

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the background of the study, research problem, scope of the study, problem identification, problem limitations, research questions, purposes of the study, significance of the study, and thesis overview.

1.1 The Background of the Study

Education is one of the basic human needs besides food and clothing needed by all ages from an early age to adulthood. Education helps how an individual can develop, recognize himself and do things according to his talents. Education starts from an early age to higher education. Education in early childhood is intended to facilitate young children from age two to six years old to be able to know their surrounding environment and as preparation for entering the next level of education. Early Childhood Education (ECE) is one of the important parts of education which focuses on the development of the children which includes various aspects such as physical motor, cognitive, art, language, social-emotional and even religious and moral values as stated in the previous curriculum, *Kurikulum 13*. While in *Kurikulum MERDEKA*, it is being specified into three learning goals, namely the development of religious and moral values, self-identity and basics of literacy, mathematics, science, technology, engineering, and art. The overall achievement of these developments is carried out through various forms of activities such as counting, imitating words, pronouncing sound, running, playing with balls, reading picture books, doing simple science, making scratch, matching objects, role-playing, playing with gadgets or advanced technology and listening to

stories. ECE learning is characterized by a lot of physical activity and is categorized as a play activity. By doing various activities which are fun, early childhood can gain much information for their development. Interesting learning will increase students' interest in learning.

While playing, early childhood must be facilitated with various objects that can support the child's imagination and thinking ability by using their senses. Conezio & French (2002) state that children explore the world and their environment by using their senses and asking questions. Early childhood students must experience things by touching, hearing, feeling, tasting, and seeing things as they have limited information about the shape of the object, the function of the object, the color of the object or the concept of how the object works. Activating their senses makes them learn more and better. For example, in a game intended to train their gross motor skills, the teacher can design activities using a ball, slide, hula hoop or soft gym equipment. While playing the ball, early childhood can run, walk, and jump which allows them to use all of their muscle that can benefit them to promote a healthy body, good body posture and strong body coordination, along with healthy mind. When the teacher is going to train an early childhood's fine motor skills, objects such as rice, buttons, paper, sand and soft block toys can be used followed by some instructions. The tools that are used and support early childhood learning can also be referred to as learning media. Selection of appropriate learning media can motivate the emergence of the desire of early childhood to find out and be involved in learning activity.

Ronghuai Huang (2019) describes media as a means of representing, presenting, disseminating, and storing information in a variety of formats, which

may be digital and non-digital. Learning media is used with the aim that children can be motivated to conduct activities, making learning activities more effective so that the goals of learning can be achieved. Another function of learning media is to be able to create creations or activate imaginations of children. The selection of learning media that is not appropriate can affect the achievement of the learning objectives themselves. Therefore, teachers need to continue to update themselves and try other types of learning media so that the effectiveness of learning increases. Interesting learning can be realized through the provision or the use of interesting media. One example of learning media is Loose Parts. Loose parts refer to play objects and materials that are open ended and manipulable (Nicholson, 1971) that can be found in the surrounding environment which functions and uses can be varied depending on the purpose for which the media is used. Moreover, Zamani (2012) states that loose parts promote varied play activities among preschool children. The examples of loose parts media are shirt buttons, used tissue rolls, old can, pins, newspaper, old tire, wooden twigs, or even stones.

Researcher has made observations as the first step in this study to find out what problems occur in the learning of the kindergarten 2 students at Kindergarten XYZ in Jakarta. Researcher conducted interviews with the teachers and documented the activities and results of student daily assessments as the data for observation. Below is the daily assessment summary from K2 at Kindergarten XYZ Jakarta on the day of the observation. (See Appendix A)

Table 1. Daily Assessment Summary

No.	Indicators	Description
1.	Showing new/different ideas	Students' projects were commonly same one to the other
2.	Showing initiative in choosing games (materials/tools)	Students did not show enthusiasm in making the projects because the materials were not varied.

3.	Demonstrating curiosity (exploratory-observe) through many questions, searches for data, etc.	Students did not ask further questions while making the projects to the teacher. They copied the teacher's project.
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Based on the summary of the observations made by researcher, the flow of learning began with giving initial questions by the teacher to the students. Then, the students would have information shared to them by stories, songs, videos, or discussion. Teachers showed an example of an unfinished project, so it made it easier to think of a project, but students were less able to answer the problems given by the teacher as a stage before doing their project. They were just focusing on making the same project as similar as they could for their final project without answering the triggering questions. In this case, it can be seen in the indicators of children's problem solving that have not developed properly. This is in line with Krulik and Rudnick (1980, 4) who define the process of using previously gained knowledge, skills, and understanding to meet the needs of an unknown situation as problem solving. The learner must combine what they have learned and apply it to a brand-new circumstance to solve the problem by making a project.

When learning about the theme of “Healthy Living”, students are given some information about what healthy living is and what tools can be used to keep the body healthy. The teacher presented various examples of sports equipment as doing sports is one of the ways to keep the human body healthy. Students observed and when they were going to make a project, students were still focused on the tools that have been displayed by the teacher and they did not show curiosity such as asking follow-up question or mentioning other materials they might need to make the project so that they looked confused of deciding what to make for the project. This refers to the lack of critical thinking skill. Supported by Greenberg (2016) that

critical thinking includes skills such as questioning, estimating, investigating, developing a hypothesis, analyzing, reflecting, reviewing, comparing, evaluating, and presenting an opinion. The students were not able to express their own ideas towards information given by the teacher from previous learning activities.

Another reason was they had limited materials to make the projects while teachers did not provide enough materials in the classroom, some students made the projects based on the parent's instruction which limited them to develop their own creativity. They said to have their parents decide which materials to use for the project which means that it was not fully the student's own desire. They had limited exploration in using various objects. This showed that the creativity of the students was still low as they did not have the opportunity to explore materials or objects to develop their creativity. That is why it was hard for them to do more in making the project, researcher saw that children had not been able to express their imagination to create works using various kinds of objects but imitate teachers and friends.

Related to the problem above, this was an interesting topic to research. The researcher does this research because the researcher works in making lesson plans at the educational institution to be used by teachers of kindergarten for the learning but is not directly involved in teaching and learning activities in the classroom. Therefore, research problems were formed, namely problem-solving abilities, critical thinking, and creativity skills of students are still low, so the researcher conducted research entitled **“The Use of Loose Parts as Media in Improving Problem-solving, Critical Thinking, and Creativity Skills of Kindergarten 2 students at Kindergarten XYZ Jakarta”**.

1.2 Problem Identification

From the background of the problems above, the following problems are identified:

- 1) Problem-solving, Critical Thinking, and Creativity Skills of Kindergarten 2 students at Kindergarten XYZ Jakarta were still low. According to the National Curriculum (*Kurikulum Merdeka*), problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity skills are very important due to the need of learning in the 21st century.
- 2) The media used in making projects were less varied and limited in type and less stimulating for students in creating something for their project. Students only brought materials needed and had limited materials provided by the teacher or parents in the classroom. This limits the creativity of the students.
- 3) Students did not show curiosity such as asking follow-up questions to try to answer the initial question given by the teacher or asking to have other materials.
- 4) Parents contribution still limits the students desire to make something.

1.3 Problem Limitation

To focus on the objectives of the study, researcher draws limitation to the problem of the study, only focuses on improving Problem-solving, Critical Thinking, and Creativity Skills of kindergarten 2 students at Kindergarten XYZ Jakarta using loose parts as the media which can be described as below:

- 1) The effect of using Loose Part media on increasing Problem-solving Skill.
- 2) The effect of using Loose Part media on increasing Critical Thinking Skill.

- 3) The effect of using Loose Part media on increasing Creativity Skill.

1.4 Research Problem

Considering the background of the study, problem identification and problem limitation explained above, then the problem that can be stated as follows:

- 1) Does student problem-solving skill using loose parts improved higher compared to the regular curriculum of kindergarten 2 students at Kindergarten XYZ Jakarta?
- 2) Does student critical thinking skill using loose parts improved higher compared to the regular curriculum of kindergarten 2 students at Kindergarten XYZ Jakarta?
- 3) Does student creativity skill using loose parts improved higher compared to the regular curriculum of kindergarten 2 students at Kindergarten XYZ Jakarta?

1.5 Purposes of the Study

The aims of this research are as follows:

- 1) To analyze the improvement of students' problem-solving skill using loose parts as a learning media compared to the regular curriculum of kindergarten 2 students at Kindergarten XYZ Jakarta.
- 2) To analyze the improvement of students' critical thinking skill using loose parts as a learning media compared to the regular curriculum of kindergarten 2 students at Kindergarten XYZ Jakarta.

- 3) To analyze the improvement of students' creativity skill using loose parts as a learning media compared to the regular curriculum of kindergarten 2 students at Kindergarten XYZ Jakarta.

By using loose parts, it is later can be known whether there was any relationship between the use of loose parts and problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity skills.

1.6 Significances of the Study

The benefits of this research were expected to be useful:

- 1) for Schools. This research is beneficial as additional information of the application of loose parts as a learning media and will be given to the school in which this research was done, that is Kindergarten XYZ Jakarta.
- 2) for teachers. As a reference for teachers to vary the use of learning media.
- 3) for other researchers. As a reference and basis for further research related to the use of loose parts as learning media in improving problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity skills of K2 students.

1.7 Thesis Overview

This thesis has five chapters which are divided into the first chapter discussing the background of the study, research problems, scope of the study, research questions, purposes of the study, significances of the study, and thesis overview. In Chapter I, the researcher describes in detail several important things related to the topic of the research about loose parts and their significance in improving problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity. Then proceed with a brief overview of the background which happened in a kindergarten, highlighting

the gaps in existing literature that this study aims to address. The objectives and scope of the study are outlined, along with a description of the benefits of this research.

In Chapter II, the theoretical definitions of the variables used in this study, that is the loose parts, problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity are given. Chapter II also provides an overview of the existing literature, describing various indicators and dimensions related to problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity to the use of loose parts as a learning media. Some previous studies are also given to critically analyze the strengths and weaknesses and highlight any gaps or inconsistencies. The theoretical framework that will guide the current research is discussed in detail, setting the stage for the subsequent chapters. Chapter II also writes down the hypotheses that need to be tested and verified in this research.

Chapter III describes the research design, approach, and methods used in this study that is the quasi-experiment research. Details about the data collection procedures, including the sample selection and data sources, are provided. The chapter also outlines the data analysis techniques employed and the instruments used in this study, namely the normality test, homogeneity test and mean test.

Chapter IV presents the findings of the study based on the collected data through pre-test and post-test of experiment and control group. The results are presented in a clear and logical manner, utilizing tables, graphs, and pictures to enhance understanding. The findings are then analyzed and interpreted considering the research objectives and relevant theoretical frameworks. The chapter is organized to address each research objective or research question separately. The

researcher explained the processing of the data along with the formula used and the interpretation of the data obtained.

In Chapter V, conclusions, suggestions, and implications are explained based on the research that has been done by summarizing the main findings and their significance in relation to the research problems. The chapter reflects on whether the research objectives of using loose parts in improving student skills were achieved and discusses the implications of the findings. The contents of this chapter can be used as a reference for the development of research with the same type or variable. The limitations of this research are also acknowledged, and suggestions for future improvement are provided which can be used by other educational practitioners or curriculum administrators.

