

# Educational Values in Busy Book for Early Childhood Learning

Martono<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Yogyakarta State University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

\*Corresponding author Email: [martono@uny.ac.id](mailto:martono@uny.ac.id)

## ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop a busy book, examine the educational values developed in the busy book, as well as the feasibility of the busy book for early childhood playing and learning. This study employed the qualitative method to describe and analyze the phenomena, events, activities, attitudes, perceptions, and thoughts of individuals or groups in early childhood learning using the busy book media. Descriptive data analysis presents the shapes, colors, and educational values for early childhood learning. The findings show that the visual forms of the busy book are unique in themes, shapes, colors, and structure, which can be removed, reattached, opened, and closed as an album. The busy book can be regarded as a toy aimed to develop children's logical understanding on shapes, colors, balance, and appropriate and accurate compositions. The educational character values in the busy book include observantness, accuracy, creativity, appreciation, discipline, and responsibility in playing and learning the composition of shapes and colors by practice playing and learning using the busy book. As a new type of learning media, busy books are found to be feasible, attractive, safe, and appropriate for playing and character learning for children. Children's expressions when playing and learning using the busy book reveal enjoyment, seriousness, and joy which can be interpreted and understood as an interesting and appropriate education process for children. The busy book materials as ethical and aesthetical learning media are aimed to examine the development of children's aesthetic expressions. The development of children's artistic expression and appreciation is highly influenced by their surroundings and teaching. Therefore, the busy book as a new type of learning media is instrumental to address such challenge.

**Keywords:** Educational Values, Busy Books, Early-Aged Children

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Art education for children is essentially learning art by games or playing, learning while playing, and playing for learning. In principle, children have similarities in nature; these fundamental similarities later develop into different personalities due to influence of nature and the surrounding culture. Ki Hajar argues that around the world, all children's games have the same essence despite differences in forms and content, due to the influence of nature and the time. Children's games which initially result in children's art or painting in the form of similar brush expressions, and later develop into different styles is the natural product of the influence of nature and the period [1]. This notion is supported by Bordieu, who argues that the differences and similarities are the result of experiences and teachings. Children are more shaped by their social and cultural environment, thus there needs to be a facilitation of conducive social and cultural environments at school and at home so that children can develop their sense of appreciation and expression optimally.

Children's games are children's art that is essentially quite simple in content and form, yet they

must meet ethical and aesthetical requirements, with a "nature to culture" principle [1]. Furthermore, because of the changes resulted by the development of society and modern technology, children are conditioned and used to the world of virtual games. As a result, children's games have somehow moved to the imaginative virtual fantasy world that unfortunately lacks ethical and aesthetical values and strays from the children's natural surroundings. These games are far from the natural reality of the children's world based on where they live. The impact of this reality is that children begin to be less sensitive toward their natural surrounding and social-cultural awareness around them that is in fact natural according to the children's actual lives.

Psychologically, art is originated by the drive to play inside the children. Art can be assumed as a game which balances the entire mental abilities of children in relation to the excess of energy demanding to be channeled. The energy excess is prepared for a variety of imaginative games and fun playing activities which ultimately produce art works. As noted by Horalt Titus "games are the children's art and art is the adults' way of playing." This suggests that playing is important for children and art is something that is born from games/playing. Playing for children is a means for

learning and exploring their environment to develop their physical, cognitive and social-emotional state. In addition, playing also aims to develop individuals to possess good habits, such as communication, helping one another, sharing roles, learning discipline, being certain in making decisions, and learning how to be responsible. Playing can develop imagination and exploration abilities.

Art education for early-aged children should be consists of ethical education (moral and character) and aesthetic education (arts and aesthetics) in an appropriate manner in accordance with the children's development. For this reason, art learning in pre-school and primary school must distance itself from the *Amerikaanse schoolbank* model, according to Montessori, as children must be provided with the freedom to learn and play based on the *Heimatprinzip* principle according to *globalmethode*, which argues that the physical and mental development of children must be based on nature and their community.

The Chinese Mind model may be more appropriate for children education as a holistic or comprehensive education which involves sports, arts, and mental health. Children are fully engaged in expressing themselves based on their world through games, simulations, painting, and other activities, based on their needs.

Behavioral change due to learning is a result of children's cognitive development, namely the children's ability to think about their surroundings [2]. This thinking skill is influenced by two aspects, namely maturation (the process of becoming an adult) and readiness. According to Montessori, children from newborns to 3-year-olds still rely on instincts, and only begin to develop complex mental development at 3 years old, which later develop into the three main aspects of the mind, feeling, and willingness. Ki Hajar explains that the 3-7 years age range is the sensitive age period, which is important to ensure the development of instincts into skills and character intelligence. It must be ensured that the instincts not stay as instincts [3].

The concept of learning for children is to lead them to do spontaneous things by paying attention, allowing, not restricting, and being led individually with a principle of making them intelligent according to their nature. It is important that children not lose their nature/identity, individuality or essence only because they are educated together with their peers. In this concept, classical art education, according to Montessori, is less preferable, because art education should be individual to prevent children from becoming "artificial humans" with unextraordinary intelligence rate. Studying is done by training the five sensory senses through spontaneous behavior by giving freedom to children. The learning principle for children is to let go

of all restricting elements, including the *Amerikaanse Schoolbank* learning system, by allowing to children to sit as they like on the floor, or change their table and chair positions. Essentially, children are familiarized to learn how to draw, sing, march, play, make crafts in a free and orderly manner so that the material order can form spiritual order. Education is freedom, and that the true purpose of humans is to be the subject, not the object [4]. A humanist individual must be the creator of their own history.

The psychological, social, and cultural character development among individuals is the function of the entire potential of individuals (cognitive, affective, conative, and psychomotor) in the context of social and cultural interaction (in the family, school, and community) and lasts for life [5]. The character configuration in the context of the totality of psychological and social-cultural process can be grouped into spiritual and emotional development, intellectual development, physical and kinesthetic development, and affective and creativity development (caring, creative).

Artistic experience will be able to improve knowledge, understanding and skills in making art. Artistic experience will lead to aesthetic sensibility, the skill of using tools and media of expression to obtain satisfaction through the process of expression, and will offer a sense of reward or appreciation toward art works. Through artistic experience of painting, for example, children must be able to use visual elements such as lines, shapes, colors, textures, and spaces by using the principles of creation such as balance, unity, rhyme, harmony, composition, and organization with various media of expression. Further, it is designed to package the playing concept into a fun learning of painting so that children are able to imagine, express, appreciate, and communicate using the visual language through their painting.

Busy books are made of cloth consisting of simple game activities in a creative design as props [6]. Busy books used as props or toys in the shape of a book made out of flannels is designed to develop children's cognitive [7]. Based on these definitions, it can be concluded that the busy book learning media is a cloth book consisting of simple activities as props. Activities of busy book learning media in this study are adjusted with the developed learning materials. The busy book media in this study consists of various activities related to day-today rules at home.

The points of attraction of busy books for children are the themes, shapes, colors, and that they can be removed and reattached based on the patterns or the children's imagination. They are unique due to the interesting shapes and colors which attract children. This study was focused on how to develop a busy book for early-aged children and aims to produce a busy book and examine its feasibility in art learning for early-aged

children. Children can tell stories and imagine and reproduce in their minds the life they experience, including what they have done, seen or imagined outside their realities. When children play, they can play a role as a certain figure, reproduce their experience, and use their imagination to imitate or act out certain occupation or event. The playing types are categorized into four types, namely practice play (relaxed), symbolic play (representing an object), games with rules, and construction play (constructing observed objects) [2].

Children need to be taught technical skills to help them express their thoughts and feelings. Easner, in *The Art and Creation of Mind*, explains that mimesis is not the only way to represent images and convey meaning. Art can depict not only what is seen or heard, but also depict what is felt [8]. Children attempt to represent their experience in art to distinguish themselves from their peers; as a result, the advancing principle is understood as an effort to develop or modify objects into important things for children. Each time children make art, they try to express new shapes and styles as an effort improve to develop their creativity. This notion can also be found in the busy books as children can develop and manipulate the shapes and colors as they like with the available themes, patterns, and colors.

## 2. METHOD

The research type of this study is qualitative, which refers to a research procedure which generates qualitative data in the form of utterances or observed descriptions on the state of an individual in a holistic manner [9]. Qualitative research is a study which describe and analyze a phenomenon, event, social activity, belief, perception or thought of individuals or groups [10]. The main informant in the study was Titi Sari Handayani as the creator of the busy book and a teacher. The data collection method involved observations, interviews, and studying documents. The research instruments were guidelines for observations, interviews, and documents. The data validity was ensured using source triangulation and detailed observation for data interpretation. Descriptive data analysis was used to present and analyze data to interpret how the shapes, colors, and themes are used to present educational values.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results and discussion, this study is able to describe the form and educational values of the developed busy book for early childhood learning. As one of the forms of children's toys, busy books consist of thematic works compiled in an album which can be opened, closed, removed, reattached, and played. This type of media is used to learn accuracy, attention to detail, and observantness in learning shapes and colors

composition. Busy books that are made popular are cloth books consisting of pages with various activities in the form of book [11]. Busy books are also known as quiet books, soft books, or books. Essentially, busy books allow children to get busy with fun activities in the book. The pages of the book are made of flannel, cotton, or thick cartons with activities that are interesting for children. In each page, children can do fun activities such as matching the colors, adjusting the shapes, matching the numbers and letters, etc. Busy books can be used for children of all ages. Many busy book products aimed at babies have more contrasting colors and fun images, while for older kids, the books may include cut-out pieces and boardgames. The appropriate target age range for busy books is two to five years old focusing on skills such as matching the shapes, colors, imaginative games, and how to dress (zipper, tie, suspender, etc.).

A busy book is a work of art aimed for children as a toy which consists of various components of art skills, just as mosaics, as children will be able to play by attaching shapes and colors, with exciting themes. Other art skills components include application and collage with cut out shapes and patterns, as well as freely playing with matching the shapes and colors according to the themes. Busy books are a kind of two-dimensional puzzle game that can be disassembled, reassembled, and manipulated as the kids like. The complexity of knowledge and skills in the busy book can be interpreted and understood as a media product which provides educational values for children's development. These educational values include intelligence, creativity, observantness, accuracy, discipline, orderliness as well as responsibility in playing and learning shapes, colors, and themes composition using the busy book to form the children's sense of appreciation and creativity.

Busy book, in principle, aims to keep children busys with enjoyable and educational activities in the book. It is also known as quiet book, soft book, or cloth book. It has many names with similar ideas. This study chose the term busy book because it is generally used to describe a variety of this type of product, ranging from flannel, cotton, or thick carton materials, which includes various fun activities for children to play, such as matching the colors, shapes, numbers, letters, etc.

Busy books can be used by children of all ages. Busy books for toddlers have fun and high-contrast pictures, whereas for older children, the book typically consists of cut out shapes and games. The appropriate target age range for busy books is between two to five years old, focusing on skills such as matching games, sorting games, and imaginative games. Some makers design the pages to be sewn into a permanent book, while others make the busy book with removeable pages such as maps and loose leaves. These pages are interchangeable and children find them more exciting as they can exchange or share pages with their friends.

### 3.1. Form and Themes of the Busy Book

The increasingly transparent and accessible information stream has generated new virtual figures in children's art to the point that there seems to be something missing from the meaning in real creativity. It is as if this reality was leading to one culmination point where the more "advanced" human civilization due to technological development, the thinner the difference between the world of children and that of adults. The acceleration of periodization in children's art development is a concrete evidence of the development in the meaning of creativity. The complexity of the social and cultural environment makes children lose their world even more, as signified by how the art that they make can no longer be considered as new or original. The more transparent information stream, in turn, becomes a virus which close the children's integral imaginative spaces. In such condition, there needs to be a form of learning media which instill educational values in the process.

The busy book themes are developed based on the early childhood education curriculum themes in order to support the children's art learning. The themes include transportation that is used in the day-to-day life, communication (to address the current age of technology), geometry, animals, fruits, marine animals, and other themes that are close to children's life.

### 3.2. Educational Values in the Busy Book

The most fundamental principle is that the learning capacity of early-aged children is fundamentally different from that among adults [12]. Learning tasks that both adults and children are familiar with are to speak in a new language. This shows that learning can improve creativity values in communication. There are educational values identified in learning and playing with the busy book, namely intelligence, accuracy, and sense of discipline. Children's intelligence is trained by playing with the book and opening, removing, and reattaching the elements in the book to develop their creativity, as well. The accuracy aspect is obtained by opening and removing the components to be reattached accurately and carefully based on the patterns of the shapes and colors. From these activities, children will obtain the educational values of observantness and accuracy by playing with the order of the shapes and colors. The discipline and responsibility values are formed from the orderliness in using the busy book with care and responsibly, namely by organizing, tidying, cleaning, and storing the book back in its place. All playing and learning activities to assemble the composition of shapes, colors and themes by practice is done using the busy book to build children's sense of appreciation and creation. This type of children's toy demands the children's responsibility and discipline in playing and learning.

The advantages of busy book learning media, according [13] are that it can be used for all subjects, can be developed independently with items that can be adjusted accordingly, can be prepared in advance, can be used repeatedly, can be adapted according to the needs of the subject and students, and that it saves time and money. In its use, busy book media can be complemented with other variations of media. The busy book media helps and accelerates students' understanding through the visualization process [14]. The media can also be added with colors to attract students' attention, in addition to its relatively quick making process. This suggests that the busy book media also has the advantage of using thematic items to build children's imagination in which children can actively manipulate the images according to the pattern by opening, removing, and reassembling them. The media can be used repeatedly, accelerate students' understanding through the visualization process, and is made attractive to children with shapes and colors.

Nevertheless, learning media in any form must have weaknesses. The weaknesses of the busy book media include its limitation in reaching a wider group, as it is more suitable for individual or partner learning [13]. In addition, the busy book media only focuses on the visual sense instead of incorporating audio and motion elements. This observation has also been noted by a previous study pointing out that the limitation of the busy book media is that it only conveys the message in visual elements, whereas in order to produce a suitable media, there needs to be specific skills in the development [14]. In order to overcome the limitation and improve the quality of the busy book media, it is suggested that the busy book multimedia is developed in the video format with moving pictures and narrated audio which explains the content as well as the objective of learning using said media. Further research to refine and improve the busy book media needs to be continuously conducted to generate the best media for early childhood art learning.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the descriptions of the research results and discussion, the following conclusions are obtained.

Busy book as learning media is presented in an attractive album with shapes, colors, and themes for children to learn and play. Busy book themes are developed according to the environment around the daily life of children, such as learning about geometric shapes, colors, animals, marine life, transportations, and means of communication that are familiar to children. The form of this media has its own interesting points as the book or album consists of images which can be opened, removed, reattached, and manipulated based on the pattern to increase children's creativity.

The educational values in playing and learning with busy books are that they can train children's intelligence,

observantness, and accuracy in using the media to develop creativity. Children are given the responsibility to learn independently using the busy book in order to develop their independence and sense of discipline. The busy book media is deemed feasible to be used for art learning for children as evidenced by the internal validation by researchers and teachers, which involves studying, trying, and assessing the quality of the product. The appeal of busy book is that it is highly appropriate for learning and playing as shown by the attractive shapes, colors, and themes which can be manipulated by children by being opened, removed, reattached, and played with. The limitation of the busy book media is that it only focuses on the visual sense. Therefore, researchers must develop busy book in a video format which contain images and sounds to narrate the description of the images in order to improve the educational function and value of the media.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Dewantara, K. H., *Karya Ki Hadjar Dewantar*, Yogyakarta, Majelis Luhur Persatuan Taman Siswa, 2004.
- [2] Piaget, J, Cognitive development in children: Piaget. *Journal of research in science teaching*, 2(3) (1964) 176-186. [https://scholar.google.co.id/scholar?q=Cognitive+development+in+children:+Piaget&hl=id&as\\_sdt=0&as\\_vis=1&oi=scholar](https://scholar.google.co.id/scholar?q=Cognitive+development+in+children:+Piaget&hl=id&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholar)
- [3] Tauchid, I., “*Faktor-Faktor Yang Berkaitan Dengan Tingkat Kecacatan Kusta Di Kabupaten Brebes Tahun 2005* [The Factors Are Related to The Level of Leprosy Defect in Regency of Brebes on 2005].” 2006, Unpublished
- [4] Freire, Paulo, “*Politik Pendidikan: Kebudayaan, Kekuasaan dan Pembebasan terj: Agung Prihantoro* [Political Education: Culture, Power and Liberation trans: Agung Prihantoro].” Yogyakarta, Pustaka Pelajar, 1999.
- [5] Ministry of National Education Regulation No. 2 of 2010 concerning the National Education Strategic Plan for 2010-2014, 2010 [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p\\_isn=91459&p\\_lang=en](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_isn=91459&p_lang=en)
- [6] Mufliharsi, R., “*Pemanfaatan busy book pada kosakata anak usia dini di paud swadaya Pkk* [Utilization of busy book in early childhood vocabulary in paud swadaya Pkk].” *Jurnal Metamorfosa*, 5(2) (2017) 146-155. <https://metamorfosa.stkipgetsempena.ac.id/?journal=home&page=article&op=view&path%5B%5D=70>
- [7] Annisa, B. N., & Tasuah, N., *The Use of Replica Media in Order to Improve Speaking Ability of 4-5 Yaer Old Children of TK ABA 02 Banjarejo. BELIA: Early Childhood Education Papers*, 5(2) (2016) 56-59. <https://scholar.google.com/scholar?oi=bibs&cluster=8624982388085075063&btnI=1&hl=en>
- [8] Sauter, D. A., Eisner, F., Calder, A. J., & Scott, S. K., *Perceptual cues in nonverbal vocal expressions of emotion*. *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 63(11) (2010) 2251-2272. DOI: [10.1080/17470211003721642](https://doi.org/10.1080/17470211003721642)
- [9] Bodgan, Robert dan Steven J. Taylor, *Kualitatif Dasar-Dasar Penelitian* [Qualitative Research Basics].” Surabaya, Usaha Nasional, 1993.
- [10] Sukmadinata, S. N., *Metode Penelitian* [Research Method].” Bandung, PT remaja rosdakarya, 2005.
- [11] Nilmayani, Zulkili Ria N, Risma Devi, *Pengaruh Penggunaan Media Busy Book terhadap Kemampuan Membaca Permulaan Pada Anak Usia 5-6 Tahun di Paud Terpadu Filosofia Kubu Babussalam Rokan Hilir* [The Influence of Busy Book Media Usage on Beginning Reading Ability in 5-6 Years Old Children in the Integrated Paud Filosofia Kubu Babussalam Rokan Hilir].” 2017. (online), (<https://jom.unri.ac.id/index.php/JOMFKIP/article/download/15787/15329>, diakses 26 Januari 2020).
- [12] Montesano Montessori, N., *A theoretical and methodological approach to social entrepreneurship as world-making and emancipation: social change as a projection in space and time*. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 28(7-8) (2016) 536-562. DOI: [10.4324/9781351270762-4](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351270762-4)
- [13] Daryanto, S., Eldridge, D. J., & Throop, H. L., *Managing semi-arid woodlands for carbon storage: grazing and shrub effects on above- and belowground carbon*. *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment*, 169 (2013) 1-11. DOI: [10.1016/j.agee.2013.02.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.agee.2013.02.001)
- [14] Indriana, T., *Perbedaan laju aliran saliva dan pH karena pengaruh stimulus kimiawi dan mekanis* [The difference in salivary flow rate and pH is due to the influence of chemical and mechanical stimuli].” *Jurnal Kedokteran Meditek*, 2011. <http://ejournal.ukrida.ac.id/ojs/index.php/Meditek/article/view/207>