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The Roles of Educators in Stimulating the Development of Early Childhood

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ABSTRACT

This research is aimed to describe the roles of institutions and educators in stimulating the early children's development. This descriptive research implemented purposive sampling technique. The data were collected by using questionnaire and analyzed by employing descriptive statistic technique. The results showed that the roles of institutions and educators in stimulating the development of early children were in good category.

Keywords: *role of institution; early childhood education*

1. INTRODUCTION

The problem of economic development can be Early childhood education tends to focus on physical development (fine and gross motor coordination), cognitive development (thinking skill, creativity skill, emotional quotient, and spiritual quotient), socio-emotional development (attitude, behavior, and religiosity), as well as language and communication skills, based on their uniqueness and developmental stages. Law number 20 of 2003 on national education system stated that early childhood education is basically an education conducted to facilitate the children's development comprehensively or to focus on building children's characters. Therefore, institutions of early childhood education allow the children to fully develop their characters and potentials. Developmental stage of early children is unique since at its period of time, they are in their golden age. Golden age is a period in which the children experience fast growth of intelligence, so it is a perfect chance for the educators to provide them with strong stimulation. In the field of neurology, it is known in this period that children reach 50% of their total brain development in their lifetime. It means that the golden age is the best time to really explore and stimulate their potentials and intelligence. It is widely accepted that early children are to be defined as children at the age of 0-8 years. However, the widely used definition of early children in Indonesia is children at the age of 0-6 years [1]. Early children need a variety of physical and psychological services and helps

from adults. The services are meant to facilitate their optimal growth and development as a human being conforming to norms and society's expectation.

Educational institution for early children is an institution providing educational care and development for 0–6-year-old children which is administered by private party or government. Therefore, educational institutions for early children need to accommodate various activities to improve the children's skills based on their developmental stages, such as cognitive, social, emotion, physical, and motor skill. A number of functions of early childhood education are 1) to develop whole abilities of the children according to their developmental stages, 2) to introduce them with their surroundings, 3) to develop their communication skills, 4) to make them understand the rules and be discipline, 5) to make them enjoy their childhood period, 6) to facilitate cultural stimulation for them, and 7) to provide expressions of cultural stimulations [2]. The knowledge of children development principles is important to gain the complete description of children's habit in general in a certain stage. This knowledge is also useful in order to ease the process of providing guidance and stimulation so that they can achieve their optimal abilities as well as allowing teachers to prepare them in facing future expectations [3].

The significant benefit of early childhood education based on psychology is to develop their aspects of intelligence. The intelligence is beneficial for them if they can make use of it in their daily life, manifested in their life

skills. There are three key categories regarding to life skills, which are social and interpersonal skill, cognitive skill, and mimicking emotion skill [4].

Early childhood development needs to be stimulated since preschool period since it is the moment in which they have the capability to experience rapid development, especially in the aspect of language development. Language includes every word related to comprehension, consideration, information management, problem solving, deliberation, and belief. Most psychologists, especially cognitivists believe that humans' cognitive development is started since the moment they were born [5].

In regard to the topic of human development, it is important to mention three constantly changing aspects: physical, cognitive, and psychosocial aspects [6]. Physical aspect is the most profound aspect since it is materialized. The rapid change in this aspect happens since the conception period until the human was born. It is continued with the physical growth during babies, children, adolescents, and adult period. Physical development process is showed with the changes in the size of physical external organs (arms, legs, torso, etc.) which grow bigger, longer, wider, or higher. Meanwhile, the changes of internal organ are showed by the maturity of nervous system and complexity of cellular tissue, so they can improve the capability of the hormones and glands as well as motor skill. In this respect, there are some factors contributing to the physical changes, such as health, illnesses, and nutrient. This physical change becomes a foundation and a principle since it affects the other aspects of development, cognitive and psychosocial aspects.

Cognitive development is related with the increase of thinking skill, problem solving skill. decision making skill, intelligence, and aptitude. Developmental psychologists widen and underline the statement by elaborating that the developmental aspects include cognitive, moral, religion, and language aspects [6].

Optimization of cognitive development is highly affected by physiological maturity, especially in babies and children. Children can make a coordination of hands, legs, or head movement consciously after their nerves and muscles are developed sufficiently. It means that the cognitive skill has to be supported by physiological maturity so that the cognitive skill is improved and become coordinative.

Human is a social creature (*homosocio-politicon*). Thus, humans cannot live without nobody else. Everyone needs help from the others. In the social life, human is expected to develop their adaptation skill, by interacting with the others and their surroundings. Interaction with the others may change one's perception, view, attitude, and behavior due to transfer of information concerning customs, habits, and cultures. After that, one may adapt with the expectation of their social environment. The success of

one's adaptation will likely to develop healthy development of personality. They will have good self-concept, self-esteem, confidence, and efficacy. On the contrary, inability to adapt will make someone experience alienated life, low self-esteem, feeling of pessimistic, apathy, anxiety, dread, or fear. This results in personality crisis [6].

Children developmental stages includes aspect of religious and moral value, physical and motor skill, cognitive skill, language, socio-emotional skill, and art [7]. Religious and moral value includes the ability to notice believed religious values, to worship, to be honest, to be helpful, to be polite, to be respectful, to hold sportsmanship, to keep the heart pure and environment clean, to know the religious holidays, and to be tolerant with the others' religious values.

Physical and motor skills include 1) fine motor skill which is related to the ability to create coordinated, flexible, agile, locomotor, non-locomotor, and rule govern body movements as well as 2) gross motor skill which is related to the ability to use fingers and tools to explore and express one's self in many forms, to maintain one's health and to conduct safety action, by considering one's weight, height, head size according to the age, healthy and clean lifestyle, and aware of their safety.

Cognitive skills include 1) learning and problem solving skills related to with simple and daily problem solving skill with flexible and socially acceptable ways and taking into account new information, knowledge, and experience into the thought, 2) logical thinking skills related to various classifications, patterns, initiatives, plans, causes, and effects, and 3) symbolic thinking skills related to the ability of noticing, stating, and using numeric concepts, understanding letters, and drawing things and imagination.

Language skills include 1) language receptive skills which are the ability to understand, enjoy, and appreciate stories, understand orders, and understand rules, 2) language expression skills which are the ability to ask, answer, do verbal communication, recite stories, learn pragmatic, express feelings, ideas, and wants in the form of writings, and 3) language letters skills which are the ability to understand relation between letters and their sound, imitate the form of letters, and understand words in stories.

Socio-emotional skills include 1) self-awareness skills consisting of showing abilities, understanding owns feelings and self-control, and practicing adaptability, 2) responsibility awareness skills consisting of understanding owns rights, following rules, practicing self-regulation, and practicing responsibility of owns action for the common good, and 3) pro-social skills consisting of playing with the peers, understanding feelings, responding, sharing, respecting others' rights and opinions, practicing cooperativeness, tolerance, and politeness.

Art skills include the ability to do exploration, express one’s self, create imagination through moves, music, theater, and other means of arts, as well as appreciate various artworks.

Teachers have a respectable position in a society. Teachers may be respected due to their authority, so the people do not have a doubt in them. People believe that teachers can educate children and develop the students’ characters accordingly to make them achieve high intellectuality, leadership attitude, and responsible traits. Simply put, teachers deliver knowledge to the students. People also think that teachers can teach in various places, not only in formal places, but also in non-formal places such as mosques, praying chambers, houses, etc.

With that kind of trust from the people, teachers have huge responsibilities put on their shoulders. The responsibilities are getting heavier across the wall of the classroom and reaching to the outside world. Teachers also give guidance not only based on the classical examination, but also from the assessment and observation toward the students on personal level regarding the attitude, behavior, and activities of the students whether inside the school or outside it. In the teaching and learning process, teachers have fundamental role to make the students obtain knowledge. The role is not to be bound only in delivering the material. Teachers can have many roles such as educators, instructors, resources of knowledge, facilitators, and guides [8].

3. METHOD

The subjects of this descriptive research were teachers of kindergarten school in Makassar. The subjects were selected through purposive sampling technique based on non-probability sampling method. The purposive sampling technique was conducted by initially identifying teachers with specific criteria in accordance with the purpose. The criteria were 1) having been serving for at least 3 years, 2) working as civil servant teacher/honorary teacher/non-civil servant permanent teacher, 3) living in Makassar, and 4) willing to fill need analysis instrument. The identification resulted in 150 teachers to be included as the subjects The data were collected through the use of questionnaire and analyzed with descriptive statistics analysis.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The instrument regarding the role of institutions/educators in stimulating the development of early children in the school consisted of 25 questions categorized into 6 indicators which were: 1) curriculum development, 2) service program, 3) lesson planning, 4) lesson management, 5) learning facilities and infrastructure, and 6) learning implementation and assessment.

The result of the questionnaire regarding the role of institutions/schools/educators in stimulating the

development of early children in school stated that 1) in regard to curriculum development, there were 32.50% of institutions/educators performing a very good role, 32.50% of them performing a good role, 26.88% of them performing a moderate role, and 8.13% of them performing a poor role, 2) concerning with service program, there were 25.00% of institutions/educators performing a very good role, 27.50% of them performing a good role, 35.00% of them performing a moderate role, and 12.50% of them performing a poor role, 3) as to lesson planning, there were 31.67% of institutions/educators performing a very good role, 34.17% of them performing a good role, 25.00% of them performing a moderate role, and 9.17% of them performing a poor role, 4) on the subject of lesson management, there were 22.50% of institutions/educators performing a very good role, 32.50% of them performing a good role, 32.50% of them performing a moderate role, and 12.50% of them performing a poor role, 5) relating to learning facilities and infrastructure, there were 27.50% of institutions/educators performing a very good role, 32.00% of them performing a good role, 25.00% of them performing a moderate role, and 15.50% of them performing a poor role, and 6) in respect to implementation and assessment of learning process, there were 28.33% of institutions/educators performing a very good role, 31.00% of them performing a good role, 25.42% of them performing a moderate role, and 17.08% of them performing a poor role. The percentages and ranges are visualized in Table 1.

Table 1. The Roles Of Institutions/Educators In Stimulating The Development Of Early Children

No.	Indicator	Role	
1	Curriculum Development	32.50%	Very Good
		32.50%	Good
		26.88%	Moderate
		8.13%	Poor
2	Service Program	25.00%	Very Good
		27.50%	Good
		35.00%	Moderate
		12.50%	Poor
3	Lesson Planning	31.67%	Very Good
		34.17%	Good
		25.00%	Moderate
		9.17%	Poor
4	Lesson Management	22.50%	Very Good
		32.50%	Good

		32.50%	Moderate
		12.50%	Poor
5	Learning Facilities and Infrastructure	27.50%	Very Good
		32.00%	Good
		25.00%	Moderate
		15.50%	Poor
6	Learning Implementation and Assessment	28.33%	Very Good
		29.17%	Good
		25.42%	Moderate
		17.08%	Poor
Average		28.00%	Very Good
		31.00%	Good
		28.00%	Moderate
		13.00%	Poor

Based on the table above, it can be seen that 28.00% of institutions/educators had a very good role, 31.00% of institutions/educators had a good role, 28.00% of institutions/educators had a moderate role, and 13.00% of institutions/educators had a poor role. It indicates that almost all of the institutions/educators have followed the minimal standard of learning program stated by Directorate General of Early Childhood, Non-Formal, and Informal Education.

The results showed that 35.00% of institutions/educators had a very good role; 32.00% of institutions/educators had a good role; 22.00% of institutions/educators had a moderate role; and 12.00% of institutions/educators had a poor role. It signifies that there are 34% of institutions/educators that still need to be improved to be able to stimulate the development of early children properly.

Educational Institution for early childhood is an institution providing educational care and development for 0-6year-old children which is organized by private party or government. Therefore, educational institutions for early children need to accommodate various activities to improve the children's skill based on their developmental stage, such as cognitive, social, emotion, physical, and motor skill.

Educators of early children are responsible for planning, executing, and assessing lessons as well as guiding children. Educators of early children's duties are more complex than those of the next educational levels. It is due to education of early childhood provide basic foundations for the next educational levels.

The foundations in early childhood education demand a solid structure in making the children to learn as well as in developing their potentials. Necessary concepts will be well understood as long as educators are able to create a fascinating program to stimulate the children through fun and engaging activities. Thus, the educators need to be capable of developing interesting and challenging activities, setting up joyful atmosphere, observing and taking notes of children's growth and development, and evaluating the conducted educational program.

Based on the findings above, the need to develop an intervention to stimulate the development of early children through play activities is certain. Such interventions can be effectively and efficiently conducted if the institutions/educators properly perform their duties, such as developing operational curriculum based on characteristics of the institutions or the children, creating and executing lesson plan, preparing the facilities and infrastructure to support the children's potentials improvement, and assessing all of the educational process. When those roles are performed properly, the children's potentials are expected to be improved in accordance with their developmental stages. Law number 20 of 2003 in article 39 and paragraph 2 stipulates that educators are professionals tasked with planning and implementing the teaching and learning process, assessing learning outcomes, conducting guidance and training, as well as conducting research and community service, especially for educators in higher education. The above explanation clearly stated that educators must be able to plan, implement, and assess the teaching and learning process as well as provide guidance and training for students.

Educators of early children have complex tasks regarding with their really young students. It means that their job is difficult since the children studied from what they see, hear, and feel. The role of teachers in teaching and learning process is vital, especially in developing the students' characters [9]. Teachers have to act as a source of knowledge, facilitator, manager, demonstrator, guide, motivator, and evaluator. If teachers are able to fulfill their duties and perform their role well, they will be able to led and guide the students easier. Teachers not only have to be capable of understanding the teaching and learning process, but they also have to be able to use the process as a mean to build the students' characters and personalities. Therefore, teachers need to choose appropriate learning method and media for the teaching and learning process. Some generally implemented methods are lectures, questions and answers, discussions, practices, assignments, stories, demonstrations, socio-dramas, etc. What is meant by educators is not only teachers, but also everyone involved in the process of education. However, to be called as educators, ones should be able to plan, implement, and assess the teaching and learning process as well as provide guidance and training for students. Referring to the responsibilities of educators, the

most suited to be called as educators are only teachers and parents.

5. CONCLUSION

There are six aspects in the roles of institution/educators in stimulating early children's development, which are 1) curriculum development, 2) service program, 3) lesson planning, 4) lesson management, 5) learning facilities and infrastructure, and 6) learning implementation and assessment.

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