Creativity and imagination in *messy play* among preschool children

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ABSTRACT: This study was conducted to examine creativity and imagination messy play among preschool children. The focus of the study was on identifying types of messy play that can help preschool children develop creativity and imagination as well as to identify the creativity and imagination of preschool children in messy play. The sample consists of two principals and four children aged five and six years at two preschools. Two principals were interviewed, and their responses recorded and transcribed into a data form. The eight children participated in three kinds of messy play activities that differ in materials. They were also interviewed, observed and recorded in video during the activities carried out and all results collected were transcribed in the form of data and analyzed on the development of creativity and imagination. Study design is based on qualitative. The result showed that types of messy play can help preschool children in the development of creativity and imagination and the creativity and imagination in preschoolers have been shown extensively in messy play activities carried out. In conclusion, it is undeniable that messy play can help preschool children develop their creativity and imagination. This study also suggests further research can focus on creativity and imagination messy play among children aged four and below as well as other aspects of development that can also be enhanced in messy play activities.

*Keywords:* Creativity, Imagination, messy play, children’s play, development of creativity

1 INTRODUCTION

Each human being has a mind and brain to differentiate between things. According to Sternberg (2004) the human mind has the main potential of creativity and wisdom. According to Toh (2003), and Yong (1989), many studies carried out in the context of education in Malaysia have given focus on nurturing intelligence while the aspect of nurturing creativity has not been given the attention it deserves. Unless creativity is nurtured and given better attention, the objective of producing innovative and balanced human capital will be hard to achieve (Mohamad & Nasruddin, 2008). The importance of creativity in developing a nation and society has long been acknowledged (Storm & Storm, 2002). Many scientists, leaders, historians, educators, psychologists as well as business people say that creativity is essential for the people of any country to live in optimum conditions especially in the era of globalization replete with challenges such as changes and competition (Mohamad & Nasruddin, 2008). Since Malaysia is rapidly developing into a developed nation by 2020, the creativity of its people is highly important. Albert Einstein (1879–1955) had stated that that “Imagination is better than knowledge”. Einstein had put forward many scientific theories far ahead of his time. Until now, imagination has encouraged scientists to succeed in science and technology. This success is the basis for national advancement. If imagination can be encouraged in children our nation can produce innovative human capital.

The need to produce a young generation with high creative ability and imagination cannot be denied. Hence, these abilities must be nurtured in the life of the younger generation especially among children. For children, the activity that is their right in life is play. Play is a natural activity and necessity in all children. They learn and explore through play because of their high imagination (Fauziah, 2009). Considering that creative ability and imagination are important