

Educational Toys for Inclusive Classroom

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Abstract

When students with disabilities or special needs receive special education services in the general education classroom, it is called inclusive education. Within educational literature, inclusion is described in many different ways. Moreover, inclusion is a lifelong process with the goal of providing full participation for all children and adults in education, community activities and work. On the other hand, inclusion is about a set of best practice strategies coupled with the moral view that all students bring value to the general education classroom.

What does a successful inclusive classroom look like? 1. In inclusive classrooms students have a variety of ways to access information and demonstrate what they know. 2. Inclusive classrooms focus on utilizing strengths. 3. Inclusive classrooms create a sense of belonging. Moreover, the teacher must have a good strategy in order to create a successful inclusive classroom. For it can help all students to get same knowledge and experiences. The strategy behind inclusion is to design supports for every student in the classroom. One of the strategies that can be used in the inclusive classroom is to make educational toys, as a learning media. It will help all students to understand the lesson, including the students with special need.

One of the strategies that can be used in the inclusive classroom is to make educational toys, as a learning media. It will help all students to understand the lesson, including the students with special need. The students with disabilities need to learn and play just like other students. They more easily understand the lesson by using the toys rather than just listening to the teacher. So, educational toys become an important thing and become an innovative approach during the learning process in the inclusive classroom.

Keywords : *educational toys, special needs student, inclusive classroom*

Background

Education for all is one of Indonesian government regulation. It hints for teachers, education practitioners and observers to fix the education program which has been going on. One of these programs is about inclusive education. It is written in the national education minister rule number 70 of 2009. This regulation contains of sign for inclusive education which ranging from planning to technical implementation. This regulation also requires local government to designate one or several schools to implement the program. So, hopefully the many regions in Indonesian have implemented the inclusive education.

Within educational literature, inclusion is described in many different ways. When students with disabilities or special needs receive special education services in the general education classroom, it is called inclusive education (Kasa & Theoharis, 2013). More, Kliwer (1999) says, inclusion is a lifelong process with the goal of providing full participation for all children and adults in education, community activities and work. On the other hand, inclusion is about a set of best practice strategies coupled with the moral view that all students bring value to the general education classroom (Causton-Theoharis & Theoharis (2008). Inclusion also talked about education model that does not discriminate against students who have disabilities, such as impairment, learning disability, autistic children and developmentally disable children. (Buklet Tulkit LIRP). In other words, inclusive education is a program that provides the opportunity for students with special needs to learn together with other students in general education.

Now, the question is, what does a successful inclusive classroom look like? Kasa and Theoharis (2013) stated that: 1. In inclusive classrooms students have a variety of ways to access information and demonstrate what they know. It means that each student is given the freedom to obtain information and explain what he knew based on his capabilities. For example, the student with William Syndrome is very good at explaining key concepts verbally and also demonstrating knowledge through hands on material. So, the teacher can assign the test orally or demonstrate by making something. 2. Inclusive classrooms focus on utilizing strengths. The teacher should focus on the skills and strengths which the students have, so it can help them to learn and develop the social relationship. And, 3. Inclusive classrooms create a sense of belonging. Teachers must ensure that every student gets the same rights. For example, the students with disabilities get the same supplies and materials as all of the others and they get same respect and support from the teacher and others.

Through that explanation, the teacher must have a good strategy in order to create a successful inclusive classroom. For it can help all students to get same knowledge and experiences. Schwarz (in Kasa & Theoharis, 2013) states the strategy behind inclusion is to design supports for every student in the classroom. One of the strategies that can be used in the inclusive classroom is to make educational toys, as a learning media. It will help all students to understand the lesson, including the students with special need. Moreover, Anderson (2005) stated that the students with disabilities need to learn and play just like other students. They more easily understand the lesson by using the toys rather than just listening to the teacher. They can explain or demonstrate what they know through the toys, such as the William Syndrome student. So, educational toys become an important thing and become an innovative approach during the learning process in the inclusive classroom.

Discussion

1. Understanding of Educational Toys

Toys are tool which the people, especially the children can play. Toys are used either to build the children specific skills or as distracters (Anderson, 2005). The toys which help the children to build their skills called educational toys. Elaine (2011) stated that educational toys are tools that help the children to learn something and develop their skills. So, it must educate the children and should instruct, promote intellectually, and develop the children motor, emotional, social, cognitive and physical skills. Moreover, the function of the educational toys is as a creative stimulus for the child, so it does not need expensive toys, as long as it is appropriate for the child can learn creativity through these toys.

2. Characteristic of Educational Toys :

The key concepts for the best choice of educational toys are fun, age appropriate, intuitive, accessible, flexible, expandable use, novel, safe and affordable. Also, the educational toys cannot use by children themselves; parents, teacher and peers as a partner to play together (U.S. Department of Education).

There are several characteristic of educational toys, such as:

- Specially made to stimulate the basic skills for child,
- It has many functions and benefits,
- There are several variations (so the stimulation obtained by the child),

- Encourage problem-solving abilities (apart pairs of toys or puzzles are very helpful for this process),
- Train the accuracy, patience and perseverance child. (so do not just simply enjoy, but the child also demanded thoroughness, patience and perseverance when to play it)
- Train the basic concepts (the child is taught to recognize and develop basic skills such as shape, color, texture, scale)
- Educational toys can also be used to train the fine motor nerves apart from the above function,
- Child's creativity is stimulated (so that the children will be more creative in its development through a variety of toys that are made)

3. Educational toys model for inclusive classroom

Educational toys which appropriate to the student, including the special needs students should not purchased by teacher. For the educational toys in the market place are usually expensive. The teacher can make the educational toys by herself. However, the teacher should be able to develop a model of educational toys by taking the key concepts and the characters of the toys are already discussed earlier. There are some examples of toys that could be made by teacher, such as:

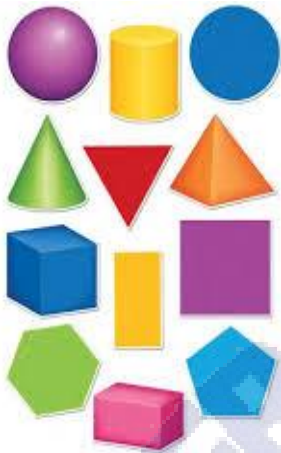
- **Play dough**



This toy can be used to develop fine motor skills. Moreover, this toy can be used as a medium to teach Language, Science or the other lessons. This game is particularly useful for students with special needs, because they helped in understanding the lessons through the color media.

The teacher can create their own play dough from ingredients that are safe to use for students. Safe play dough made form flour, salt, water, cooking oil and food color.

- **Geometric Shapes**



This toy is usually used by teachers as a medium in learning Mathematics. Students can learn shapes and counting numbers through this toy. Teachers can create their own toy is made from cardboard or color flannel.



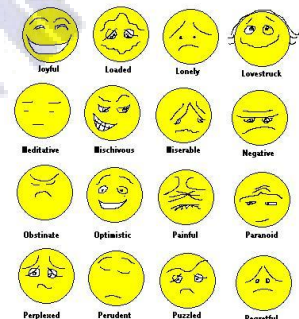
However, teacher can use this toy to teach Science or other lessons.

- **Flashcards**



This card is typically used in Language lessons. However, this kind of card can also be used for Math or other lesson. It depends on the topic being taught by teacher. Teachers can create this card from heavier paper that is cut into pieces and teacher draws animal, vegetable, fruit, alphabet or number.

However, the teacher must be alert to the needs of students before using or creating educational toys. Not at all toys can be used for students with special needs. Therefore, teachers must have the students' data such as their strength, talents, weaknesses and interests. It can help teacher to create the best strategy and innovative toys that right on target and in developing students' potential. For example, students with Asperger Syndrome, they like to direct communication, visual processing (thinking pictures and video), and attention to detail, but they have difficulty in developing motivation to study areas not of interest, perceiving emotional states of other, and expressing empathy in ways that others expect or understand. So, the teacher can use emotion card, as a toy, to help them to understand the emotions of another friend, and may appear a sense of empathy towards friends. It can be used in Social Studies, Religion or Civics.



Conclusion

Based on that description, it can be concluded that the teacher should have the best strategy in managing the inclusive class. So, that all students, including students with special needs can learn and get the same material. They gain the same knowledge and experiences. Moreover, the students can develop any potential that they have. One of the strategies that can be used to support the learning process is by using educational toys. Such toys can help students more easily to understand the material than just listening to the teacher's explanation. In addition, educational toys can be used as a classroom management tool. Therefore, the teacher must be careful in using and designing educational toys. The type of toys that used to be in appropriate with the students needs. Thus, the toys are able to educate and build students' potential, including the special needs students.

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Discussion

Ellysa

Question: What toys can be used in class?

Answer: Toys in general can be used to teach children by playing.