

THE IMPORTANCE OF INFORMAL EDUCATION BEFORE ENTERING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION INSTITUTION: LESSON LEARN FROM OUR CULTURE³

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Abstract

There is no hesitate that reseachers have conclude that good early childhood education (ECE) not only improve the lives of the children and families involved but also in substantial economic benefit for society. Unfortunately, the earlier the children send to ECE institution the earlier they miss opportunities to play because its activities focus on reading, writing and counting. If we believe that the ealier stimulation given to the child the better to optimize his potent, it means that family involvement is strategic to bridge children activities before entering ECE institution for: (1) introducing moving not only important to excercise child's body but parents also known that children learn through moving, so parents' image about wellbeing doesn't mean to decrease child's moving, (2) popularizing hands-on experience for children in the family setting where they use their hands, arms, legs, feet and bodies rather than just listening and observing, (3) decreasing children access to laptop, hand phone and computer and replace it with traditional play to respect heritage from generation to generation, and (4) all of these arise parents' need for environment to the children. Its conclude that if our environment sets according to the need for children to move, hands-on experience and to play traditional play, it will impact to community alert the important of good environment for children.

Key words: family, children, environment, informal education

1. Introduction

Fortunately, Early Childhood Education (ECE) students increase in number in the last ten years. This participation might say that communities' awareness about the importance of ECE based and ofcourse impacted by the information well spread by the government. Communities' awareness can also be recognized by increasing community involvement in developing new ECE through group of communities whether from association or individual. In theory said that children participation in ECE could be affected to the children's future education toward a better lives. As Essa (2003:05) tells that the reseachers have conclude that good early childhood programs not only improve the lives of the children and families involved but also in substantial economic benefit for society

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If we try to correlate what happens now to the graduates of any school especially High School regarding economic benefit to society. It impresses that the educated people, a person who joins the formal school neglects to work as the family earns money to live such as farmer or work at plantation. There are facts in our community that the success of parents values how the children do not work as their parents do, so since the age early years the children are not well informed on their parents' environmental work where the children are actually used to live.

On the other hand, it is impressed the earlier the children join the ECE the earlier they miss the opportunity to play appropriately to their development because most of the ECE focused on reading, writing and counting "Calistung". Though in the curriculum stated that curriculum structured the development of religious and moral value, physical and motoric, cognitive, language, social emotional and art. Focusing in on RWC has been warned through an Open letter from Directorate General of Primary and High School number: 1839/C.C2/TU/2009 in April 23, 2009 says that, "the principle of teaching and learning in Kindergarten based on learning through play. And to introduce Reading, Writing and Counting (RWC) is in accordance with developmentally appropriate practice and no ways to teach RWC fragmentedly. The same problem also faced abroad which is called schoolification. Doherty (2014:2460) define that schoolification is an emphasis on the acquisition of specific pre-academic skills and knowledge transfer by the adult rather than focus on broad developmental goals such as social-emotional well-being and the gaining of understanding and knowledge by the child through direct experience and experimentation.

We have to flash back to our cultural ways of thinking in order to have basic understanding about educating children based on our own tradition to scaffold children learning. Our problem now, is we relatively have no the same understanding on how should the children grown up as becoming a member of society and in the relation to ECE context. What is done in ECE seems to have a little correlation with the children lives at home and society. The *Minangkabau* aphorism says that, "*alam takambang jadi guru*" we learn from the universe. The Importance of Informal Education before entering Early Childhood Education Institution: Lesson Learn from Our Culture may bridge fundamental values in families or communities.

2. Problematic Situation

Schoolification or focused on reading, writing and counting (RWC) in ECE become a "satanic cycle" where ECE blame onto each other as a source educational problem in Indonesia. The same mistakes that educational experts believe that school graduates weak on skills and less attitude toward science is caused by focus on cognitives in education. An Open letter from Directorate General of Primary and High School number: 1839/C.C2/TU/2009 in April 23, 2009 warn for no schoolification for Kindergarten, but it didn't work. I think peoples' concern on play-based is the answer to make the children creative that their own future education and future lives. And informal education may help to solve the problem to prepare the children for life skills.

3. Discussion

a. Hands-on Experience/Moving Learning in Early Childhood Education

Every village called "Nagari" must have football field to play, but now since 1975 where many elementary built all over Indonesia decrease the football field or public spaces. In west Sumatera most of the elementary school build on the football field or public spaces. That's why it is hard to find a good football player or athlete because of no place for people to exercises or to rehearse for them. As Thomson and Ashton Lilo in Essa (2003:177) says that from research we know that the physical environment affect the behavior of children. In fact some theorist propose that identity should be considered part of self-identity, because it contributes to a definition of who the person is. Place identity is integral to self identity because it is within the environmental context that children needs are met, that they develop mastery and competence, and they gain control over the physical world.

On the other hand in 1970s motorcycle become populer as a means of transportation and having motorcycle is one of criteria of prosperity in ones village. By having motorcycle, body exercises decrease because most of activities used vehicles though it can be reach on foot. We can see how motorcycle now is the main transportation for students to go to school. Hannaford in Pica (2007, p.xi) tells us that movement activates the neural wiring throughout the body, making the whole body the instrument of learning. Children think better when their daily routines include physical activity.

The Institute for dairy nutrition and healt, In 2010 exposed that the WHO issued recomendation for physical activity for different age groups where age 5-17 \geq minutes per day, based on scientific evidence on health benefit. While this recomendation cover the majority of people, various groups are not yet included such as children under 5 years. Also the amount physical activity needed for weight loss or weight management and treatment of chronic deases is still to be explored.

Body exercises becomes a critical problem for children activities. Most of children activities are done by using fingers to operate gadget, laptop or computers to play football, car rising, boxing or another sport activities. Instead, Pica (2007, p.xi) said the term of the whole child means that children come to us as thinking, feeling, moving human beings who learn through all their senses.

As you can observed what the children daily activities, they use minimal part of the body to interact such as hand, and eyes wich is called non locomotor. The term of using all senses is hands-on experience. Arce (2000, p.04) define that "hands-on" means that children used their hands, arms, legs, feet and bodies rather than just listening and observing. You will also word concrete describing activities that allow children to use real materials and to actively patricipate.

Using all senses in child activities must be accompanied with concrete materials and directly experience by children. That is why in introducing moving not only important to excercise child's body but parents also known that children learn through moving, so parents' image is not necessarily to decrease child's moving. Our task as ECE lecture or teacher is how to popularize hands-on experience for children in the family setting where they use their hands, arms, legs, feet and bodies rather than just listening and observing.

b. Play-based in Early Childhood Education

Everybody must have his experience during early years as a child. We can arrange spaces to play according to the need of play. We can build a house from recycle material, sarong, broom, chair or table. No body teach us but everybody has an idea how to build such play what we called a house. Then each of us try to find our role in playing in that houses such as father, mother or as a child in one family. There can be more than one family which is interacted on to each other living side by side in a harmony. Each role of the family member run as it is and each one may talked to each other according to their role.

Play may be expand not only in a family setting but in the market or other activities according to their discussion. In the market we need money, we used colourful leaves which is more bright values higher or recycle paper such as cigarette packs. The more difficult we find the pack of the cigarette the more of it values/price in trading transaction. Some of us become trader, and some others become buyers with different styles or setting according to environment. Sometimes our inspiration influence by what we watch on TV such war. We play hide and seek by holding piece of pistol/gun made of wood or what ever. We have strategy on how we are not going to be shot by hiding behind the tree or at the corner of the bulding. We can say something in English dialect, and we can understand each other though it is not a real language/words in English.

The plays done by the children above is the real play. As Morrison (2008, p. 223) define informal play or free play occur when children play in environment material and people with whom they can interact. The atmosphere of a free play environment is informal, unstructured, and unpressured. Play and learning episodes are generally determined by interest of the children. Outcomes of free play are socialization, emotional development, self control, and concept development. If we compare play experienced by the children at home and at school, especially play set by the teacher. At least it is no as free as play conducting by children according to children interest.

If you grew up in farming environmental setting, you might experience working as farmer. Your grandma/father or your parents made small mattock to dig ground to plant. Sometimes our parents gaves space to be complete in a certain time but we never felt that is a kind of duty/task to perform that might us unhappy. This learning session given from parents or grandpa/ma done in play-based though it is not set up by us not setting up by children. Sometimes the task given by chance caused of children trouble to them while they are seriously in finishing their work. I don't know whether that kind of experience for the children still exist in the rice field!

The Minangkabau aphorism tells us that, We try to learn from a model while we are as child, we do imitation as we first know the nearest environment, we can't/hard to change our behavior when we have grown up, and at last at the end of our lives what has been learned becomes our nature/disposition, "*Ketek taraja-raja, gadang tabao-bao, lah gadang tarubah tidak, kamati jadi parangai*".

Docket (2002:121-122) said that Early childhood educators need critically examine their own values and understanding regarding play. Educator need to think about how these views may be different to the experiences of the children in the program. In observations of children at play, the early childhood may note cultural differences. If differences are not attributed to cultural experiences and values, then the danger is that children may be seen as deficient, rather than having had different experiences. The facts about play above of how children activities impact to the whole live of people. It can be conclude that parents should aware how play done by their children will loose their body exercises wich is beneficial in lernaning. So, controlling or decreasing children access to laptop, hand phone and computer and replace it with traditional play to respect heritage as a fundamental for growing up children from generation to generation.

c. Early Childhood Education Environment

What do we really known as environmnet in early Childhood Education? As we know there are two kinds of environment. First, general environment is reatively fixed and constant. It is made up of physical equipment and materials, together with their spatial arrangements and location. The second, the developmental environment exist in general environment and is an environment in action. The developmental environment, however, is dynamic and constantly changing which is highly subjective. The subjective values of environment made various meaning and uses for adult and for children. The differentiation meaning of the environment come to difference perspectives among the adult and the children. Once in a while it become a source of the problem in educating children.

The important of environment cites by Edward and Cutter-Mackenzie (2011:52) for many year teacher, parents, researchers and policy maker have asked pertinent question about the influence of early chidlhood environmental education experience on children disposition knowledge, behavior later in life. Plamer and colleage (1993, 1999) and chawla and Cushing (2007) have both independently reasearh this reasearh with adult environmental educators, and have shown a convincing relationship between childhood experience in nature an the formation of pro-enviroment believe and lifestyle later in life.

Since our difference understanding about environment, opportunities to explore the word of environment. To paraphrase Harrison (2003:112) The Early Years Learning Fundamental is underpined by three themes: belonging, being and becoming. Belonging is seen as a central to being and becoming in that it shapes who children are what they can become. The notion of belonging recognises the need for children to feel connected to, and to have close relationship with, their family and the wider community including their early education and care settings and school. Being recognize the significance of the here and now in chlidren's lives. It is about the present and then knowing themselves, building and maintaining relationship with others. Becoming, is children identities, knowledge, understanding, capacities, skills and relationship changed during childhood.

Arce (2000:42) in early childhood education we used environment to describe the surroundings, the conditions and the location of places where care

and education take place. The reference to the word environment also describes the buildings and play spaces. The implication is that the environment influences growth and development of the children. Then Essa (2003:178) states as Kounin & Serman, when children are in a particular behavior setting they behave in a manner appropriate to that locale, following what might be viewed as unspoken rules. Morrison (2008:332) environment plays a key role in children's ability to guide their behavior. Arrange the environment so that it support the purposes of the program and make appropriate behavior possible.

Bentzen and Frost (2003:07) divided into two primary environment: general environment and the developmental environment. Firstly, General environment is relatively fixed and constant. It is made up of physical equipment and materials, together with their spatial arrangements and locations. It contains the cues or stimuli to which the children and adult can respond. The general environment is the one that exist before anyone sets foot in the center or classroom and is an objective environment. Secondly, the developmental environment exist within general environment and is an environment in action. The developmental environment is dynamic and constantly changing. In an objective sense, wooden blocks are what they are; in subjective sense, they are whatever children want them to be. Developmental environment is highly subjective.

Based on the meaning of the subjective environment. The environment in the big house in Minangkabau is still relevant to talk about. There are two mothers in big house called the *Bundo kanduang* and the *Andeh*. A person who is responsible for educating people in the big house called the big mother or "*Bundo Kanduang*". The *Bundo Kanduang* is a person who is a model who is knowledgeable and to a person who questioned be asked. She is the model for every person in the big house which is knowledgeable on how to run the lives based on the values of the Minangkabau culture. Furthermore her duty is to cultivate a sense of respect, careness, empathy, deliberation, humble. The *Andeh* or mother or mom gives duties for girls to do the house works such as do dishes, cooking, tailoring, to set table, and to introduce the heritages to their children.

Father has basic task in financing for daily life, school fee and school needs. Father to let his children know the relation out of tribes, the way to make friends, to respect older and to treat the youngest. The Minangkabau people known as the four words, they are ascending words, descending words, level words, and slopping words. And of course, the role of the uncle exist among the duty of the father. In the aphorism says that the children is son/daughter of the father while in early years, and whenever son/daughter get older they become niece or nephew of his/her uncle "*Katiko ketek anak bapak lah gadang kamanakan mamak*". The value of Minangkabau people also changes through interaction among different culture in Indonesia. Knowledge of children needs and abilities and how they changed over time is one basis of child appropriate practice. When properly applied, Essa (2003:112) the concept of childhood and the treatment of children through history have always been tied to economic, religious, and social factors.

Morrison (2008, p.349) believe parent/family involvement is a process of helping parents and family members use their abilities to benefit themselves,

their children, and the early childhood program. Families and children, and the program are all part of the process; consequently, all three parties should benefit from a well plan program of involvement. Nonetheles, the focus in parent/family-child/interaction is the family, and you must work with and through families if you want to be successful.

But beyond the overall need for responsible knowlegable adult to provide care for children. Some of these needs concern helping the parents, as individuals, meet the demands of their multiple roles. Gestwicki (2007:08) NAEYC recognize that all high –quality early childhood programs will share common characteristics: provision of a “safe and nurturing environment that promptes the physical, social, emotional, aesthetic, intellectual, and language development for each child while being sensitive to the needs and preference families”. So informal education are to minimize the impact of school system which are focus on reading, writing and counting.

4. Conclusion and Suggestion

- a. Introducing moving not only important to excercise child’s body but parents also known that children learn through moving, so parents’ image about wellbeing doesn’t necessarily mean decrease child’s moving.
- b. Popularizing hands-on experience for children in the family setting where they use their hands, arms, legs, feet and bodies rather than just listening and observing. So parents have to let them know the important of whole child.
- c. Decreasing children access to laptop, hand phone and computer and replace it with traditional play to respect heritage from generation to generation.
- d. All of these arise parents’ need for environment to the children. Its conclude that if our environment sets according to the need for children to move, hands-on experience and to play traditional play, it will impact to community alert the important of good environment for children. Indirectly ECE could influence community aware of environment.

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