education. The learning process in early childhood should be done through real experiences in order to increase the activity and curiosity of children. Experts state that children from birth to 6 years of age will experience a golden development or golden age because at that age children can respond to stimuli provided by their environment. The stimulation received by early childhood will provide a very valuable experience. Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System Article 1 states that: "Early childhood education is a coaching effort aimed at children from birth to 6 years of age which is carried out by providing educational stimuli to assist physical and spiritual growth and development so that children have readiness to enter further education "(Sumarni, Astuti, & Mering Master of Technology Education FKIP Untan Pontianak n.d.). The stimulus to increase creativity in children can be obtained by using materials that come from natural resources which are processed into games or learning media. In addition, we can use the five senses in interacting with language. Such activities can develop multiple intelligences through games in accordance with children's development (Technical, 2003). Learning can be done by providing maximum experience and stimulation, and therefore the learning environment is designed to arouse children's enthusiasm for learning. Materials from nature can be used as a medium in learning so that the children's learning atmosphere becomes more enjoyable, fun and not boring.

There are many natural materials that we can easily get as a medium in developing children's creativity. Examples of natural materials that can be used are leaves, seeds, twigs, water, sand and others. Creativity will not develop if children do not get stimulation and support from the surrounding environment. A good learning process is needed in increasing children's creativity. Creativity does not arise if an educator does not provide various stimulants. Activities in early childhood education cannot be separated from the factor of playing. Playing is the heart of children and through playing children get the opportunity to express their

creative impulses. Creative here is not only centered on the arts but creative in thinking and solving any problems is very necessary in early childhood. Educators who are less creative in using or utilizing media will have an effect on children's creativity. Children become less confident to express or give their opinions. The environment around children can also affect children's creativity, because the environment which does not support children's development like the educators above will make children feel bored and there is no encouragement that spurs children's creativity.

A conducive environment can optimally develop interest and potential in early childhood. The absence of adequate facilities and infrastructure hampers learning activities. One of the learning tools is the media, but the use of media is still rarely used in learning. Educators often use worksheets or portfolios. Even though there are abundant natural resources that can be used as a medium to increase children's creativity. These natural materials can be in the form of leaves, seeds, twigs, rocks and other natural materials. In addition, we can also explore the surrounding environment such as rice fields, beaches and others.

Learning using natural media will allow direct interaction between the natural environment and children. Even children can learn actively according to their interests and abilities. Learning is a deliberate activity so that there is a change to children in doing something, being skilled, and knowing something. Knowledge cannot be obtained by passively interacting with the environment. Objects that are around us can be responded to by using the five active senses, so that children can feel and respond to objects around their environment (Hartati, 2005). Natural media is an interesting medium to increase children's motivation and creativity. Media materials that are in the school environment or outside of school can be the basic material for making media and it is hoped that there will be direct interaction with the environment so that children get experience. Environmental media created by educators can function to facilitate children's learning in the process of understanding and receiving messages. Children can be stimulated to think rationally so that they have better psychomotor.

The environment participates in determining the success or failure of the education carried out. If we understand, the environment is a factor that supports

children's learning and playing processes. If the children are accustomed to doing positive things at school, the environment must be supportive so that children are accustomed to doing positive things. Utilizing the natural environment can stimulate the potential and talents possessed by children. There are several factors that cause the environment to develop children's potential, namely: (1) nature has universal characteristics, (2) nature cannot be predicted, (3) nature is very abundant, (4) nature lives with sound and is very beautiful, (5) nature has many places, (6) nature contains a variety of nutritious and healing foods.

With nature, children can learn by playing around. The natural environment also not only affects the development of the child's body, but can also provide a real experience of playing. By utilizing natural materials that are around us, it becomes a real learning medium for early childhood. Children can explore and experiment using natural materials. Indirectly, children will recognize the materials or objects around them such as soil, water, sand, seeds, bricks, trees, real grass and flowers. Children can interact through nature songs and walk through trees and plants. There are many steps that can be used in the utilization of natural materials. The steps include natural materials are grouped by color, size, type, and shape. Then, they are matched with those that look the same as its color or size. Provide supporting materials that can be combined with natural ingredients such as stalks used as hands or feet. Educators or people around can help increase creativity by giving children the opportunity to collect natural materials. The advantage obtained from the use of natural materials is that the price is economical and may not even cost a penny. Besides, natural ingredients are also easy to get. Utilization of this natural environment can stimulate imagination, support children's learning, be easy to remember and provide real and meaningful experiences by building communication. Bringing children closer to the natural environment can also develop naturalist intelligence in early childhood. Nature also provides many things that can be learned, such as children can immediately learn to know animals, plants, rocks, soil and so on.

DISCUSSIONS

A. Definitions of Nature Environment and Creativity of Early Childhood

The environment is everything that is around us which can affect the behavior and development of living things. The environment is also defined as a spatial unit with all objects, forces, conditions and living things including humans and their behavior that affect the continuity of life and the welfare of humans and other living things (RI Law No. 4 of 1982) (Widiyanta 2002). From this definition, it can be concluded that there are two systems in the environment, namely sosystem and ecosystem. Sosystem is a system and a unitary order of space formed by humans which consists of social, economic, culture, religion, education, politic, demography and others. Ecosystem is a spatial unit formed by the interaction between living things and each other and there is a balance between the output and input of energy and material.

Nature is all living material or not and exists naturally on earth and in it there is no human activity or activity but nature is a natural place, so it is protected and functions for the life of animals, plants and other creatures (Kasim, 1985). We as humans must protect nature, because after all we really need this nature. The elements of the environment or the natural environment are:

1. Biological or biotic environment, namely the environment whose components consist of living things, namely flora and fauna or plants and animals.
2. Abiotic environment, which is an environment whose components consist of inanimate objects, such as air, water, soil and others.
3. Socio-cultural environment, namely the environment around humans. The socio-cultural environment is a system, ideas, values and beliefs to determine human behavior as a social being.

The natural environment is everything that is around us which is formed and arises from natural processes and consists of natural resources which include the ecosystem and its components. Its components can be biological and physical. This environment is formed without human intervention and is dynamic (Hamzah, 2011). The natural environment is also created for human needs on this earth. This natural environment includes the sea, rivers, mountains, plants, animals and many more.

The natural environment with good quality food will be important for the survival of living things, but the natural environment has limitations on quality and quantity (Neolaka, 2012). By decreasing a quality in the environment, the benefits of the natural environment will also decrease. The benefits of the natural environment for humans are providing oxygen, a source of food, education and medicine. Therefore, as humans, we must be able to protect and preserve the natural environment that has been created by God with various important benefits.

Creativity is very important for early childhood because with creativity children are able to optimize cognitive, psychomotor, social emotional in a sustainable and balanced manner. Creativity is a process carried out by individuals in their experiences in order to develop and improve themselves. Creativity in this child has an expressionist character, which means the expression that is born and can develop through practice. So, creativity is a person's ability to think in new ways and does not result in solving unique problems (Vidya Fakhriyani, 2016). Early childhood is a group of individuals who are in the age range of 0-8 years. At that age humans are in the process of growth and development. The development of potential in children can be done through providing the right stimulus (Choiri et al. 2017).

B. The Characteristics of Early Childhood Creativity

Creativity gives children a great deal of self-satisfaction and pleasure and respect and also has a real influence on their development. The characteristics of creativity are:

1. Thinks fluently, which is giving various suggestions or ways of doing things and he always thinks of more than one answer.
2. Think flexible, an individual is able to see problems from various points of view, he can change his way of thinking or approach and his answers always vary.
3. Thinking to elaborate or detail, that is, an individual can develop and enrich a product or idea, add in detail of an object, situation or idea to be interesting.
4. Original thinking, namely an individual can already express new and unique things, to think that is not common to express himself.

5. Judging, namely determining a thing or a statement whether it is true, he is able to determine the benchmark or reference for its own research, individuals do not only issue their ideas but they also implement them (Munandar, 1992).

There are several ways we can develop children's creativity, namely by:

- a. Involving children in brainstorming

Brainstorming is a way to get children involved in bringing up new creative ideas in the group, practically speaking what appears in the child's mind, criticizing other people's ideas. There are several advantages to the brainstorming technique in that a team or group of children is asked to criticize other people's ideas after the brainstorming session is over. The creativity strategy in this technique is to bring up as many children's ideas as possible because the more ideas that are issued, the more it will create something unique. One of the characteristics of a creative child is not afraid to do something wrong or not afraid of failure.

- b. Providing an environment that can stimulate children's creativity

There are several environmental situations that can bring out a child's creativity. Often some people ask things or questions that the answer is in the form of a rote answer, so that the child's creativity will not develop. We must provide an environment that encourages children's creativity, such as asking questions that are critical in nature or giving a concrete problem so that children are able to think according to their experiences.

- c. Don't supervise your child too much

We don't need to be afraid of children's exploration, we just need to watch them and let them know if it's dangerous. Being possessive of children causes children to feel afraid to go on adventures or explore themselves, and therefore causing children's creativity to decline. Give them freedom to explore themselves and supervise the children as appropriate.

- d. Provide internal motivation

Giving excessive gifts makes children's creativity decrease because children will quickly feel satisfied with the awards given. The impetus that drives the child's creativity is the satisfaction that comes from the work of the child. A competition for prizes or a formal evaluation often reduces children's creativity.

e. Introducing children to creative people

We don't need to get far to introduce children to creative people. We can take several people around the child's environment such as educators, parents of children or community leaders. We can invite one of these characters to the child's class to describe what makes them creative. And the characters can demonstrate their skills such as singing, writing, science, and others (Supriyadi, 2001).

In addition, there are games that can develop children's creativity such as role playing and constructive play. In role playing, children are asked to see and feel the things around them (Musfiroh, 2008), such as being a doctor, TV lawyer, being a teacher, buying and selling and so on. There are also constructive games, which are games that are much loved by children. The type of this game is making things from clay, folding paper, drawing, playing with blocks and so on.

C. Driving Factors of Early Childhood' Creativity

Early childhood with the natural environment have a binding relationship, they also influence each other. Not only early childhood, but humans will also affect the natural environment. Humans and the natural environment have reciprocity. Creativity is the potential that every child has and needs to be developed. In the development of creativity, there are factors that can encourage the development of creativity in early childhood, as follows:

1. Internal factors, namely factors that come from within the child itself that can affect the development of children's creativity. There are two internal factors, namely:
 - a. Biological factors, namely parents or genes that are inherited in the development of early childhood creativity. Apart from inheriting physical similarities, genes can also inherit traits and psychological traits such as intelligence and talents. Intelligence and talent can also influence the development of creativity in early childhood. Sometimes children who have high intelligence and talent will show unique and good creativity compared to those with low intelligence.

- b. Physiological factors, these factors are related to children's health, because health affects children's creativity. Children who are active and healthy physically and socially emotional will affect the behavior and psychology of children. If the child is healthy, the child will show his creative spirit and vice versa if the child's health is not good, his self-confidence will decrease and it is difficult for him to express his creative spirit (Theresia Alviani).
- 2. External factors, namely factors that come from outside the child, namely those in the environment around the child. The environment around children also affects the development of early childhood creativity. There are several external factors, namely:

- a. Family environment

Family plays an important role in the growth and development of children in all aspects. Because the family is the first and closest environment to the child. The parenting style given to children is very influential on the development of early childhood creativity. Give the child a pattern of parenting according to his development. Don't give too much freedom and don't be too restrictive. If the child is restrained, the child will feel afraid to come up with ideas and afraid to express. One of the parenting styles that is suitable for early childhood is democratic parenting, because by implementing this parenting style children have ample opportunity to pursue their interests and children will become more open, creative, initiative and confident.

- b. School environment

Apart from the family environment, early childhood deserves a proper education. School is the right option in improving early childhood education, especially with parents who work one day so children can be entrusted to school. Many early childhood schools now provide child care, so parents who work all day need not worry. They can entrust their children to their school institutions. In the school environment, this is also very influential in the development of children's creativity. Maybe at school children get to know the outside world for the first time other than their home environment. All components in the school environment are very influential on the

development of early childhood creativity, starting from educators, learning curricula, students, school facilities.

In this environment, children have many opportunities to develop children's creativity. The available facilities and infrastructure are also sufficient to be used as media or means of early childhood development (Farida, 2005). For examples, educators who provide fun and interesting activities as they wish. Children have many opportunities to express their ideas, so their creativity will develop optimally.

Playing is a child's world, learning while playing will provide opportunities and a place for children to explore with a high sense of curiosity. Children can experiment by issuing their ideas using either media or other playing tools to create works that can hone children's creativity.

c. Natural Environment

The natural environment can affect children's creativity. Natural demographic conditions also influence it, such as the development of children's creativity in villages and children in cities, which must be different. Children in the village can take advantage of the natural surroundings as a medium in optimizing children's creativity. Natural materials are one of the media that can be used in the development of early childhood creativity, such as leaves, twigs, seeds and others.

D. Inhibiting Factors of Early Childhood's Creativity

Apart from driving factors, there are several things that cause creativity to not develop properly. The following are some of the inhibiting factors of early childhood creativity:

1. The principle of authoritarian discipline

The principle of authoritarian discipline is that parents require children to comply with their decisions, so that the child will lack initiative in doing something causing the development of creativity in children will be hampered.

2. Lack of encouragement to explore

With a lack of encouragement to explore, children will be hampered in creative thinking and development in children's creativity is not optimal.

3. Provision of well-organized and structured toys

The provision of toys that have been provided in a neat and structured manner will reduce children's opportunities for creative thinking, because children do not use their imagination to modify, shape and create a work.

4. There is a limit to imagination

Limiting children to fantasize can hinder children's creativity, because then the child's imagination will decrease and the child will be less able to get creative ideas. It can be concluded that there are driving and inhibiting factors.

Creativity in early childhood cannot develop properly if the environment does not provide the right stimulation. As parents and educators, they must understand what are the driving and inhibiting factors of children's creativity.

E. Utilization of Natural Environment in Improving Children's Activity

The purpose of using the natural environment in children's creativity is to improve children's thinking and to be able to get children closer to the natural environment so that interactions will occur with both of them (Hendarwati 2013). The use of the natural environment as a child's creativity also makes it easier for educators to provide learning resources or learning media, because the natural environment has provided many natural materials as a source of children's creativity. The use of nature for early childhood learning can be done in two ways, namely direct and indirect ways.

First, direct utilization. Educators can directly use nature as a learning medium by bringing their students directly to nature. The method used can be in the form of outbound, study tours, field trips, professions introduction by visiting directly to the workplace.

Utilizing the surrounding natural environment by bringing the children to observe the natural environment will add balance in children's teaching and learning activities (Ulum, 2014). This means that learning is not only in the classroom but can also be outside the classroom. In this case the natural environment will add to the spirit of creativity in children, because it greatly affects

physical development, emotional development, intellectual, social and cultural skills.

We can use the village-owned field or if the school has more space of land, it can be used as a field to train the children's physical motor skills. Children can play throw and catch, *Sunda Manda*, jump rope using tree fibers, etc. But, educators must not be careless to keep the children playing in order to avoid bad things.

Areas located on the coast can use the beach as a source of children's learning. There, children can learn to get to know their surroundings and play while playing on the beach. Educators also feel less anxious because they are very familiar with the environment. We can also teach children to plant plants in the area around the school. Not only are they taught to plant but children are also invited to take care of the plants they have planted. This was done by the children with big enthusiasm. The above activities can increase children's creativity in all aspects of development by utilizing the natural environment.

Second, indirect use of nature, namely the use of natural resources where students are asked to bring what is in nature into the classroom as a learning resource. This pattern can use thematic learning. Students can be asked to bring seeds, plants, fruits, fish and others to learn at school. By using learning resources through the natural environment, it can increase children's insight and knowledge. By utilizing the natural environment, children learn not to be limited to the classroom walls. In addition, the truth is more accurate, because children can experience it firsthand and can optimize the function or potential of their five senses.

The use of various models or methods in the teaching and learning process is a demand or need that must be met in early childhood education, because then children will be more creative in solving problems. There are so many benefits that can be obtained from the environment as an increase in creativity in early childhood education, even almost all the themes of the activities in early childhood education can be learned from the natural environment (Ikhsan & Sulaiman 2017). However, this requires creativity and an innovative spirit from educators to be able to take advantage of the environment as a source of learning for early childhood.

The natural environment is an interesting and rich source of learning for children. If during learning in the classroom children are introduced by educators to animals by utilizing the natural environment, the child will gain much more experience. In utilizing the natural environment, educators can bring activities that are usually carried out in the classroom into the natural open air, this is the environment. However, if educators tell stories in the classroom, the atmosphere that occurs in the classroom will not be as natural as if the educator invites children to take advantage of the environment.

In utilizing the natural environment for early childhood, innovation needs to be carried out by using various media and sources that exist around the surrounding environment. The existence of innovation is to support the continuity of teaching and learning activities for early childhood. Educators are required to be more creative in preparing learning resources needed by children by utilizing various materials available in the natural environment (Mustaqim 2012). With creative educators, the children will indirectly be creative. The number of learning resources available in the natural environment is very unlimited, although they are generally not deliberately designed for educational purposes. The teaching materials available at schools are limited. Often educators usually look for seeds, shells and other objects that can support children's creativity. Sometimes educators ask children to bring materials around their home environment to be used for learning activities the next day (Esa, 2010). This is important to do, so that children know directly the teaching materials to be studied. Children can see and feel firsthand the teaching materials that they will learn. With this, the child will absorb or understand the knowledge that will be conveyed by the educators later and the child does not get bored quickly in teaching and learning activities.

Educators can also ask parents for help in making blocks and make bamboo strips that children can use to learn to count. When the learning activities take place with the theme of animals, the teacher asks the children to bring tamarind seeds to be used by the children to make fish in the aquarium which aims to develop the child's fine motor skills. Even a child's aquarium uses blocks that have been made by the child's parents. These activities aim to develop children's cognitive abilities (Widyanta, 2002). Fun activities even though it aims to develop various aspects of

child development. We can also take the child to one parent's stable or farm. Moreover, in rural areas it is still very easy to find this. Children are not only happier and get to know the natural surroundings, but also indirectly they can save costs and at the same time physically train the children by walking from school to the farm.

By using plant theme, educators can use learning resources in the school environment. We can find various types of plants such as: leaves, flowers, plants that educators can use as teaching materials. Educators can introduce the names of these plants, introduce the functions or benefits of plants, can introduce colors and also learn to count. Counting activities can be done by counting the leaves on the tree branches that have been taken. The natural environment around is very important for the teaching and learning activities of children.

CONCLUSION

Creativity is very important for early childhood because with creativity children are able to optimize cognitive, psychomotor, social emotional in a sustainable and balanced manner. The use of nature for early childhood learning can be done in two ways: First, direct use. Educators can use nature as a direct learning medium by bringing their students to visit nature directly. The method used can be in the form of outbound, study tours, field trips, professions introduction by visiting directly to the workplace. Second, indirect use of nature. Namely the use of natural resources where students are asked to bring what is in nature into the classroom as a learning resource. This pattern can use thematic learning. Students can be asked to bring seeds, plants, fruits, fish and others to study at school.

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