

Observation Instrument to Evaluate Early Childhood Educator's Teaching Strategies using Creative Arts

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Abstract

This paper aims to develop an observation instrument items to evaluate early childhood educator's teaching strategies using creative arts to enhance children's holistic development. This instrument has three categories. The first is that the use of the creative arts technique in the teaching that encompasses drama, puppetry, music, dance and visual arts. Secondly, the suitability of the creative arts technique with the teaching objectives encompasses communication, creativity, problem solving, curiosity and exploration. Thirdly, the creative arts teaching technique and children's holistic development covering language, emotion, social, physical, cognitive, creativity, spirituality, attitude and values. Every item in every category has four Likert scale. It is hoped that every item of observation developed can be used to assess the execution of the creative arts technique in the teaching strategy to help the holistic development of the children.

Keywords: Observation Instrument, Creative Arts Technique, Teaching Strategy, Children's Holistic Development

Introduction

The teaching strategy which adopts creative arts techniques like drama, puppetry, music, dance and visual arts can help develop children's holistic development. Three categories of items of observation are developing. The first is that the use of the creative arts technique in the teaching; secondly, the suitability of the creative arts technique with the teaching objectives; thirdly, the creative arts teaching technique and children's holistic development. The items of observation developed are to identify the ways of implementation of the teaching strategies, the weaknesses of teaching and learning, methods of improving the weakness and improving the knowledge, skills and diversifying educator's teaching strategies. Educator or researchers have the responsibility to plan and discuss, develop observation items and carry out observation, record and report the level of achievement and development of the children to the administrators and also to parents or children's caretaker.

Background

The development of creativity and aesthetics in the field of Learning in PERMATA Curriculum (2013) also the creativity and aesthetics in the Core Development of Physical and Aesthetics in the National Preschool Curriculum Standard (2016) with a list of creative arts activities like drama, puppetry, music, dance and visual arts to help with the children's development.

The teaching strategies which use creative arts activities have to be assessed to identify the level of use of the creative arts techniques in teaching, the level of the suitability of the creative arts technique with the teaching and learning objectives, also the creative arts technique in children's holistic development. An assessment is very important and it needs to be carried out continuously. It is a process of getting information about the knowledge and skills of educators or teachers also the knowledge, skills and development of the children. One of the ways of carrying out the assessment is through observation. The developing of the items of observation is crucial because the data obtained from the observation have to be recorded and reported. The finding of this observation can help the groups of educator or researchers to make plans do follow-ups to improve the learning development of children involved in the teaching strategies that adopt creative arts techniques (Bonner, 2012; Pekdemir & Akyol, 2015).

Problem Statement

The implementation of the formative evaluation by means of observation can enhance children's achievement. However, educators have taken this less seriously, thus they need to make more discussions with regard to the relationship between the formative evaluation and the implementation of the teaching strategies (Bonner, 2012).

Today, the problem that we face is the lack of observation instrument to evaluate the knowledge and skills of the educators, also children's knowledge, skills and holistic development. The level of use of the creative arts technique in teaching also in the level of suitability of the creative arts technique with the teaching and learning objectives or teachers cannot be identified due to the lack of instrument to evaluate. Children's knowledge, skills and holistic development cannot be recognised because the evaluation cannot be carried out as the creative arts activities are taking place.

Donna (2005) also proposed that creative arts evaluation has to be comprehensive. Therefore, the instrument of observation for the implementation of the creative arts technique in teaching strategies for children has to be built to increase or educator's

knowledge and skills in the teaching strategies and increase children's achievement especially in terms of their holistic development.

Literature Review

The literature review includes observation instrument, creative arts technique as teaching strategy, the suitability of creative arts technique with the teaching objectives, creative arts teaching strategy and children's development.

Observation Instrument

A measuring tool is used to serve as guidance the style, progress, strength and weakness of the educators or teachers or children based on the level of knowledge, suitability and development of children in a research. The process of the teaching strategies using creative arts technique in children's holistic development has to be evaluated (Donna, 2005; Bonner, 2012).

Creative Arts Technique as Teaching Strategy

The creative arts technique chosen as the teaching strategy must be appropriate so that it can achieve the teaching and learning objectives and further help in the children's holistic development. The use of creative arts technique in teaching covers drama, puppetry, music, dance and visual creative arts.

Drama encompasses creative drama, improvisation, pantomime, memos, role plays, simulations, reading theatres and story-telling theatres. Creative drama is drama activities that come in the form of games. It encourages children to learn through playing. Improvisation is created spontaneously by narrating about a situation. During this activity, children are stimulated to interact spontaneously with other children. Under certain circumstances, they need to think and arrange the dialogues in the acting. Improvisation can be done based on a situation, a prop, a costume, a picture and a character. Pantomime is the acting without any dialogue. Dialogues in the script can be read by other children to accompany the situational acting. Children reading the script for pantomimes can master reading skills while acting children can train themselves in mastering listening skills. Memos are muted acting that uses the body movement without the language. Children deliver messages through facial expressions and body movements. Memos train children to understand and reason with their body movements also express their feelings through body movements (Loy, 2011; Avcioglu, 2012; Filiz & Esra, 2013; Cooper, 2016).

Role plays conduct by creating a situation to act out the characters in the situation given. Children need to imagine and act out the characters in the situations created. Simulations conduct by planning on problematic situations and creating the situation in writing or verbally. Prior to the activity, the issue, the roles of the characters and the duration of the activity must be explained to the children. The reading theatre combines the theatrical techniques and reading for children clearly and using the right intonation based on the story also making movements suitable with the content and the atmosphere of the story. The story theatre brings together the theatrical techniques and story to deliver messages to children. This technique is good to be practised at pre-school level because children love to listen to stories (Loy, 2011; Cheryl, Marissa & Jacqueline, 2012; Cooper, 2016).

Puppets as the teaching and learning material have its own special appeal. It comes in various forms and looks as humans, animals, and plants. The types of puppet proposed for children are glove puppets, finger puppets, rod puppets, string puppets and shadow puppets. The puppet performance can also be done using the stage or without the stage. Other than that, the props, sound effect and lighting can be interwoven in puppet shows (Mirella, 2012).

Music, songs and singing offer the opportunity to children to express themselves and take creative arts in singing, playing instrument and making movements. In music, songs and singing activities, children have the opportunity to learn about the melody, tempo and lyrics. Children are encouraged to make musical instruments from waste materials, recyclable materials and raw so that children can love the nature and appreciate God's creations. Other than that, children are also encouraged to explore the sound through improvisation materials or objects (Loy, 2010; Cooper, 2016).

Children dances and multi-cultural dances educate children to know the diverse cultures in Malaysia. Kuda Kepang, Zapin, Joget dances, Lion dance, Dragon dance, Bharata Natyam, Bhangra, Ngajat, Sumazau, Bamboo and the Native People Dances can be introduced to children. Creative movement activities give them the opportunity to get creative, know the elements of space, time and energy. Movement activities get to increase children's physical skills and their spatial stamina (Loy, 2010; Rebecca, 2011; Serap, Sadettin & Mustafa, 2011).

Visual creative arts encompass paintings and crafts and they can guide children to become more creative and able to create something new. Children know colours, dots, lines and circles through drawing activities. The activities give the opportunity for the children to fantasise based on their imagination and creativity. Visual creative arts activities present the children with teaching and learning strategies that can help them solve problems and create learning and its environment. Visual creative arts activities evoke the sense of curiosity among children. They will explore into materials in the surrounding to make easy crafts and get the idea to draw after observing their surroundings (Zupancic, Cagran & Mulej, 2015).

The Suitability of Creative Arts Technique with the Teaching Objectives

Creative arts technique is used to achieve the teaching objectives encompassing the skills in communicating, having the creativity, problem solving, having the curiosity and exploring. Communicating refers to the skills of connecting through speech, body language and sign language. Speech is the way of communicating verbally. Body language is the way of communicating facial expressions, also the walking and the sitting styles. Creativity refers to someone having the skills to create. An educator's creativity in the teaching strategy using creative arts techniques. The problem solving skill refers to the method, attempt and process to get the answer to the problem faced. Curiosity refers to the feeling to know something or evoking the feeling to get the answer for any question or issue. Exploration refers to finding an answer by way of attempting to use the knowledge, skills and experiences (Svetlana, 2015; Cooper, 2016).

Creative Arts Teaching Strategy and Children's Development

Creative arts techniques also serve as the teaching strategies to help translate the teaching and learning that inject elements of language, emotions, social, physical, cognitive, creativity, attitude and values so that they will form holistic humans (Loy, 2011; Rebecca, 2011, Pekdemir & Akyol, 2015; Cooper, 2016).

Creative arts activities help children in language development. Creative arts activities train language skills and children's linguistic creative arts. During the activities, children communicate and interact with other children or teachers or educators. They are able to

master language skills especially speaking and listening skills. Other than that, children have the opportunity to use language more meaningfully and precisely and interpret language beautifully through creative arts activities.

Creative arts activities help children in emotional development. Children are able to express their feelings like happiness, sadness, anger, hatred and fear through creative arts activities. They will understand the forms of emotions that exist based on the creative artistic situation. Creative arts activities with the children will help them build their positive self-concept like self-control and self-discipline when engaging themselves in creative arts.

Creative arts activities help children in social development. Children social and interaction skills can be enhanced through creative arts activities. They need to adapt, interact with friends, understand the form of interaction with others, learn to cooperate and be responsible through the creative arts activities.

Creative arts activities help children in physical development. Creative arts activities can strengthen children's muscle control because movements in drama, puppetry, dance, music and creative movements involve children's coordination and physical agility. During the activity, children's movements happen simultaneously using other body part like the hands, the feet and the body for acting and making movements. The mastery of children's manipulative skills can be better controlled when they do visual creative arts activities.

Creative arts activities help children in cognitive development. Children are really into fantasising and further create imagination. Creative arts activities give the platform to children to imagine and build their ability in their thinking and understanding. It involves a lot of mental activities and the aspects stressed are knowledge, understanding, application, analysis and assessment.

Creative arts activities help children in creativity development. The development of the creativity of the children in creative arts activity involves the imagination or fantasy. Creative arts activity opens the opportunity for children to translate the idea creatively, see something in a different way and find the satisfaction in producing works of creative arts.

Creative arts activities help children in spirituality, attitude and values development. Creative arts for children come in the form of entertainment and education, and it can deliver good moral values and train them to enjoy the nature. The beauty enjoyed will bring a delight to the children and bring them closer to the creations of God.

Conclusively, the teaching strategy that uses creative arts techniques can help the development of language, emotion, social, physical, cognitive, creativity and spirituality, also children's spirituality, attitude and value.

Items Development in the *Observation Instrument*

The observation items are developed to identify (i) the level of use of the creative arts technique in teaching (ii) the level of suitability of the creative arts technique with the teaching and learning objectives also (iii) the creative arts technique and children's holistic development.

The instrument of observation has three categories. Every category has four scales. Scale 1 represents the fact that the creative arts technique is not used or not suitable, Scale 2 shows that there is 1 type of creative arts technique in the teaching, Scale 3 shows the use of 2 types of creative arts technique in teaching and Scale 4 shows more than 2 types of creative arts technique in teaching.

The instruments are used to evaluate the teaching strategy which uses the creative arts technique. The researchers need to observe the educators or children involved in the teaching strategy using creative arts activities.

Researchers need to make plans, make observation, record educator’s achievement level and take measures to improve the educator’s or children’s shortcomings so that the teaching strategy using the creative arts technique can increase its use in teaching, the technique’s level of suitability with the teaching and learning objectives also the creative arts technique in children’s holistic development.

Three instruments have been produced. The first one is the use of creative arts technique in teaching. Secondly, the suitability of creative arts technique with the teaching objectives. Thirdly, creative arts technique in children’s holistic development the level of achievement of the teachers or education in teaching strategies that use creative arts techniques, the level of suitability of the creative arts technique with the teaching and learning objectives, also the children’s development exposed with teaching strategies that use creative arts techniques.

Table 1
Items of observations for the use of creative arts techniques in teaching

The use of creative arts techniques in teaching.							
Types of creative arts:							
- Drama creative arts (Creative drama, improvisation, pantomime, memos, role plays, simulations, reader’s theatres and story theatres.)							
- Puppetry (Glove puppets, finger puppets, rod puppets, string puppets and shadow puppets.)							
- Music (Songs and singing, music and movements.)							
- Dance (Children dances, multi-cultural dances and creative movements.)							
- Visual creative arts (Paintings and crafts.)							
4	3	2	1				
Using more than 2 types of creative arts technique in teaching.	Using 2 types of creative arts technique in teaching.	Using 1 type of creative arts technique in teaching.	Not using any creative arts technique in teaching.				
Remarks:							

Note. Items of observations and the likert scale are adapt from (Chesterfield, 1997; Bhagwanji, 2011; PERMATA Curriculum, 2013; National Preschool Curriculum Standard, 2016).

Table 1 shows the items of observation for the use of creative arts technique in teaching. The use of creative arts techniques in teaching encompasses drama, puppetry, music, dance and visual creative arts. For children, the drama entails creative drama, improvisation,

pantomimes, memos, role plays, simulations, reader’s theatre and story theatres. For puppetry, it involves glove puppets, finger puppets, rod puppets, string puppets and shadow puppets. The music that can be implemented for children encompasses songs and singing also music and movements. The dances for children include multi-cultural dances and creative movements. For visual creative arts, children can try paintings and crafts.

Table 2

Items of observation for the suitability of the creative arts techniques with the teaching objectives

The suitability of creative arts techniques with the teaching objectives.
 The creative arts technique used can help achieve the learning objectives/outcomes:

- Communicating
- Developing creativity
- Problem-solving
- Feeding curiosity
- Exploring

4	3	2	1
Educator uses more than 2 creative arts techniques to achieve more than 2 learning outcomes.	Educator uses 2 creative arts techniques to achieve 2 outcomes.	Educator uses 1 creative arts technique to help achieve 1 learning outcome.	Educator does not use any creative arts technique to achieve any learning outcome.
Remarks:			

Note. Items of observations and the likert scale are adapt from (Chesterfield, 1997; Bhagwanji, 2011; PERMATA Curriculum, 2013; National Preschool Curriculum Standard, 2016).

Table 2 shows the items of observation for the creative arts technique suitability with the teaching and learning objectives. It is important to improve children’s knowledge and skills. The technique adopted should be appropriate as it considers children’s requirements and development. It also should be able to achieve the learning objective or outcome. An appropriate implementation of the teaching strategy can enhance children’s knowledge, creativity, problem solving and curiosity.

Table 3

Items of observation Creative arts technique’s and children’s holistic development.

Creative arts technique and holistic development.
 The technique adopted can enhance children’s development in these aspects :

- language
- emotion

- social
- physical
- cognitive
- creativity
- spirituality, attitude and values

4	3	2	1
Educator uses more than 2 creative arts techniques to help develop more than 2 aspects of children’s development.	Educator uses creative arts techniques to help develop 2 aspects of children’s development.	Educator uses 2 creative arts technique to help develop 1 aspect of children’s development.	Educator does not use any creative arts technique to help boost children’s development.

Remarks:

Note. Items of observations and the likert scale are adapt from (Chesterfield, 1997; Bhagwanji, 2011; PERMATA Curriculum, 2013; National Preschool Curriculum Standard, 2016).

Table 3 shows the items of observation for the creative arts technique and children’s holistic development. The technique implemented is able to spur children’s holistic development. Children’s language skills and knowledge, emotion, social, physical, cognitive, creativity, spirituality, attitude and values can be improved after they follow the teaching techniques which use drama, puppetry, music and visual creative arts.

Conclusion

It is hoped that through the construction of the three categories of items of observation, the assessment on the level of use of the creative arts technique in teaching, the level of suitability of the technique with the teaching and learning objectives also the technique in the children’s holistic development get to be identified. Last but not least, the teaching strategies can be diversified to achieve the teaching and learning strategies and further to ensure children’s holistic development.

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