Character education and early childhood creativity strategies through educational games in Megamendung village

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ABSTRACT

This dedication aims to emphasize the role of educators in shaping the character and creativity of early childhood. It goes beyond theoretical discussions during meetings or face-to-face classes, but involves active creation using instructional instruments and learning techniques that utilize direct teaching media. Innovation must be maximized as it can enhance children's reasoning abilities. All thoughts within teenagers can be created through creative activities. Creative activities provide valuable opportunities to express feelings and perspectives, fostering creativity in children. Educators are expected to continuously demonstrate innovative strategies. This technique brings children into active participation in learning cultivating their excellence effectively. The activity was carried out on July 15-16, 2023, at Camp Ground Lentemland, Curug Panjang Subdistrict, Bogor Regency, West Java, involving 20 elementary school children and 30 students from the Department of Islamic Education, 45 Islamic University, Bekasi. Based on the results of the dedication, it can be concluded that education strategies for the character of early childhood through learning while playing, engaging in learning activities, playing, and developing artistic souls can provide a new impression on children and enhance their creativity. Additionally, children begin to interact with their peers and accompanying students, creating a sense of enthusiasm and synergy

INTRODUCTION

Education is a deliberate effort designed to refine individuals during the socialization process, aiming to further develop character and cultivate the intellectual capacity of learners for progress. Positioned intentionally, education serves to teach and intentionally demonstrate the benefits of positive habits in societal activities through the cycle of socialization. Character education is a conscious effort to instill and nurture outstanding qualities to refine individuals, enhance the development of character, and train the minds of children. The goal is to create a knowledgeable and

virtuous generation capable of contributing beneficially to the surrounding environment. This contribution is envisioned through the deliberate cultivation of virtues and the enhancement of intellectual capacities, ensuring that the educated individuals positively impact their communities during the socialization cycle.

In the Republic of Indonesia Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Chapter I, Article 1, it is stated that education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process, allowing learners to actively develop their potential for spiritual and religious strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, as well as the skills necessary for themselves, society, the nation, and the state. The development of national education is based on the paradigm of building a complete Indonesian human, functioning as a subject with the capacity to actualize potential and humanity dimensions optimally. Humanity dimensions encompass three fundamental aspects: (1) the affective aspect reflected in the quality of faith, piety, noble character including moral virtues and excellent personality, and aesthetic competence; (2) the cognitive aspect reflected in the capacity for thought and intellectual power to explore, develop, and master knowledge and technology; and (3) the psychomotor aspect reflected in the ability to develop technical skills, practical competence, and kinesthetic competence. These principles form the foundation for the national education system, emphasizing the holistic development of individuals with the capability to contribute effectively to themselves, society, the nation, and the state. (Akhtim Wahyuni, 2021).

Character education has become a crucial aspect today to address the social issues that often plague this nation. Elective regulation must be maintained in everyday life. This is no exception in instructional organizations, which, among other things, serve as a platform for discussions to cultivate three domains of behavior, cognitive, affective, and psychomotoric.

In the external factors influencing the nature and character of a child, the environment and the child's current social relationships play a significant role. Adolescence is a developmental period where children tend to reflect on aspects they consider prominent, irrespective of the positive or negative impact of the behaviors they imitate. Essentially, these character differences will also influence a child's absorption capacity and responses to stimuli in every learning process. Therefore, this period is the most opportune time to instill positive behaviors in alignment with the religious values they adhere to. (Yasa, 2021).

The learning system serves to support learning experiences and development. It is believed that the learning system will increasingly facilitate students in appreciating or understanding the taught material. Additionally, educational experiences are valuable for educators to provide what a child needs. The existence of a learning system makes it easier to convey the ideal learning targets that have been formulated. Education also shapes character and helps children understand goodness, love goodness, and believe that it should result in something beneficial. Character education is not merely a formal education within an educational environment. Beyond that, family and community environments also actively play a role in providing character education (Andika Aprilianto & Wahyuni Mariana, 2018).

In addition, fostering the imagination of early childhood may also be crucial in shaping a child's character. Children are the future of the nation; they are not blank sheets but dynamic individuals capable of innovation. Therefore, the progress of children should be focused on from birth onwards. It is essential to implement educational efforts aimed at children from birth to six years old by providing joyful education to assist in their physical growth and depth, so that children are ready to enter the next phase of life.

According to Syamsu, the development of preschool children encompasses nine aspects: physical development, intellectual development, emotional development, language development, social development, play development, personality development, moral development, and religious awareness development. (Syamsu Yusuf LN dalam Siti Hairiyah & Mukhlis, 2019).

To be instilled in young children through instructional play activities, the most successful changes are in attitudes, as early childhood learns through play. Thus, indirectly, training, habit formation, and instilling positive attitudes can be achieved through the use of tools in educational children's games. Various game-based learning tools, such as blocks, puzzles, sandboxes, snakes and ladders, and traditional games like acting, can be utilized in this context to cultivate attitudes. However, the reality is that currently, some parents, especially in Indonesia where electronic devices are rapidly advancing, allow their children to play with electronic toys, such as mobile devices, gaming laptops, etc. As a result, parents may not fully understand it (Winasis, 2019).

According to a study by Rakhmawati (2022), children's play has several benefits. The goal is to develop three main skills: first, physical-motor skills (psychomotor); as children run, jump, or move naturally, they exercise their major muscles, promoting well-formed and healthy physical development. Second, when children play games and experience joy, they utilize emotional-social skills (affective) as a means of emotional development in their interactions with other children. Parents are the primary playmates in the early stages of development. Third, cognitive capacity is developing. Letter vocabulary, numbers, words, language, interactive communication, and even the introduction to specific things, such as shapes (big or small) and tastes (sweet, salty, bitter, or sour), can all be conveyed to children through play.

Therefore, the researcher aims to enhance the creativity or skills of young children through learning that employs educational games. With this method, educators need not adhere strictly to textbooks but should create situations to make learning appear more engaging and enjoyable. From the aforementioned issues, it can be concluded that educational games significantly influence the development of young children in terms of affective, psychomotor, and cognitive aspects. Play for young children allows them to learn and understand many things, grasp numerous rules, socialize, position themselves, manage emotions, practice tolerance, cooperate, and uphold sportsmanship. Play activities also contribute to the development of a child's mental, spiritual, language, and motor skills. Thus, playing is an essential learning activity.

Learning techniques that are not engaging can lead young children to easily become tired. Therefore, this activity aligns with the goal of community service student creativity, aiming to enhance the learning environment for children in Megamendung Village.

METHOD

This community service was conducted on July 15-16, 2023, at the Lantemland campsite, Megamendung Subdistrict, Bogor Regency, West Java. The project involved local children equivalent to elementary school level, with a total of 20 participants. The purpose of engaging these children in the community service activity was to broaden their knowledge beyond what they acquire in formal school education.

We are already familiar with the meaning of Education. Education is something highly crucial for life. Through education, we can understand and comprehend many things. It has the power to transform our lives from ignorance to understanding.

Hence, Education is the process of altering the attitudes and behaviors of an individual or group with the aim of maturing them through teaching or training. Similarly, Character Education is a

conscious and planned effort by humans to educate and empower learners to develop their individual character, enabling them to become individuals beneficial to themselves and their environment.

In the implementation of this activity, children often experience a rigid, frightening, tense, awkward, or communicative congestion atmosphere, where they do not know what to talk about. This hinders the achievement of goals in the activity, thus it is necessary to create an enjoyable, warm, comfortable, conducive, non-rigid, and non-frightening atmosphere by providing engaging educational games. These games can bring dynamism to the activity, making children interested in participating, ultimately achieving the intended objectives. (Tita Astria, 2018).

This PKM (Community Service Program) activity utilizes the Game Based Learning method, which is highly effective when applied to early childhood. The method that aids in achieving learning goals is play-based learning, where activities involve playing or games played while learning. In other words, games are selected with instructional components, not merely as pastimes or entertainment for children. (Rosarian & Dirgantoro, 2020).

Numerous researchers have expressed that game-based learning is highly successful when employed in educational settings. Game Based Learning plays a crucial role in influencing students' motivation and abilities, making them feel satisfied, enthusiastic, challenged, and inspired to collaborate (Winatha & Setiawan, 2020).

Therefore, the researcher opts for the Game-Based Learning method to prevent children from getting bored and tired quickly. This way, the researcher integrates with the community without causing any unpleasant feelings.

FINDINGS

Location and Problem Identification

This Community Service activity was conducted at Camp Ground Lentemland, Jl. Curug Panjang, Megamendung Subdistrict, Bogor Regency, West Java. Before conducting the Community Service, the organizers sought permission and coordinated with the local village authorities, youth groups (Youth Organization), and the head of local neighborhood associations (RT/RW). The activity involved a total of 20 community members equivalent to elementary school children and 24 students from the Department of Islamic Education, Universitas Islam 45 Bekasi. During the Community Service activity, students actively participated in carrying out the service to the community.

This activity took place for 2 days with different agendas. On the first day, July 15, 2023, students were guided by existing speakers. The guidance aimed to prepare the students both mentally and with the necessary materials for the Community Service Program (PKM). The guidance for students was conducted by four different mentors, each covering various topics, namely, education for children, higher education, public speaking, and workshops.

On the second day, July 16, 2023, students applied the knowledge they gained from the mentors during the activities on the first day to the local community's children. During the implementation of the activity, students were divided into 4 groups, each consisting of 6 individuals. Furthermore, the children, totaling 20, were divided into 4 groups, each group containing 5 individuals.

On the second day, each group of students was required to create a teaching module that could be directly conveyed to the children. The student groups devised various agendas for the participants, including teaching practice, art creation, and adventurous activities to hone the participants' skills. In this activity, the author also conducted an analysis of the issues.

Based on the author's analysis, it is found that children prefer direct learning through play-based education. The incorporation of learning elements into games brings joy to children, expanding their knowledge in the process.

Implementation of Activities

In this activity, students are required to create a project to engage the participants formed in their respective groups. The students organize various activities, such as teaching practices, crafting, and educational adventures. In this activity, the author also conducts an analysis to identify the issues at hand.

One of the ways that students can achieve success in training children to be independent and think creatively is through a learning model that aligns with the learning material. A learning model that can enhance the creative thinking of children is Problem-Based Learning (PBL). In line with the objectives of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) as articulated by (Yamin, Martinis, 2013, 63-63), it aims to enable students to develop knowledge applicable in daily life. Thus, in the learning process, students are not only relying on memorization but are also encouraged to be creative in problemsolving. The Problem-Based Learning model also requires students to collaborate, communicate effectively within the group, and take responsibility in resolving a problem. Therefore, the ProblemBased Learning model provides students with ample opportunities to enhance their creative thinking skills significantly.

The method has an impact on the behavior or situations of children in communicating with their peers, while it can also develop the knowledge and creativity of the children. The Community Service (PKM) activity was carried out over 2 days on July 15-16, 2023. This activity was conducted on a holiday so that it could fill the children's holiday by playing and learning together. In this activity, students gathered children of various ages into several groups. Subsequently, the students, also acting as educators, conducted various learning activities with the children, including ice-breaking, painting and drawing, educational snake and puzzle games, and an educational adventure or environmental exploration game, incorporating learning with nature.

Early childhood is a stage of rapid development for little humans, forming the foundation for their future lives. They possess unique characteristics, including egocentrism and a high level of curiosity (Sujiono, 2013:6). To support the growth and development of children, various aspects of development are crucial, as identified by experts, including Social-Emotional development, Religious and Moral values, Language, Physical Motor skills, Cognitive abilities, and Art.

Among the various developmental aspects mentioned, this discussion will focus on the Social-Emotional Development of children, specifically addressing the self-control abilities in children. The Social-Emotional Development in early childhood is highly significant as it plays a crucial role in shaping the attitudes, values, and behavior of children in the future.

Drawing and Painting

Creativity in early childhood is expected to be creative; a creative person is someone who has new ideas and thoughts, engaging in constructive or positive thinking activities, and creating something new (productive). This is reinforced by the quote from Suharnan (in Nursisto, 1999), which states that there are several fundamental components of creativity: Thinking Activities, discovering or creating something, and a new or original nature.

Drawing and painting activities using the basic learning method in early childhood are crucial processes in developing their creative and fine motor skills. This method relies on a simple approach that allows children to systematically understand the basics of drawing and painting. Drawing and painting activities using basic learning in early childhood can also help enhance their creativity and

expression. Children are encouraged to express their imagination freely through their artwork. By providing opportunities for children to draw and paint according to their own ideas, this method can promote the development of their creativity and self-confidence in expressing themselves through art. Drawing and painting are applied in learning activities to shape the fine motor skills of children, one of which is through Finger Painting activities implemented in tutoring sessions at Rumah Pintar, yielding significant results or benefits that strongly support the development of very young children. Basically, the goals of developing fine motor skills, according to Yudha M Saputra and Rudyanto (2005: 115), are threefold: (a) ability to function small muscles like finger movements, (b) ability to coordinate hand and eye speed, (c) ability to control emotions.

DISCUSSION

Expression Puzzle and Snake Ladder Card Media

Figure 1. Material about the snake education game and puzzle

A puzzle, briefly defined, can be understood as a game medium consisting of several pieces that form a picture. It is played by disassembling and then reassembling the pieces to create a complete image (Rahma & Lestariningrum, n.d.).

The Expressive Puzzle media activity is conducted by 2 students with a technique where children will be given several expressive puzzles. After that, the children are given a die to roll to determine the number that will correspond to a box on the puzzle. In each box, there is a question created by the students, and the child will answer that question. The children will then guess the expression depicted in the picture, determining whether the expression matches the behavior shown in the image. This activity aims to describe whether the utilization of expressive puzzle media can improve self-control abilities in early childhood. The low self-control abilities in children become one of the obstacles to their overall development. The development of self-control abilities in children requires an appropriate learning medium to assist in the comprehensive development process.

The second media is the Educational Snake Card, where this activity is conducted by 2 students. Children are divided into groups and then choose a card to tell what makes them sad and what makes them happy. Then, the children are asked to narrate when and how they felt sad and happy. Through this educational snake card game, students can understand the child's emotions. When a child gets a card that they will later experience, it indicates that the child is doing well emotionally. However, if the child cannot follow the experience depicted on the card, there may be an issue with the child's emotional well-being.

Drawing and Painting

Figure 2. The activity of children drawing and painting is accompanied by students

This learning method is carried out through craftsmanship (art). Craftsmanship is one effort to enhance a child's brain. Essentially, humans have a high sense of taste with feelings and the ability to see value in beauty through art. Therefore, with the craftsmanship method, children can face challenges according to their own ways and levels of progress. These rights can be utilized by children with guidance obtained through education. In accordance with the explanation, it fosters creativity with unique and diverse approaches.

Painting is one aspect of visual arts that provides aesthetic experiences to children, developing critical thinking skills, and producing artwork. It allows children to express feelings, ideas, and emotions through their paintings. Children can articulate their thoughts and feelings, both those visible and those perceived, thought of, and imagined, through the medium of painting (Martono, M., 2017). The more creative a child is, the more critically they can think. This medium serves as a supportive tool for children to express their creative ideas directly and tangibly.

This activity can stimulate imagination as an expression through the freedom of drawing on a blank sheet, commonly referred to as drawing. Drawing activities are generally enjoyed by children, providing them with a sense of play without the pressure to focus on thinking. This is beneficial for the development of children's brains, and the process of doing it can be used as a tool to help communicate and express a child's feelings through art. Every human has an imaginative soul from the womb, although creative souls differ in each individual. Therefore, this activity is designed to provide freedom for children to think and draw, enjoying the art of drawing and painting with the provided drawing and painting tools.

Learning While Singing

Figure 3. Learning while singing activity

Educators are required to create teaching methods that can foster students' motivation in learning so that they can easily understand the presented material (Yulia, 2020). Singing can be applied in learning with the aim of increasing the motivation of early childhood to learn. Singing is often found in each learning theme for early childhood to assist in the process of stimulating children's development. According to Sinaga (2018), singing is a series of activities expressing thoughts through melody in a song. This means that through singing, we can express our feelings and pour them into the melody of the song. Singing can also be interpreted as depicting the mood or condition of a person through a song.

Singing is a technique or method to convey impressions and messages through lyrics, usually tailored to the materials to be taught (Fatmawati, Sulaeman, & Pramanik, 2020). The mentioned singing is related to the material that will be presented, then packaged in such a way as to become an enjoyable song. Every educational learning activity uses a theme so that children obtain developmental aspects in a structured manner. The use of themes in each child's learning is not the main goal of the learning process but rather to gain broad insights and facilitate child development (Setyaningsih & Watini, 2020).

Singing activities are carried out by several students where children form a circle and sing together. The students engage in learning while singing with various materials, such as the names of the Prophets, the 99 names of Allah (Asmaul Husna), chanting cheers, and other general content. This activity can be seen in the picture below.

CONCLUSION

Character education and creativity in early childhood are crucial aspects that need to be emphasized in the learning process. The strategy of character education and creativity through educational games has proven to be effective in shaping positive values and enriching children's creativity. Educational games, such as those involving teamwork and collaboration, encourage children to learn to cooperate, share, and build empathy, thus shaping a strong social character.

Furthermore, educational games stimulate children's creativity through engaging sensory and cognitive stimulation. By presenting challenges and puzzles that are appropriate for the child's developmental stage, educational games can stimulate critical and solution-oriented thinking processes. Through this process, children can sharpen their problem-solving skills and develop out-of-the-box thinking, which is essential for fostering their creativity in the future.

Finally, character education and creativity in early childhood through educational games can also cultivate a positive sense of self confidence. Through opportunities to explore, experiment, and experience various new things, children can gain a strong sense of confidence. Thus, they will be more willing to express their creative ideas without fear of making mistakes or being ridiculed, shaping a confident and innovative character to face challenges in the future.

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