

Perception of Early Childhood Education Teachers about Teaching Environmental Education

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ABSTRACT

Environmental literacy skills are also very important characters that should be learned by people since their early age. It is believed that some knowledge if learned by people since they are in early ages, the knowledge can become habit and it will stay in the people mind and heart for a long time. The current study investigates some perceptions perceived by early childhood education teachers in teaching environmental education in this pandemic situation. The study employed 15 early childhood teachers as the samples with the semi-structured interviews as the research instrument. The data collection period took four (4) months in 2020. Content analysis was employed to analyze the data in the current study. The obtained data was validated by the members of the faculty. Findings from the study showed that early childhood teachers have already used some teaching strategies to help their early students to be environmental literacy. The teaching strategies used by the teachers varies from one to another. The study implied that even though early students have to learn at home but their early education teachers can still teach them to maintain and preserve their environmental.

Keywords: perception, environmental literacy, teaching strategies, maintain and preserve the environmental

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with many beautiful seas, forests, nature, unfortunately, Indonesia has many big environmental problems such as the exploitation of forests and marine resources, of serious air and water pollution, of population growth and a large and growing middle class set on material prosperity (Parker & Prabawa-Sear, 2020). Moreover, Parker and Prabawa-Sear (2020) stated that the Indonesians apparently have a low level of environmental consciousness among its population. To give more examples, in Indonesia, at the beginning of 2020, people in Jakarta, Serang, Bogor, Depok and Bekasi and various regions in Indonesia have experienced big floods. There are also some areas that have experienced landslides. Another problem is the disposal of factory waste or garbage. There is a big problem of this country that is many people throw garbage carelessly into the rivers and flow into the sea. These facts show that some people in Indonesia have little awareness of many environmental problems in Indonesia.

Based on the above problems, this study seeks to intensify early childhood education awareness of the environmental education through some activities such as cleaning the yard, the house, watering the plants, and planting some plants. These activities are expected to help early students and their teachers to become environmentally literate and then to be environmental literacy. Thus, the development of environmental literacy will start in a number of kindergartens and early childhood education in several areas in Indonesia. The purpose of this study is to investigate about what are the perception of early childhood education teachers about environmental literacy for their early childhood students. So, this study is the first step of the activities in developing people's environmental literacy.

To investigate about how to instill environmental literacy for early childhood, the researchers tried to investigate:

1. To what extent the PAUD community knows and knows about environmental literacy?

2. What is the form of environmental literacy model for early childhood?
3. What competencies will early childhood and their teachers have when learning about environmental literacy?

The current challenges in educating the public and children to be more sensitive to environmental problems include the lack of environmental education from the child's parents, the community is still not aware of environmental problems so environmental education must be carried out more intensively through religious education, schools etc. Therefore, in educating a community, especially early age children, schools must collaborate with parents and the surrounding community. The research strives that cultivating children's awareness to love the environment requires support from the child's parents themselves.

1.1. Perception

Kendra Cherry (2020) stated that perception is the sensory experience of the world. Perception includes the five senses such as touch, sight, sound, smell, and taste. Therefore, in the perceptual process, people can gain information about the properties and elements of the environment around them. However, the meaning of perception according Cambridge English Dictionary is a belief or an opinion about something. Thus, in this study the researchers tried to investigate what are the perceptions of early childhood education teachers about teaching environmental education. In this study perception is how the ECE teachers think about what they know and what they understand the concept of Environmental literacy. In is found that they did not know about the concept but they have already done some teaching to their early students related with Environmental literacy.

1.2. Environmental literacy

Environmental literacy is the purpose of environmental education in order to help people to understand and interpret environmental conditions. People, then can decide what is the right action to maintain, restore and improve environmental conditions. Environmental literacy skills are also very important characters that should be learned by people since their early age. It is believed that some knowledge if learned by people since they are in early ages, the knowledge can become habit and it will stay in the people mind and heart for a long time.

The meaning of environmental literacy is the ability that each individual has to behave well in his daily life, by using all the potential and skills to environmental conditions that is called environmental literacy. Thus a school based on environmental literacy can be defined as a school that underlies its citizens (students, educators, education staff) with the ability to behave well in their

daily lives, using all their potential and skills on environmental conditions (Sagino, 2019).

1.3. Maintaining and preserving the environmental

Environmental literacy is an important thing to instill in our children. It is not only the teacher's job, enforcing the educational pillar of learning to live together is also the duty of parents. Environmental literacy provides an understanding of the role of oneself in interacting with the surrounding environment, both natural and social. So that in the end education not only improves the quality of intellectual and professional abilities, but also increases attitudes, personality, and morals (<https://edukasi.kompas.com/read/2019/02/20/22201031/wa-spadai-bahaya-anak-tidak-has-an-environmental-literacy>).

Djoehaeni (2014) in her article states that environmental education plays a very important role in overcoming environmental problems that arise today. Environmental education is the responsibility of the community, government and educational institutions. Environmental education instilled early is expected to develop a positive attitude and towards environmental sustainability. Early childhood education is the basis for the development of individual character in his future life

Furthermore, Sagino (2019) states that environmental education is carried out in an integrated manner with existing subjects. This is a follow-up to the beautiful school program. The aim is to instill a foundation for environmental education from an early age, equip the younger generation with an understanding of the environment and educate students to behave caring about the environment.

2. METHODS

The current study investigates some perceptions perceived by early childhood teachers in teaching environmental education in this pandemic situation. The study employed 15 early childhood teachers as the samples with the semi-structured interviews as the research instrument. The data collection period took four (4) months in 2020. Content analysis was employed to analyze the data in the current study. The obtained data was validated by the members of the faculty.

3. RESULT DISCUSSION

Findings from the study showed that early childhood education (ECE) teachers have already taught their early students using some teaching strategies such as sending the tasks to be done by their students at home, by talking to their student via A, video conference with their students using google meet or WA to help their early students to be environmental literacy. Some tasks that should be done by the early students are watering their plants, cleaning the house, planting some plants, forming something from used goods. The teaching strategies used

by the teachers varies from one to another. The study implied that even though early students have to learn at home but their early education teachers can still teach them to maintain and preserve their environmental.

It is also found by this study that the early childhood education (ECE) teachers not really know about environmental education or environmental literacy. However, they did some task under some theme such as myself, plants, vegetables to ask their early students to do some activities related with environmental literacy.

4. CONCLUSION

Even though the early childhood education (ECE) teachers were not really understanding the concept of environmental literacy but the ECE teachers have already used some teaching strategies to help their early students to be environmental literacy. The teaching strategies used by the teachers varies from one to another. The study implied that even though early students have to learn at home but their early education teachers can still teach them to maintain and preserve their environmental.

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