The Existence and Practice of Art For Children (AFC) Yogyakarta as A Non-Formal Art Education

✉Bambang Prihadi[1], Tjetjep Rohendi Rohidi[2], Tri Hartiti Retnowati[1]

[1]Department of Art Education, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia
[2]Department of Art Education, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

Abstract

This article examines the existence, role, and practice of Art for Children (AFC) Yogyakarta as a community art center for children in Yogyakarta. Due to its cultural and educational setting, the children's art center serves as an alternative for non-formal art education. The data were gathered by the passive participant observation, in-depth interview, and document review and analyzed by using the interactive model. The research results in four things. First, the establishment of the Art for Children (AFC) meets the needs of the self-actualization of both the artists and the parents in nurturing children's art. Teaching art to children becomes the honorable way for the artists to reach his self-fulfillment as artists as well as members of a society and, on the other hand, engaging their children's in the art center is the responsibility for the parents to fulfill their aesthetic needs and to support their children's education. Second, the lesson emphasizes the process rather than the result; it is oriented to the development of art educational values rather than artistic skills. The training process involves collaboration between the artists and the parents. The artists engage the parents in active participation of guiding the children. Third, through this strategy the children have produced original and creative drawings and paintings worthwhile for children's aesthetic education and cultural activity in the city.

Keywords: Art Education; Children's Art; Children's Art Center; Sanggar; Children's Drawing

INTRODUCTION

Arts and culture create cohesion, radiate reflection and insight, create communities that make people who they are, and give them consensus with the meaning of their society. Therefore, the arts and culture should be parts of the lives of children from an early age (Jelved, 2014). Art education for children in particular has a closer relationship with culture, because art is a way to learn to communicate with himself and with the world around him (Adu & Kissedu, 2016).

The general purpose of education is to nurture the individuality of the individual and to align that individuality with the organic unity of the social group from which it originated and in that respect, aesthetic education is fundamental and important. In addition to physical maturity, growth only appears in expression through sound or visual symbols, then education is the processing of ways of expression (Read, 1970). The essence of art education lies in its potential to provide a

✉Corresponding author: Jl. Colombo No.1, Sleman, Yogyakarta, Indonesia 55281
 E-mail: bambangpri@uny.ac.id

balance between intellectuality and sensibility, rationality and irrationality, as well as intellect and emotional sensitivity. Art education is also a means to sharpen moral sensitivity and character (Rohidi, 2000).

Nevertheless, because art is an activity that is commonly done by children, there are adults tend to assume that the art does not involve deep intellectual ability and less challenging for the child. Many parents also consider that because they are liked by children, art is surely an easy thing (Jefferson, 1969). Art education in Indonesia also faces a similar fundamental problem. Art education is still considered "less important, as" complementary" that "may exist, but not necessarily" (Rohidi, 2005). The impression that art education is not as important lesson as other subjects indicated by the lack of learning facilities and support from school managers (Salam, 2013).

Given the weakness of art education in schools, support for art education from outside formal education becomes an urgent need. This is the background of the emergence of non-formal education of children's art in the form of a community art center for children (*sanggar*) in Yogyakarta since the early 1970s. The first children's art center was *Sanggar Kartapustaka* which was founded by the Department of Art Education of the Teacher Training and Education Institute of Yogyakarta in cooperation with the Indonesian-Netherland Library Foundation *Kartapustaka* (Pamadhi, 2015). The establishment of the *sanggar* was then followed by other *sanggars* founded by art educators, including the well known *Sanggar Melati Suci* and *Sanggar Pratista* .

The children's art activity, especially drawing or painting, became a means of recreation for children with their parents and a children's art world in Yogyakarta. There were as many as 30 *sanggars* in Yogyakarta (http://regional.kompas.com, 2010). The existence of *sanggars* was not separated from competitions that mobilized children's painting activities in local, national, and even international competitions (Santosa and others 1994). Thus, the children's painting activity has become a part of the social process in Yogyakarta known as the city of education and culture of Indonesia.

As a social activity that involved many people in the urban environment, the children's art act inevitable got business intervention. The children's art competitions were contaminated by the economic interest that disserved the management of the children's art activity. The bias of the management caused the parents' interest in the *sanggars* and competitions. More and more *sanggars* were closed and the number of competitions decreased.

That condition, however, did not weaken the attention and spirit of the idealistic young artists in Yogyakarta in nurturing children's art. In 2004 Yuswantoro Adi and his colleagues established a community children's art center called Art for Children (AFC). It is a kind of *sanggar* but intended for the social purpose that parents can engage their children in drawing or painting activities freely, without any payment and requirements. This activity is funded by the local government. It can be said that this *sanggar* is the revival of the first idealistic *sanggar*.

Considering the limitations of the art education in schools i.e. formal education, *sanggars* play an important role in nurturing the children's aesthetic expression as well as and the cultural activities in Yogyakarta. Related to this matter, this research was conducted to describe and analyze the existence, role, and practice of Arf for Children as a form of a children's art center. The results of this research will be useful for the understanding of children's art in the context of nonformal art education for children and cultural activity as a whole.

METHODS

Approaches implemented in this research are children's art, art education, and socio-cultural context. Children's art is to discuss the characteristics of drawing done by children according to their growth

and development. Art education is to talk about the concepts underlying art education and methods used in teaching art to children. Socio-cultural context is to explain the social and cultural background of children's art activity.

The data collection was done by participant observation, document analysis, and in-depth interview. In the observation, the researchers limited their interaction with the persons being observed, recording data from drawing lessons using a camera and field notes. The document analysis was used to explore data from children's art exhibition catalogs, articles on websites and research journals, and other written documents. Researchers conducted an in-depth interview with the art teachers and parents, to gather information about their ideas and practices in helping children to draw.

Furthermore, the data analysis technique is done using the interactive data analysis model by Miles and Huberman (Rohidi, 2007) which comprises such steps as data collection process, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion or verification. In the process of analyzing the data, the teaching and learning process and the content of the children's drawings are separated into its constituent elements, interpreted, and discussed using some relevant theories.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Background and Existence of Art for Children (AFC)

Yogyakarta is the capital city of The Special Administrative Region of Yogyakarta. It can be traced back to The Mataram Kingdom in the 18th century. The palace that brings the power of traditional culture meets the power of colonial culture to produce modernization (Soemarjan (1981). This city is renown as the city of education. It is the place for educational institutions since the time before World War II, including Taman Siswa founded by Ki Hajar Dewantara (Haikal, Djumarwan, Dewi, Astuti, & Dwi S 2012). Given its backg-

round as a Javanese royal city in the past, Yogyakarta has preserved cultural heritage which especially encourages the people in this region to engage in arts activities. There have been here public and private art galleries, art museums, art forums, and art schools, so that art exhibitions and performances become a part of the people's lives.

Yogyakarta is also the center of children's art. Drawing or painting is a typical and phenomenal art activity for children in *sanggars* which has a long history and has its relations to the art education practice and the cultural life of the city. *Sanggar* traditionally denotes a kind of a guild where children are engaged in art training under the guidance of adult artists. The origins of *sanggars* can be traced back to 1970s and even much earlier. In 1940s pioneer painters like Sujojono and Affandi who founded *sanggars* for training young artists in Yogyakarta. These *sanggars* in turn became the inspiration for the development of children's the first art *sanggars*, namely Sanggar Karta Pustaka, Sanggar Melati Suci, and Sanggar Pratista which were, in turn, followed by many *sanggars* in the city and its surroundings. The advancement of *sanggars* brought up the drawing competitions held by the government institutions and the community, which some of them were commercially oriented.

The commercial drawing contests surely, however, had a negative effect that some art trainers and parents tent to focus on the contests rather than the educational values of the drawing training. It was unfortunate that certain commercial judges had set the standards for "good" drawing: (1) all-over drawing techniques, (2) full-color gradients, (3) and stereotypes of objects. These standards were taken for granted by many parents as the basis for the training and this fallacy caused inevitable conflict between the parents and the professional juries of the contests. Parents often protested against the juries about their judgments; they refused the juries to judge drawings which did not meet the

standards as the winners. Both the professional juries and the professional trainers denied the fake standards and commercial contests, so that many parents stopped involving their children in *the sanggars*. It was not until the early 2000s that the children's art activity decreased and more and more *sanggars* were closed. Since then the word "*sanggar* style" has been used to denote the typical style of children's drawing which its influence still persists until today.

Art for Children (AFC) is an art center for children established in 2004 by a young artist community in Yogyakarta. AFC is funded by the local government and held as a a part of the cultural center called *Taman Budaya Yogyakarta* (TBY). The children's art activity is held every Sunday from 10:00 through 12:00 during the year in the Societet Building located in the center of the city. The art activities include visual art, music, dance, and theater. The visual art activities comprise drawing or painting and making three-dimensional art form, but this research is especially focused on the first activity.

AFC can be considered as a revival of an idealistic form of children's art center or *sanggar* that attempts to foster the children's aesthetic development. The purpose of this art center is to train or, precisely, to guide children in drawing or painting as self-expression. This *sanggar* was established based on the ideal of some young contemporary artists—among others namely Yuswantoro Adi and Kuss Indarto who felt disturbed with the degradation of the children's art activity caused by commercial *sanggars* and children's painting contests that ended with uncreative stereotypical drawing and a skill-oriented process of training.

The drawing activity in AFC has been guided by Yuswantoro Adi and Dwi Winarni who graduated from Indonesia Institute of the Arts Yogyakarta. Although they both have no background of formal art education, they have much concern for children education and have long experience in teaching drawing to children in elementary schools. In doing their trai-

ning, they are assisted by Imam Andakara who replaced Mochammad Fajar—both of them graduated from Department of Art Education of Yogyakarta State University.

AFC is intended to be a social service, so that children and teenagers can join it voluntarily and free of payment and any requirements. The participants are children aged three to nine who most of them come from the lower middle-class families. They are highly motivated by their parents who are aware of the importance of children's art as a special ability or talent that needs to be developed. In accordance with the mission of the children's art center, however, they agree that the art activities in AFC are more oriented to educational art process rather than to artistic skills.

The Teaching Strategy and Process

The teaching strategy applied in first *sanggars* is oriented towards the development of aesthetic sensitivity and free expression. Soesatyo (1984) summarizes some principles of teaching to art children as follows: (1) We must look at the child's painting as a recording of his or her personality; (2) During the time the child works, always give the child wide opportunity to express the important experience in his life (opportunity of self-expression); (3) nurture the child's familiar relationship with his natural environment with his or her sensitivity; (4) Good technique development is done by tracing and encouraging the child's own experience; (5) Do not attempt to provide a particular theory or technique based on the notion of an adult; (6) Give corrections or assistance if necessary and do not force the child to do things; (7) Besides the final results, note also that the process should always be kept in a free and fresh atmosphere; (8) The guidance is given in the form of a question, for example: What image is it? How many hands does the mother have? Where are the leaves of the tree?; (9) Further guidance should be given through direct observation of actual objects; (10) If possible, invited the child to find his "faults" with his own experience; (11) Do not rush to demand a naturalist

style.

In accordance to those principles, Yuswantoro Adi and Dwi Winarni are aware of the basic values of art creation i.e. the freedom of expression and creativity in delivering ideas into visual art forms and these instances also, by and large, apply to children. They personally have much care about children and children's art which is unique and full of imagination. They, therefore, use a strategy of teaching that are suitable with those aspects of art creation as well as children's conditions and abilities.

To give a wide space, the drawing lesson is conducted in a porch of the Societet Building where children can sit on the floor while doing their work freely accompanied by their fathers or mothers. The presence of the parents here is needed to collaborate with the teacher in guiding their children individually, because it is impossible for the teacher to serve each of the children intensively. The parents' role is mainly to help their children in preparing drawing materials and cleaning up, but they may give as minimum as possible assistance in solving the drawing problems. They should avoid dictation and encourage their children to work independently based on his or her own ideas and way of drawing.

The teaching of drawing or painting art in AFC shows the application of the creative expression method, which according to Jefferson (1969), including such principles as follows: (1) Every child has the opportunity to choose his or her own ideas or subject matter; (2) He or she has freedom to express it; (3) He has the right to organize it in his or her own way. To stimulate the children in the first lessons, however, they are introduced to drawing based on numbers and basic geometric shapes. In the later lesson the teacher stimulates the children with familiar themes.

As shown in Figure 1, all the participants sit on the floor forming a half circle, where the teacher, Dwi Winarsih, is at the center and surrounded by the children with their parents. By this formation, she could interact with children and their parents directly. First of all, she gave an explanation about the lesson including the theme or subject matter, form or composition, and technique that will be used in the drawing program. To assure the participants' understanding, she gave one or more examples while explaining some concepts or aspects as clearly as possible. She intentionally gave a more detailed explanation of certain concepts and warnings only to the parents in order that they would use them in guiding their children, such as the function of the background and some principles of composition in a drawing. While giving her examples, she also presented appreciation of some children' drawings or paintings done by other children or posted in catalogs to attract the participants' interests.

Figure 1. Teacher Giving Introduction to Children and Parents

After the introduction session, all the children started doing their drawing independently. While inspecting each child's work, the teacher gave an appreciation of his or her work and only helped him or her if needed. If a child had a problem that his or her parent could not resolve, for example in drawing people, the teacher would encourage and give some directions to the child to resolve it as possible as he or she could. If the child failed to do it, the teacher would give a minimal example directly on the child's work that should be continued by the child.

The children generally apply the usual steps of drawing or painting i.e.

drawing a sketch of objects using a pencil and then finished it with colors (Figure 2). Some children sometimes fail to complete their works in one meeting and they can finish it at home or in the next meeting. Their works vary in terms of objects and ways of handling the coloring materials. Crayons are used as the main materials, but children are also introduced to use acrylic media.

This practice of teaching is in line with the necessary art learning condition insisted by Mattews (as cited in Kolbe, 1993) that interaction between a child and an interested, responsive and involved adult, is essential. They encourage each child to draw and talk in order that he or she can express his or her ideas and express them smoothly. This point is accordance with the finding of Einarsdottir, Dockett, and Perry (2009) that while drawing and talking children construct and convey meaning and the combination of the drawing and the narrative is powerful means of helping children to draw.

While drawing, there were children who talked either to themselves or to others, but there were those who unaware of the conversation around them. Gardner (as cited in Coats & Coats, 2006) calls them as 'committed visualizers'.

The drawings and paintings resulted from the program were exhibited at the end of the year (Figure 3). Besides the annual local exhibition, AFC also presented their works in the national exhibition, for example Indonesia Children's Art Festival in Galeri Nasional Jakarta in 2010. Through this exhibition, AFC socialized its program children and attempted to promote parents' care for children's art. In 2017 the children's art center held workshops on teaching drawing to children (Figure 4). This workshop was aimed to train parents as well as preschool and elementary school teachers to help children to draw or paint pictures.

The children's art center confirms the important role of adults in children's drawing. As prompted by Anning (2002), children's drawing is a socio-cultural activity. Adults model drawing behaviors on the basis of shared interests and activities.

Figure 2. Child Doing Her Drawing

Figure 3. Annual Exhibition of Children's Works of Drawing

Figure 4. Workshop of Teaching Drawing

The Children's Works of Drawing

The following are examples of drawings created by the children of AFC. Using the method of drawing based on numbers, Azam (5 years old) produced a drawing shown in Figur 5. In this kind of drawing, numbers are associated with the forms of certain objects. He drew all ob-

jects based on numbers from zero to nine in the order of lines, resembling the way to write in a page. In the painting, for examples, the number "0" is developed into an orange, a lion, and a glass, number "2" into the shape of a goose, number "3" into a snake and an elephant, number "4" into a ship, number "6" into a snowman, and the number "9" into an owl. Azam first drew objects in a schematic way and then filled the shapes with colors, but colors here are used in connection with reality.

Figure 5. Drawing based on Numbers by Azam (5 years old)

Drawing based on numbers here is essentially an experiment to develop the shape of objects based on familiar forms. The numbers here serve as a stimulus to provoke the child's memory of the shapes of objects close to the shape of the number, and make it easier for the child to draw the objects. They are, however, depicted separately, not thematically interrelated and arranged in the form of a register. This work shows the preschematic stage of children drawing. According to Lowenfeld and Brittain (1982), during this stage images begin to resemble symbols, but these may only be understood by the child. Colors may also begin to be more realistic than they were in drawings of younger children.

Drawing based on basic geometric shapes is shown in Figure 6. Shasha (5 years old) drew two flowers in a pot by developing circles, half circles, and a trapezoidal.

Figure 6. *Sunflowers* by Shasha (5 years old)

Shasha here uses the freedom to use colors that the two large flowers are colored based on emotion rather than accordance with reality, except for the yellow color for flowers and green for the leaves. The large size of flowers indicates that she is more concerned with flowers than the stems and leaves of the flower and the pot. In addition to these main objects, she freely added the sun placed in the upper right corner and a doll in the lower right corner of the page and dots with various colors as the background. However, the sun and the doll may only exist as a stereotype in children's drawing and have nothing to do with the sunflower. The objects in the page are arranged side by side or in juxtaposition. She used a marker to draw the outlines the did the coloring with pastels. This drawing has a uniqueness in the rhythm resulted from the repetition and variation of line, shapes, and colors.

In the theme-based painting, the teacher provides a short theme, "smile" for example, then the children are asked to make their own interpretation of what should be drawn based on the theme. To expand the children's interpretation and imagination, the teacher states that the act of smiling is not limited to people, but also to things in the surroundings. Aisha (7 years old) drew a picture of a smiling tree with a marker and crayons (Figure 7).

Figure 7. *Smiling Tree* by Aisha (7 years old)

In her drawing, Aisha combines forms of a tree and a human. The leaves are drawn resembling the hair and the pair of branches resembling the hands. The idea that Aisha wants to express is that a tree can smile happily like a human. Therefore, he depicted the lips in the act of smiling, the uplifted hands, and the opened fingers, giving the impression of excitement. As the main object, the tree and the grass are drawn schematically, and the background is just filled with outlines of abstract shapes with varying colors.

Figure 8 shows the work of Krishna (5 years) which is also based on the theme of "smile" but with a different interpretation. According to Lowenfeld and Brittain (1982), an automobile becomes an object of interest to boys in the *preschematic* stage. In his drawing, Krishna depicts a bus with the idea of a human face, with opened eyes and a smiling mouth. Krishna first depicted the bus and then added the details of the object and other objects:. roads with stones, grass, trees, the sun, and clouds.

Krishna produced the above painting using markers and crayons. The use of markers here is only visible on the image of a bus and the sun, which indicates that these are the main objects whereas the other objects are added as complementary

items. The colors are used in accordance with reality in general, such as gray and black for roads and stones, green for grass and leaves, brown for tree trunks, blue for the sky, yellow for the sun, and black for birds.

Figure 8. *Smiling Bus* by Krishna (5 years old)

Although Krishna is only five years old, his drawing shows some characteristics of the schematic stage (7-9 years). In this case he does not draw an automobile in general, based on a combination of simple shapes of a rectangle and two circles, but more based on reality. The picture shows the authenticity of the forms created by the child. The trees, for example, are depicted with details of leaves.

Another example is a drawing by Jehan (6 years old) titled *My Cat* (Figure 9). It can be called a painting because it is made with wet media. Jehan used acrylic paints in a transparent as well as dense manner. The first step was coloring the top of the canvas with blue paint in a transparent way as the sky or background and the bottom with light brown to suggest the ground. The next step was drawing the cat by adding yellow paint over the background. The cat's head was further emphasized with yellow paint, while its body, legs, and tail of the cat are emphasized with a bright, transparent red paint.

On the cat's head was then added details with dark red and pink contours. The pink paint was also used to draw the mustache and stripes on the body and legs. The next step was adding a deep red paint to emphasize the details of the ears and face.

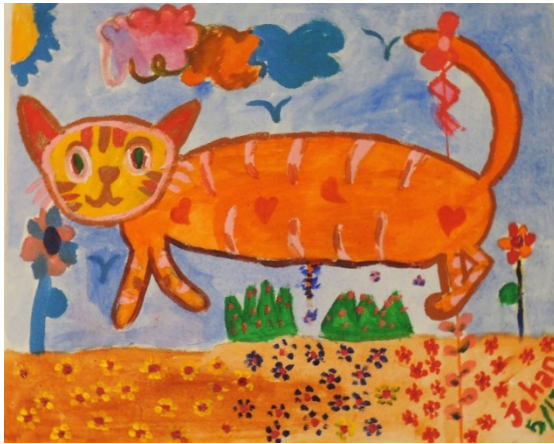The last step was drawing the other objects such as bushes, flowers, clouds, and the sun.

Figure 9. *My Cat* by Jehan (6 years old)

Based on the analysis of the drawings created by AFC participants, several general conclusions can be drawn: First, the characteristics of the children's drawings are approximately in line with the stages of development according to Lowenfeld and Brittain (1982). Second, through the methods of teaching used each child is able to develop his or her own ideas and manipulate drawing materials in his or her own way. Third, each child is able to develop his or her own symbols to express their ideas, although there have still been symbols that become stereotypes, such as the symbol of the sun, clouds, trees, flowers, and birds. Fourth, the children's drawing and painting show the aesthetic qualities that deserve appreciation. The results of children's painting in accordance with the approach used, namely individual guidance, freedom of expression, and constructivist learning.

CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation above, several main points can be drawn. First, Art for Children (AFC) in Yogyakarta becomes the revival of idealistic children's art center founded in the 1970s, especially *Sanggar Karta Pustaka* and *Sanggar Melati Suci*. The establishment of the children's art center meets the needs of the self-actualization of both the artists and the parents. Teaching art to children is the honorable way for the artists to reach his self-fulfillment as artists as well as members of a society and, on the other hand, engaging their children's in the art center is the responsibility for the parents to fulfill their aesthetic needs and to support their children's education. Second, AFC mainly applies creative expression method of teaching art to children based on themes. Consistent with recent research results, this art lesson emphasizes the process rather than the result; it is oriented to the self- expression and art educational values rather than artistic skills. The training process involves collaboration between the artists and the parents. The artists engage the parents in active participation of guiding the children.

Fourth, through this strategy the children have produced original and creative drawings and paintings worthwhile for children's aesthetic education and cultural activity in the city (Adu, 2016).

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