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The learning process visual art for children with learning disabilities

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Abstract. Children with special needs have trouble learning, especially in regular class. They could not follow regular teaching nor work on regular tasks. These children with special needs require specific art learning process. This art learning process will involve the class teacher, art practitioner and psychologist. This ongoing research will use experimental method. The main participants for this research are children with special needs, learning disabilities. Hopefully this research can be as a model for children with special needs in Aceh. This art learning process will use paper and pastel as main media. The preliminary outcome from this continuing research was children with special needs felt more comfortable in regular class after art learning process using art therapy approach.

Keywords: children with special needs, learning process, art

Introduction

The tsunami hit in Aceh left a traumatizing memory for the habitant, especially for children. These children have lost their loved ones: parents, teachers, siblings and friends. Some of these traumatized children are children with special needs. The trauma from tsunami adds mental burden for them. In addition, there was lack of necessary learning facilities for them. These children need special attention and distinctive approach.

The demolished school facilities made Aceh have to strive hard to deal with these children with special needs. Various aids from national and international organizations only concentrate on rebuilding infrastructure for transportation and accommodation. The rehabilitation for learning facilities for children with special needs is another crucial problem. The main problem is the most suitable learning process for these children with special needs for their learning problems.

The traumatized children after tsunami with special needs in this research are children who could not follow regular teaching in class, have trouble complicating tasks by themselves and could not concentrate in class. Usually, they could not sit tight until the class is finished. These children need a specific learning method to evoke their interest.

Previous researches for children with special needs have been done in many countries. One of the publicized research was *Educating Special Children* by Farell (2008). This book describe a cathegorized map of children with special needs and classified learning methods, curriculum and therapy for them. Another book was *Artful Therapy* by Rubin (2005) which explained that art therapy can be used for man kinds of people with disabilities.This book also explained the reason why art is the perfect tool for people with disabilities. Detailed explanation on the method and material is provided in this book.However, both books have not discuss the art learning process for children with multiple disabilities. In this case experiencing traumatic event such as tsunami adds problem for children with special needs. Therefore this research is needed by teachers for children with special needs in Aceh.

Art learning process for children with special needs

Art is one of the compulsary subject in Indonesian primary school, as intracurricular or extracurricular class. School with better facilities could provide classroom and material and make art as extracurricular activity. The government sets drawing as compulsary in standard curriculum, and sets dance and music as extracurricular activities.

One of the problem in learning art is the art program for children with special needs. The considerable number of these children in Aceh needs a lot of attention from academics. This seminar is expected to informs thoughts for theses children's learning process. The lost of school facilities and infrastructure rehabilitation which takes time made these children lost a great deal of time in learning process.

Children with learning disability could be detected early by the school teacher, because they could not follow nor focus in class. One of the tool for learning art for children with learning disability is art therapy. According to Ulman in Rubin (2010) everything in art therapy is part of art and therapy. Rubin was questioning whether art therapy is constructed from two words art + therapy = ? In one of the first issue of the Bulletin of Art The Art Therapy, Elinor Ulman (as a founder, Bulletin of Art Therapy) stated that classifying this new discipline was not easy, because it involves various disciplines. Ulman added that this discipline needs strong colaboration between art and therapy. She defined therapy as "procedures designed to assist favorable changes in personalty or in living that will outlast the session itself" (Rubin, 2010). While she defined art as "a means to discover both the self and the world, and to establish a relation between the two". Ulman also stated that art is a crossing between inner and outer world. Her statements gave birth to a new profession withcross disciplines approach.

Art Learning Process

This research will use experimental method, using elaborated method from a workshop by Monty Satiadarma, a leading art therapy expert in Indonesia. Children are instructed to use pastel to draw in this experiment, because pastel leave a visible scratch mark. Children are encouraged to draw on A3 paper (size: ± 42 cm x 30 cm). Phases in this experiment can be describe in following table.

Table 1. Research Phase with experimental method

Description	1ST Phase	2ND Phase
AIM	To help children relax and continue to draw freely.	To help children relax. To adapt with the current condition. To stimulate creativity. To help children explore.
ATTENDING STUDENTS	37	25
THEME	Drawing freely	Drawing freely
MATERIAL	PASTEL	PASTEL
PAPER	A3	A3
TIME	2 x 45 minutes (90 minutes)	60 minutes
INSTRUCTION	Children were encouraged to tell a story. Then asked to draw anything they want.	Children were asked to 'enter' certain state of mind then interact with a 'projection screen'.
PROCESS	• tudents made drawings.	• Made continuous scratch on paper without lifting pastel. • Done with opened/closed eyes to induce relaxation. • Students could scratch freely without any direction from therapist. • Finding unique pattern among unstructured scratches. (to find structure in chaos) • Adding unique color and form in findings. • Integrating findings in the theme.

On the first phase, the children felt uncomfortable, because they are given specific instruction. On the second phase, children felt more comfortable with the absence of instruction. Children were more enthusiastic to express their feeling through scratching pastel on paper.

Conclusion

This ongoing research shows more positive result for children who are given minimum instruction in the second phase. While they were feeling intimidated in the first phase. The first participant and the second participant is a same students. Children with special needs find expressing their feeling on paper was enjoyable and freeing. Paper and pastel are considered an environmentally friendly and harmless media. Children with special needs could ignore pressure they have experienced during class through this experience.

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