Thematic-Integrative Learning with the Beyond Centers and Circle Time Approach at Tunas Harapan Preschool, Salatiga, Central Java

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Abstract

This study is aimed at uncovering the development of children's attitudes at Tunas Harapan preschool in Salatiga, Central Java, through thematic-integrative learning with the Beyond Centers and Circle Time (BCCT) approach which was shown to be effective learning model for improving children's physical, emotional, and academic performances. Involving teachers and parents, the model stimulates the rise of creativity and accommodates individual differences so that all children can experience learning as a knowledge foundation. The study solicited nine children of Berlian grade 1, two teachers, the principal, five parents, and a staff member. Data collection included interviews, observations, and documents. The findings reveal the model emphasizes playing and mutual interactions between the children and the preschool environment. The teacher simultaneously connected the topics with the surroundings drawing out the curiosity of the children to help them gain knowledge. The topics were selected through a variety of games based on their interests so that they would eagerly play to build positive attitudes.

Keywords: thematic-integrative learning, Beyond Centers and Circle Time (BCCT) approach, attitude, preschool

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Introduction

A child is naturally not only born with intelligence, but also is equipped with creativity. The latter is developed through training and education while the former is inherited partly from a genetic cause. Both potentially provide resources for the child to survive in every stage of his or her life course. Therefore, intelligence and creativity build life skills that can be used for survival. However, these in themselves are not enough as science and technology could add to developing children's creativity. Advances in these areas have helped inventions and because the availability of natural resources has dwindled, new innovations are needed to preserve them and find alternatives. The presence of innovative persons then could solve problems because of their ability to make breakthroughs in managing the resources wisely. Individuals cannot develop creativity without additional training or education. Hence, creative individuals emerge often through a long process of learning. Therefore, education has the basic task of producing creative persons to meet their highest life goals. Creativity is the power to invent something original and new. It is more than simply daydreaming or thinking about things (Seefeldt & Barbour, 1998). The early childhood education (ECE) is, therefore, a critical step towards bright ends and is the basic foundation of enriching the independence of children for their life.

Every creature on the earth undergoes a unique experience towards maturity. Humans are not exceptional: children like to touch, kiss, or lick new objects as they try to build knowledge through experience (Fisher, 1991; Trawick-Smith, 2009) or they are "interested in everything they see, want to examine it, handle it, test it, take it apart if they can" (Holt, 2017, p. 27). However, parents and teachers often do not understand what is behind these actions. They may think that the experience of the object is simply for pleasure not as a tool to acquire knowledge. Even some hate these actions and get upset when seeing their children putting strange objects in their mouths, for example, and subsequently take them away. The ignorance of what the children do can unwittingly inhibit their curiosity and character growth because curiosity is the heart of learning (Levine, 2012). Curiosity of children towards their surroundings is natural and failure in nurturing it will impede their development. Thematic-integrative learning's BCCT model, thus, emphasizes "learning-by-doing" in which the teacher designs a lesson plan that provides direct, intellectual, or social stimulation (Fisher, 1991; Trawick-Smith, 2009).

Conceptual Framework

Early childhood education (ECE) focuses on nurturing the child's physical, emotional, and moral growth to acquire the best virtues of human life and this all will build social skill which is a product of social interactions (Bossard, 1948; Tough, 2012, 2016). Children of three to six years old will experience rapid advance of the nervous system in order to perform tasks if their behavior can be modified in a positive situation (Tough, 2016). Children of such ages have the highest interest of learning which falls into three categories: the first is concrete implying that an essence of learning is to see, hear, smell, touch, and think of an object via the use of real and factual environment; the second is integration which is the way children should study the whole object to get a comprehensive understanding; and the third is hierarchical, which is the way children learn the object on a scale from simplicity to complexity (Seefeldt & Barbour, 1998). Children can build their own learning style in relation to the object while their teacher serves as a mentor guiding them to achieve academic independence (Mutmainah, 2014). It is, therefore, believed that life in the early years has the fastest advances for children, so the teacher needs an effective and joyful strategy in treating his or her children (Fisher, 1991). The word "learning" means to remind oneself of the meaning of life through imitating, understanding, observing, feeling, studying, and believing in everything that becomes a challenge as the thing facilitates him or her to achieve the desired goals. The process of learning basically involves the challenging effort in shaping personality (Green, 1971; Hilgard, 1977; Noddings, 2006).

As a game based-learning model, BCCT has two main characteristics – activities and experiences – which facilitate a meaningful learning that helps develop children's critical thinking in dealing with social affairs such as cooperation, tolerance, communication, and assertiveness to different ideas (Al-Tabany, 2015). In the model, topics are used to facilitate the children to understand and increase their motivation for a play. While providing a meaningful discussion of the topic, the teacher needs to establish the main theme as a strategy for strengthening children's characters. In this context, the thematic-integrative learning aims at developing skills of finding, processing and utilizing information, and fostering and cultivating creative attitudes such as having the power of inventiveness and being active in doing tasks or being initiative to overcome issues (Al-Tabany, 2015). Hence,

the thematic-integrative learning model guides children to achieve a higher level of thinking which will allow them to understand ways in addressing the issues they encounter.

Meanwhile, creative attitudes during early childhood are shown in children's habits, ideas, activities, and interests of overcoming problems, facing challenges, or willing to undergo a new experience even feeling unsatisfied when repeating the same thing (Seefeldt & Barbour, 1998). A creative attitude stems from creative thinking and through training and education, the children have the opportunity to develop their creativity, an action referring to mental processes that lead to solutions, ideas, conceptualization, and products which are unique and novel (Reber & Reber, 2001). The development of creative attitude during ECE can be sought by playing to help grow physical and psychological states of children to be ready for an independent life. In this regard, ECE requires participation in the environment to optimize growth.

Accordingly, the children's hidden creativity should be stimulated to grow and continuously creative activities should be encouraged to become a habit. This requires teachers and parents to become role models so that they grow into creative persons because they learn from and imitate what was seen and observed (Horton, 1998). Through observing, for example, preschool children will store the captured images in their memory, so it is very effective to be done in the early childhood period because, at this time, their larger brain grows, which consists of billions of neurons (Trawick-Smith, 2009).

The research focuses on Tunas Harapan, a private preschool in Salatiga, Central Java, with its unique characteristics. It is one of the leading preschools in the district. The preschool has become model because it uses methods of beyond circle and time as part of its teaching and learning. In this, time has been allocated to the children to play at the location designed through BCCT. The research observed that the place is used to build the students' character to become more creative so that they will live smart of all growing aspects. The type of such preschool education is rare in Indonesia although it has been existed in some larger cities of Indonesia. Salatiga, a small city, has a friendly educational environment. Tunas Harapan preschool differs from many public preschools which lack infrastructure that supports children's development. Tunas Harapan preschool, therefore, has rooms uniquely designed with play equipment to encourage creativity.

The thematic-integrative is a holistic learning system combining many aspects in the

learning process and integrating various disciplines centered on a matter, topic, or project theoretically or practically. Furthermore, the system connects the school and surroundings in which this integrated learning occurs when authentic exploration of a topic is the driving force in the curricula. By participating in events or topic exploration, children learn the process and the related contents more than curricula area at the same time. In addition, the thematic-integrative learning is an effort that uses themes to bring together children's myriad growing potentials so that they will achieve new valuable experience (Phillips, Burwood, & Dunford, 1999).

Review of Previous Studies

A number of writers have researched and written about the major needs that dominate and influence children's attitude, and there were studies regarding this topic, and all shared the belief that for children to have their basic needs met and, thereby, function effectively in the school environment, they needed to experience positive relationships with others such as belonging, significance, collaboration, and love (Glasser, 1990). Bossard (1948) has pointed out that attitude is the result of adjustment of a child to peers and the environment. Grinder (1973) further contended that attitude is shaped as a realization of human socialization and "it is a process whereby individuals acquire the personal system properties – the knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 4). It showed herein that attitude development will not occur in a vacuum, but it needs socialization; it influences or is influenced by circumstances (Mutmainah, 2014).

There was little research on this topic in Indonesian preschools (Mutmainah, 2014; Oktaria, 2014; Rahman, 2013; Samad & Al-Hadad, 2016) and these authors studied ECE contending that it potentially boosted intelligence, shaped attitude, and developed basic skills including establishing child independence. Their studies used the BCCT approach in the learning process in which it most often employed playing. In particular, Rahman (2013)'s study was to examine the development of multiple intelligences while Samad and Al-Hadad (2016) investigated the learning approach which was used to deepen preschoolers' understanding on the material topic they learned. Mutmainah (2014)'s study focused on how the BCCT approach was used to teach the children to have had self-independence in learning. She summarized the results that this approach significantly influenced children's

positive attitude. Furthermore, Samad and Al-Hadad (2016)'s investigation showed that the approach ran effectively because the learning was equipped with adequate infrastructure, the availability of scaffoldings, and the everyday evaluation. Similarly, Lestari (2012)'s and Oktaria (2014)'s studies aimed at acknowledging the effectiveness of the approach at preschools in Yogyakarta and Jakarta, focusing on how effective this approach was employed to evaluate the achievement of the children. Their findings showed that the approach was effective because of adequate infrastructure not only teachers but also physical support such as sufficient facilities (i.e., natural materials, micro and macro drama rooms, and beam centers or creative arts facilities). Lestari (2012), however, reported that a lack of facilities might become an obstacle for the approach itself.

Imron (2012)'s study was conducted due to a concern that learning for preschoolers was a critical basis of building life competences; no matter what subject was taught as the teacher possessed an important position to modify attitude to become strong. This study did not recommend memorization, but stressed on children's learning to be self-confident and self-independent. The focus was on the teacher to build self-esteem in the children in order to have independent learning through any subject used as foundation of building strong character. Meanwhile, Jamilah (2015), describing the development of early childhood creativity through music in a prekindergarten, reported on development of creativity through intra-music. She stated that a creative character could also be taught through reciting poems, singing, or dancing, aimed at developing creativity.

Sardilah (2015) stated that early age is a child-sensitive period. At this time, the child begins to sensitively accept the various development efforts of his or her potential. Therefore, such age is time to stimulate sensitivity with adult guidance in accordance with their needs for development. Given the fact, the formulation of a guideline of ethics and aesthetic values developed in ECE program will be formulated in a learning curriculum since ECE is the basis for laying the foundation of creative thinking, "mental processes that lead to ideas and solutions" (Reber & Reber, 2001, p. 165). Creativity is the process of "creating" something new that previously did not exist (Levine, 2012; Seefeldt & Barbour, 1998). The dominance of initiatives, hard work, and environmental determination indicates that creativity occurs naturally. The basic concept of ECE emphasizing "playing while learning" establishes an important role in the development of creative attitude because the

play has an explorative nature and then game activities play an important learning area that is a creative attitude.

Given the explanation, our research to some extent had the similarity of focus with some previous research such as an examination of the effectiveness and what roles adults might play in guiding children to have had learning experience with the aforementioned approach. Another similarity was that several studies mentioned also applied in them BCCT, but our research did not mean to test validity of those studies as our research had been expedited in its specific time frame and unique location in Salatiga, Central Java. Much of the previous research was not conducted in the district or nearby and, therefore, our study was not the comparison with the previous studies, yet replicated them. As our reseach was conducted, we found differences loomed as the children were mostly from middle class families, lived in inner heart of Java Island, and played in some of their school time outdoor. Meanwhile, some of the studies reviewed above was conducted in islands outside Java. Therefore, our participants' social and cultural backgrounds might be different. Because of the difference, however, there were some focuses our research would lean to study and it considered as gaps to fill up. Thus, our research focused on gathering data which were guided by the following questions:

1. How was the thematic-integrative learning based-BCCT conducted and what roles did the teacher and parents play?
2. What were advantages and limitations during the application of the model?

Methodology

Using the qualitative method, the research focused on data collection, expression of words, and pictures. Words such as results of interviews were arranged in sentences (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The study was targeting the entire population of Berlian grade I ages between three and five years old. They came from different backgrounds regarding ethnicity, language, and familial statuses. To better understand the process of the BCCT approach, we gathered data through semi-structured questions by using face-to-face interviews to solicit respondents' views, experience, and knowledge. Adding to this method, we used observations in order to build solid comprehension about the topic of the study.

Then the final method was that taking photograph and studying documents relative to the topic. Then conclusions were drawn from the results extracted from observations written in field notes, verbatim transcribed from interviews, and the study of documents. We analysed and categorized data according to themes and synthesized data through our descriptions, interpretations, and conclusions. Analyses were required, but only those were based on findings and relevant to the discussion and the research questions (Charles & Mertler, 2002; Mason, 1996). A purposive sampling was applied in which we solicited the class consisting of nine children in the Berlian grade 1, two classroom teachers, the principal, an administrative staff, and five parents. We intended to choose relatively a small sample because our research aimed at seeking the deepest understanding of the process of learning with the BCCT in a preschool and to look at whether this approach effectively facilitated the children.

Data collection focused on children's activities, but we also gained opinions of the teachers, parents, the principal, and the staff. We did not interview children participants directly, but we did with their teachers and parents because of the ethical consideration. The steps of data analyses were reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawings. To test the validity of the data, the study used triangulation techniques of sources namely by comparing one source of data to the other with the purpose of understanding the complexity of the phenomenon as it is differently situated and interpreted across different sources and contexts (Mason, 1996). The study was conducted from January through April 2017.

In this thematic-integrative learning, the teacher played the role as charming and caring person and that the learning itself became meaningful for the children. The teacher herself was creative that the children learned directly through their new experiences by relating them with past experiences. In the classes that were became the object of the research, the thematic-integrative learning was to develop various skills but not limited to finding, managing, utilizing information, developing creativity, and being initiative and to find solution of problem the children faced.

The model of learning at this preschool was thematic-integrative using BCCT method where the area of learning was prepared to give more opportunities to the children to actively play in the activities. The teacher prepared kinds of spots with variety of toys and equipment. The preschool was the only model in Salatiga, Central Java, and was/is the

barometer of this kind of learning system. It educates children aged four to six. This research focused on nine children and was conducted over six months. Individual interviews generally followed observation.

Findings and Discussion

The research had been conducted with qualitative approaches as the primary method to achieve goals of the research whether or not the objectives of integrative learning procedures had been reached and whether the the student-centered model was used together with BCCT. Normal learning application was usually held indoor as classrooms were in general and the learning processes which were placed outdoors served mainly to modify attitudes of the children so that they would grow towards a positive direction. As we are describing results of the research later in this section, it is implied that outdoor learning was mostly centered outside the classrooms in a location where equipment such as scaffoldings and toys or stationary were provided for the play. Series of observation and interview and review of relevant previous research were meant to add to our research focus at Tunas Harapan preschool on how the program of integrative learning was implemented to enrich positive values in the children.

Before starting the academic year, the school committee met to negotiate the objectives of the curriculum. Subsequently, the results of this meeting were put in the annual programs containing a collection of themes to be delivered throughout the year. These programs were divided into monthly, weekly, and daily plans and were translated into semester plans to be implemented by the teacher.

The main principle of thematic-integrative learning found in this study was a child-centered approach which allows the children to have had direct experience, showed familiarity with the various materials in the learning process, and possessed the learning outcomes. This principle was relevant to the philosophy of integrating what the children had learned into the environment. Hence, the form of learning was flexibly designed so that the children found the theme. Meanwhile, the BCCT approach was chosen in this context to fit the level of their age as children naturally like playing. Here most plays were held outdoor where the children and the teacher sat in a circle to make no distance and boundary

between them so that both felt more comfortable. The availability of toys attracted and increased children's motivation to learn. Given the importance of ECE in an effort to improve the character of the children, the ECE herein was to learn while playing; it took a lot of games such as building blocks, building towers of Legos, driving trucks through sand tables, or piecing together jigsaw puzzles that could support their needs.

The thematic-integrative learning's BCCT model was one of the learning approaches in which the teacher sat with the children in a circle so that they could share one another and had equal participation as member of the group. One of the activities performed was that they had to provide scaffoldings throughout the play. The center of the play was a zone filled with a set of scaffoldings needed to develop basic potentials of the children in various aspects. The position of circle was believed to strengthen closeness between the teacher and the children. And about this, the principal stated:

> With the BCCT approach, there was no distance between the teacher and the children. The children felt as if they had the same position as did the teacher; no one was lower or was higher. Also, the children would feel more familiar with the approach and were close to the teacher. It would be different if a child sat in a chair or on the floor while the teacher stood. This not only would create a distance between the children and the teacher, but also would cause the children to be shy and be awkward in interacting with the teacher.

In this type of learning, there were four scaffoldings provided by the teacher including environmental playing, early playing, while playing, and after playing. Earlier the teacher gave the children an explanation about the rules of the play and its procedure and the teacher motivated them to learn in group. In supporting the development of creative attitude, the children were placed in the center to stimulate the advance of imagination and fantasy. It was, therefore, important that the teacher understood the needs of children by practicing high-level thinking skills. About this, one teacher put it:

> Learning goals were stated about what this school needed; the children learned to be competitive in the existing time and future market place. If the school determined that innovation was a necessary competency, it must develop the goal of fostering out-of-the-box thinking. Therefore, the school had to develop a learning goal of understanding the concepts in a strategic way so that they were acknowledgeable…

The statement confirmed the importance of the school to be able to understand what the children would need for the future. Training the children to think in different ways was one of the aspects that could be used as a learning means to develop their creativity, in this case, through learning based-center and cirle time.

The outcome was that the children were considered to be creative by being able to demonstrate the following skills: *exploring* (experimenting, manipulating, playing around, asking questions, guessing, and discussing findings), *imagining* (playing roles, using language, and telling stories), *concentrating* on a single task in taking a while, *organizing* something to taste, *doing* something with the teacher, and *repeating* to know more. Creative attitudes arisen in these children as results of learning carried out in this preschool were summarized into the ability to remember, apply, and create.

The Ability to Remember, Apply, and Create

After entering the classroom in an orderly manner, the children sat in a circle and prepared for a play. Before playing, the teacher read out the procedure of the game so that the children could know the rules and these were always reminded to the children so that they were able to complete the activities. An explanation was delivered by the teacher earlier in the preparation center before the play started. She had to invite the children to have agreed upon the rules of the game. They had to choose the one they liked to perform in turn, to use the appropriate equipment, to carry out the main activities and finish them, and to play again.

Based on observation, the ability to remember was also visible at the time in the center of the beam. Before the play began, the teacher needed to invite the children to have agreed upon the ground rules in which they arranged the blocks of building on the available base, had the beam to taste, carried out the activities to completion, and cleaned up after finishing the play. At the footing before playing in every center, the teacher always needed to convey the rules of the game and had to make a deal with the children. Furthermore, the teacher informed the students about the function of books, the stationery, and the playground that could be used to carry out the activities that had been chosen by the children. They also could use these instruments properly. This meant that the children were able to remember the rules that had been agreed upon with the teacher on the ground before playing.

At the time of play, there were activities in every center and the children showed the ability to apply the rules that had been agreed upon. When using beams to make the building in one role play center, the children used tools properly. In addition, in centers focused on natural materials, creative arts, and so on, the children really showed they understood every tool to be used and could use these according to their function. After they finished, they cleaned up the toys and other tools and returned them to the original places.

After playing, every child performed an activity in which they were asked to recall what they had experienced during the play and to explain about what had been done, why had he or she made what he or she had, and how he or she felt after making it. When asked about the result of his group's work, a four-year-old child, Zimam, said, "why do people make a house equipped with close-circuit television for surveillance (CCTV)?" He answered his own question; "if there are thieves, they will be caught". This showed that the child understood one of the benefits of the CCTV and to know this, he should have a basic concept of what the CCTV and its functions are.

Also, an observation on the ability to apply showed that the children in each center liked the activity in the block center. The children in group discussed what they had made. Jingga and her friends saw that a tower they had built did not fit with its position. Therefore, Jingga shifted the tower so that it turned to the appropriate direction as expected. Additionally, in another group, Orange and his friends could build forts from which they could observe various directions from their respective positions.

During the activities, the children were eager and optimistic to create buildings that they had agreed upon. In the centers for natural materials and artificial creative arts, some of them showed their creativity. When the teacher asked them to draw trees, they were able to draw the trees well and colored them with crayons. Lilly, for example, colored the trees with dark green on the one side and light green on the other to show the direction of the sunlight. Furthermore, Josh drew trees with a variety of colors; he drew many objects such as grass, clouds, and the sun to complete the picture.

Given the explanation, it was clear that putting activities in place could enhance children's creativity. This could be done in many ways such as giving time of pouring ideas and concepts and letting them try in a new form. The children actually needed time and solitary opportunities to develop their imagination. Regardless of how well their learning

outcomes met adult standards, they needed encouragement to be creative while divergent thinking activities have generative, explorative, unpredictable, and multi-answer characteristics. However, the process of creativity also involves convergent thinking skills. Therefore, the process of lateralization in the children occurred and then the stimulation in the right hemisphere became essential (Phenix, 1968). This was similar to the theory of "process" stating that the children transformed experience into knowledge, which was exactly the same as the process of scientific knowledge scientists established (Hurlock, 1978; Smith, 1968).

Means of play and other means need to be provided by the teacher to stimulate experimental and exploratory impulses essential to develop creativity of the children. Similarly, a story was important to be read to the children simply because the teacher wanted to develop their creativity. A further example was that by listening to the story, the children's imagination could be honed because the story itself could increase curiosity of the children, enrich their vocabulary items, and improve the level of attention.

From the findings, we concluded that there were many stimuli that could be created to improve the creativity of children such as providing time, giving opportunity to solitude, and encouraging their motivation and many more activities that teachers and parents could do to develop creative attitudes which require an interaction between psychological states and physical ones as a result of convergent thinking and intelligence. This was because humans have mental elements as when confronted with situations that guide their actions. In this situation, individuals will combine various mental elements until a configuration arises. This configuration can be ideas, models, actions, word compositions, melodies, and shapes (Holt, 2017).

External factors can also be a driver in the development of creative attitudes due to the existence, psychological security, and psychological freedom. The teachers and parents symbolically gave the freedom to children to express their thoughts or feelings although they were limited by the rules. And related to this, a teacher asserted:

> The children really needed the freedom to express their ideas. They also needed a sense of security from the teachers, parents, and the environment. When a child laughed at his friend's work, the teacher needed to advise the child to learn to respect the work of others because by laughing at his friend, it could make his friend embarrassed even afraid to convey or make something.

In addition, one of the impetuses in the development of children's creativity was the peer according to the statement of apparent named Bunga Ayu:

> For the development of creativity, it happened that my two children attended this kindergarten. One was in group A while the other was in group B; they could be said peers, so maybe they were more excited about learning and creating forms of blocks. Comparing their work, they created their own competition to be the best. They also liked to exchange stories of activities that had been done in the school; even they boasted their mother and teacher respectively.

Given the accounts, children could learn many things such as how to convey ideas and behave appropriately. Therefore, the children needed to get chances to play with peers because, by this way, they learned how to play with others. Creativity could not be forced, but was possible to grow. Superior seedling requires a condition that fosters and allows the seed to develop its own potential. According to humanism, every human being has the potential to grow and develop because of the influence of the environment in which he or she lives. In this study, when the activities carried out in the center of natural materials and the creative arts and when the children were asked to draw trees, children like Josh, Jessica, Kyla, Nesha, Kenzie, and others not only drew trees, but also decorated them with butterflies, grass, the sun, and houses. This showed that children's creativity arose from the influence of a comfortable environment, assertive friends, and creative teachers.

Roles of Teachers and Parents

The teacher had the opportunity to interact directly with the children. Therefore, the teacher was familiar enough with applying the model that was designed in a meaningful way. The teacher provided the opportunity for the children to play and in implementing the thematic-integrative learning model, the teacher had to prepare semester, monthly-weekly-daily plannings, and assessments. The teacher was often able to manage three to five activities for each child in a day. Then the teacher planned the intensity and density of the play. Intensity means the teacher needed to arrange multiple play times according to the number of children. Density means the various types of plays that the children attended to gain experience. The types of play that were prepared tailored to the theme of learning. In addition, the teacher organized play opportunities that supported social relationships such

as working and playing together and waiting for one's turn. The teacher further monitored the master who organized the game by providing the space, arranged the number of children in each game, and motivated them to interact. In planning the games, the teacher established the standard operating procedures and developed materials and contents.

In the process, the teacher was concerned about the selected themes which were conducted by taking into account that each child acquired skills related to his or her basic development. The chosen theme was implemented in each center and the selected theme had an adequate learning resource. It was also chosen based on an agreement between the teacher and the children. The criteria of thematic-integrative learning based-BCCT were stated by a teacher:

> Everything the children learned was meaningful. They learned from their living environment and the teacher connected all themes in each center and emphasized skills that helped them gain knowledge through playing while learning. There had to be sources of information or books that supported topics in theme selection. There was a creative teacher in presenting the materials so that children did not get bored. The teacher was simply setting footing so that children were joyful in finding their own knowledge, skills, and attitude.

Given such an account, the children were able to conduct their own experience. The teacher herein guided the children by preparing the right ingredients. Most importantly was that the children could understand their need themselves and they needed to find it themselves (Fidesrinur, Mustofa, Diastuti, Supriyatna, & Lestari, 2015). Moreover, there was a contribution of the teacher such as giving footing as to facilitate the children to be able to enhance their own knowledge in accordance with their desires. Through knowledge-self-discovering, the children stored it in the memory. In implementation of such learning model, the teacher allowed children to choose the desired activity. After completing it, the children could continue other activities. As long as the children were sitting, the teacher played activities around by providing an individual guidance and motivating the needy children. In addition, the teacher conducted an assessment which was not only about the outcomes, but rather focused on the process that the children went through in each activity.

The assessment was done every day while the assessment tool was the evaluation of the children's performance and work papers. The assessment conducted by the teacher was aimed at determining the extent to which the development of abilities was achieved by

children during the learning process. With this, a creative teacher could design activities that would lift the children's ability to a higher level. In relation to this, monitoring and evaluation framework were designed for a transformative change as sustainability programs towards elementary level. It was clear that monitoring, evaluation, and assessment were aimed at knowing transformation of the program, developing an effective method, and forecasting the students' potential for success. With this means, the teacher would know whether development of attitude of the children was happening or not (Ridho, Markhamah, & Darsinah, 2016).

Meanwhile, five anonymous parent respondents stated that the learning held in this preschool had been done well and satisfactorily. This could be seen from the significant development in children's attitude. The parent respondents pointed so because they always accompanied their children's learning at home. To continue monitoring the development of children, the parents always consulted about their children's performances with the teacher. Therefore, any concerns that happened to the children could be addressed. Accordingly, the teacher stated:

> When the children were playing, I went around observing and documenting the children's play activities through photographing that would be reported to parents especially if the activities did not produce anything of real objects or could not last long. The photographs could be sent via the group's apps… It was aimed at enabling parents to know what activities children were doing and the progress their children achieved in the school.

Similarly, one parent also asserted that in each classroom, the teacher created the group's apps, effective communication media, between the teachers and the parents so that any problems that occurred to the children could be properly handled. Furthermore, Ms. Bunga Ayu pointed out that she always consulted her children's problems with the teacher. She stated:

> … since my child's early presence here, she was in difficulty to know kinds of colors. Then slowly my child could recognize some colors. After I checked her at home and I asked her about the colors, alhamdulillah (praise might be upon him), she stated that she recognized many colors. This was because I motivated her to recognize kinds of colors: for example, yellow, red, and blue. I trained her eyes and recognition to compare these colors by showing her real materials.

Meanwhile, Ms. Bunga Ayu also felt the development in her son as she stated:

Every day at the beginning of the school year, I saw my son depressed, moody, rarely spoke up, and lacked of confidence. I continued consulting his problems with his teacher and it turned out to be that my son was often mocked and bullied by his friends. His ugly timid bag and other things made him uncomfortable and insecure. There happened to be some children in his class who had a negative behavior. Eventually after I consulted his problem with the teacher and the guardian of his class, my son gradually looked more cheerful; now even looked more confident and eager to learn.

Given the explanations, it was clear that there was a relationship between the teacher's duty and the demands of the parents. This should become key for the success of the children as cooperation was an important element to strengthen the school system. Therefore, the school, teachers, parents, and community should help each other to create a school-based support for all (Kindred, Bagin, & Gallagher, 1976).

Advantages and Limitations

Teachers at the school had sufficient experience in early childhood teaching. This could be seen from their work experience with their average experience mostly over five years. The teachers' credentials had enabled them to work with this method as many of them attended in-service trainings and workshops so they had adequate skills in implementing this learning method (Lestari, 2012). The existence of teacher training, school readiness, and good cooperation between teachers, the principal, parents, the committee, and administrators could solve their existing problems properly. The teachers in this preschool always followed their task force activities held every month to further help them enhance their experience and self-competence. Additionally, they could also share experiences in dealing with their current problems related to their profession. The school facilitated infrastructure that supported learning including the availability of manuals and books as learning materials and the availability of a computers lab. Internet network could also be utilized in searching for more varied online resources. The access to information for both teachers and children could be seen from the availability of the wi-fi in the school. The

computer networking system at this school had helped the teachers and parents to easily communicate one another and to monitor and report the development of the children.

Meanwhile, limitations of the research showed this method required much teaching preparation so that children would achieve their highest expectation for their future. To do this, the teacher had to discuss the lesson more with the children so that the lesson that would also base for the children's interest could be realized and so that this could build courage of the children in expressing their opinion.

In the case of assessment, it was quite complicated due to the many aspects that must be evaluated. The assessment was very important for teachers and parents to know the level of development achieved by their children. Hence, the teacher must be thorough and objective in carrying out the assessment. The results of the assessment were then needed to be poured into the scoring sheets, for example, using the symbols of 1-4 in which 1 for "not yet emerged", 2 for "began to emerge", 3 for "evolved as expected", and 4 "for developed well".

Lack of learning facilities required the teachers to be more creative. Procurement of support could be done by asking help from the administrative staff or could be made from disposal materials that were supplied by parents. This was intended to meet the needs of children to create a meaningful and joyful learning. These limitations were considered a challenge in realizing qualified ECE. To overcome these, the teachers should always exchange ideas, experiences, and cooperation with other teachers of the same association who had the same experience so that the problems could be addressed.

Conclusion

The BCCT approach from thematic-integrative learning was employed in this innovative preschool emphasizing play as the teacher and the children played in a circle. During the activities, the teacher was concerned about the themes which were selected based on agreement of the class. The teacher linked all the themes in each activity applied in different centers and she emphasized the skills to help the children discover knowledge. Through these activities, she presented various materials so that children were enjoyable.

She prepared a footing so that the children could play joyfully to explore knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes themselves.

The teacher's creativity played an important role in managing and creating teaching materials. Utilizing natural materials, the teacher brought positive and more memorable events for children. Even these could save money so that it could be used for their development.

The impact of this thematic integrative learning on developing creative attitudes for ECE at the preschool was seen to be advanced from the creativities that were shown by the children in each center. The teachers and parents also played important roles to create a comfortable and safe learning environment. They sought to understand the character of children and know their wishes.

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