

Arts-Based Learning Environment Management for Early Childhood Creativity: A Literature Study

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse the role of arts-based learning management in supporting creativity development in Early Childhood Education (ECE). Creativity is a fundamental aspect of child development that requires stimulation through meaningful and engaging learning experiences. This study employed a systematic literature review approach by analysing 20 peer-reviewed articles published between 2015 and 2025. The articles were retrieved from three major academic databases, namely Google Scholar, ERIC, and Scopus, using the keywords *arts-based learning*, *learning environment*, *creativity*, *early childhood education*, and *learning management*. Only full-text articles published in reputable national and international journals and directly related to the research focus were included in the review. The findings indicate that arts-based learning significantly contributes to the enhancement of children's creativity, particularly when supported by effective learning management practices, a conducive learning environment, and innovative pedagogical approaches. Furthermore, the integration of arts into learning positively influences children's cognitive, social-emotional, and self-expression development. The review also reveals that the successful implementation of arts-based learning depends not only on artistic activities themselves but also on the systematic management of learning environments and resources. This study concludes that arts-based learning should be strategically planned, implemented, and evaluated within ECE settings to optimise children's creative potential. Future research is recommended to examine the effectiveness of arts-based learning environment management through empirical studies in diverse early childhood educational contexts.

Keywords: art-based learning, learning management, creativity, early childhood, learning environment

INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (ECE) serves as a crucial foundation for fostering various dimensions of children's development, including creativity, which plays an essential role in problem-solving, critical thinking, and innovation (Firjatullah, 2025). During early childhood, children experience rapid cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth, making this period highly sensitive to educational stimulation and learning experiences (Amalia et al., 2025). Ideally, learning in ECE should provide children with ample opportunities to explore ideas, experiment with materials, express emotions, and develop imagination through meaningful interactions with their environment (Rahmawati et al., 2022).

However, the reality in many early childhood classrooms remains inconsistent with these principles. Learning activities are frequently dominated by teacher-directed instruction, repetitive worksheet completion, and product-oriented tasks that emphasize correct answers rather than creative exploration. For example, children are often required to colour predefined pictures, copy teacher-made drawings, or complete uniform craft projects with predetermined outcomes. Such practices may limit opportunities for

divergent thinking, experimentation, and self-expression, thereby constraining the development of creativity.

One approach that has been widely recognized for promoting creativity is arts-based learning. This approach enables children to learn through various artistic experiences, including drawing, painting, music, dance, storytelling, dramatic play, and other creative activities that encourage authentic self-expression (Salma & Nurlina, 2024). From a theoretical perspective, arts-based learning functions not merely as a recreational activity but also as an effective pedagogical strategy for enhancing cognitive development, imagination, communication skills, and socio-emotional competencies (Maharani et al., 2025).

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that participation in arts activities contributes positively to children's creative thinking, imagination, flexibility, and confidence in expressing ideas (Alghufali, 2024; Rahmawati et al., 2025). Furthermore, research suggests that learning environments enriched with visual stimuli, diverse materials, and creative resources can increase children's engagement and learning motivation (Suryana et al., 2022; Idhayani et al., 2023). Similarly, studies on learning environments in early childhood settings indicate that classroom design, spatial organization, and the availability of educational media significantly influence children's cognitive and socio-emotional development (Safitri et al., 2020).

Despite these findings, existing literature predominantly focuses on the effectiveness of arts activities or the outcomes of creativity development. Research has rarely examined how the management of arts-based learning environments—including planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating learning spaces and resources—supports children's creativity in a systematic manner (Nugraini & Pamungkas, 2023). As a result, there remains limited understanding of how educational institutions can strategically manage arts-based learning environments to maximize children's creative potential.

This gap is particularly important because creativity development depends not only on the presence of artistic activities but also on how the learning environment is intentionally designed and managed. A flexible, aesthetically stimulating, resource-rich, and child-centred environment can provide continuous opportunities for exploration, experimentation, and creative expression (Mayar et al., 2022). Therefore, effective management of arts-based learning environments becomes a critical component in supporting creativity development.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on arts-based learning environment management as an integrated framework for fostering early childhood creativity. Unlike previous studies that primarily investigate the impact of individual art activities or classroom resources, this study comprehensively examines the managerial dimensions of arts-based learning environments, including planning, organization, implementation, and evaluation processes that support creativity development in early childhood settings.

Based on this background, the main objective of this study is to analyse how the management of arts-based learning environments contributes to the development of early childhood creativity through a literature review approach. Specifically, this study aims to: (1) identify key principles and strategies for managing arts-based learning environments in early childhood education; (2) examine the relationship between learning environment management and children's creativity development; and (3) analyse factors that influence the successful implementation of arts-based learning environments. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the field of early childhood educational

management and provide practical guidance for educators in designing and managing learning environments that effectively nurture children's creativity.

METHOD

This study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) approach to examine how arts-based learning environment management supports creativity development in early childhood education. A systematic literature review was selected because it enables a structured, transparent, and comprehensive synthesis of existing research findings related to the topic. The unit of analysis consisted of peer-reviewed scientific articles focusing on arts-based learning, learning environments, creativity, and early childhood education.

The literature search was conducted between January and March 2026 using three major academic databases: Scopus, ERIC, and Google Scholar. These databases were selected because they provide extensive coverage of educational research and include both international and regional publications relevant to early childhood education.

To identify relevant studies, several search strings were developed using Boolean operators (AND, OR). The primary search string was: ("art-based learning" OR "arts education" OR "creative arts learning") AND ("learning environment" OR "classroom environment" OR "educational environment") AND (creativity OR "creative development") AND ("early childhood education" OR preschool OR kindergarten)

Additional searches were conducted using alternative keyword combinations to ensure comprehensive coverage of the literature.

The article selection process followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework, consisting of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion stages. During the identification stage, a total of 156 records were retrieved from the three databases. Duplicate articles were removed, resulting in 132 unique records. In the screening stage, titles and abstracts were reviewed to assess their relevance to the research objectives, reducing the number of eligible studies to 48 articles. Subsequently, full-text assessment was conducted based on predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. After the eligibility evaluation, 20 articles met all criteria and were included in the final review.

The inclusion criteria were: (1) articles published in peer-reviewed national or international journals; (2) studies focusing on arts-based learning, learning environments, creativity, or learning management in early childhood education settings; (3) publications published between 2016 and 2025; and (4) articles available in full-text format. The exclusion criteria included conference abstracts, book reviews, non-scientific publications, duplicate studies, and articles that did not directly address the relationship between arts-based learning environments and creativity development.

Data extraction was conducted systematically by recording information related to research objectives, methodology, participant characteristics, learning environment management practices, and findings regarding creativity development. The collected data were analysed using thematic synthesis. Research findings were grouped into recurring themes, including planning of arts-based learning environments, organization of learning resources, implementation of arts-based activities, environmental support factors, and their contribution to children's creativity development. This thematic analysis enabled the identification of patterns, similarities, and differences across studies, providing a comprehensive understanding of how arts-based learning environment management can foster creativity in early childhood education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This results section presents research findings based on an analysis of 20 scientific articles relevant to arts-based learning and learning management in early childhood education. A summary of the results of the study is presented in the form of Table 1.

Table 1. Article Review Results

No	Author and Year	Title	Result
1	Eiserman et al. (2017)	Drawing Out Understanding: Arts-Based Learning and Gifted Children	Arts-based learning helps to improve children's understanding of concepts and thinking and expression skills in a more in-depth manner.
2	O’Gorman (2017)	Sustainability, the Arts and Big Numbers: The Challenge of Researching Children’s Responses to Chris Jordan’s Images	The use of art in learning can help children understand complex issues such as sustainability, but it requires ethical considerations and careful planning so as not to negatively impact the child.
3	Blaisdell et al. (2018)	Look Who's Talking: Using Creative, Playful Arts-Based Methods in Research with Young Children	An art-play approach helps children express experiences in an inclusive way but requires a balance between direction and freedom.
4	Davis (2018)	The Engagement Tree: Arts-based Pedagogies for Environmental Learning	The "Tree-Mappa" art project enhances student engagement and understanding of the environment through creative experiences and group reflection. Emphasizing the importance of art strategies for meaningful learning and commitment to the environment.
5	Hamilton et al. (2019)	Early Childhood Arts Curriculum: A Cross-Cultural Study	A comparison of the art curriculum of 5–6-year-olds in Beijing and Australia emphasizes the importance of a planned curriculum to support learning experiences and the potential for social change through arts education.
6	Andersen et al. (2019)	Art of Learning-An Art-Based Intervention Aimed at Improving Children’s Executive Functions	Art-based interventions improve children's executive function skills and significantly support social development, collaboration, and confidence.
7	Clough & Nutbrown (2019)	Exploring the Place of Arts-Based Approaches in Early Childhood Education Research	The arts-based approach provides an in-depth understanding of children's learning experiences, but its use is still limited in early childhood research.
8	Chien & Yang (2019)	Arts in Transformative Learning: An Arts-Based Duoethnography	The arts-based approach acts as a means of transforming learning and improving reflection and teaching practice in the educational process.
9	Hayes et al. (2021)	Professional Development in Arts Education for Early Childhood Education: A Creative Exchange Model	Collaboration between teachers and artists through a creative exchange model improves the quality of learning, enriches the learning environment, and encourages changes in pedagogical practices and the use of space and media.
10	Suryana et al. (2022)	Management of Creative Early Childhood Education Environment in Increasing Golden Age Creativity	A creatively managed learning environment enhances early childhood creativity through appropriate media and exploratory approaches.

11	Chapman & Gorman (2022)	Transforming Learning Environments in Early Childhood Contexts Through the Arts: Responding to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals	An arts-based approach can transform the early childhood learning environment to be more inclusive, creative, and meaningful and supports the development of children's understanding and expression.
12	Nugraheni & Pamungkas (2022)	Analysis of the Implementation of Art Learning in Early Childhood Education	Art learning plays an important role in developing children's creativity, expression, and cognitive abilities and supporting the play-based learning process.
13	Nugraini & Pamungkas (2023)	Art Extracurricular Learning Management in Kindergarten	The management of art extracurricular learning in kindergarten uses POAC (Planning, Organizing, Actuating, Controlling). The results showed that the management process was running well, including music (angklung), fine arts (painting), and dance (dancing), with systematic assessment and reporting.
14	Fajrie et al. (2024)	Natural Material-Based Art Learning Model Increases Aesthetic Experiences in Early Childhood	Art learning based on natural materials effectively improves the aesthetic experience of early childhood significantly using the environment as a learning medium.
15	Alghufali (2024)	Artistic Activities and Developing Creative Thinking Skills among Children in Early Childhood	Art activities play an important role in developing children's creative thinking skills and supporting cognitive, emotional, and social development, influenced by pedagogical factors, parental support, and the environment.
16	Salma & Nurlina (2024)	Learning Management Strategies to Increase Early Childhood Art Creativity	Learning management strategies such as projects, interactive learning, and technology integration have been proven to enhance early childhood artistic creativity, as well as provide practical direction for teachers and parents.
17	Siette et al. (2024)	Revitalizing Preschool Minds: A Fresh Approach to Arts-Based Brain Health Interventions	Art interventions improve child participation, material comprehension, and motivation, supporting cognitive development and positive habits from an early age.
18	Stevens-Ballenger & Wilson (2024)	Arts Integration in an Early Childhood Education Setting: The Role of the Teacher	Teachers play an important role in the integration of the arts in early childhood education; The research identified 9 pedagogical themes framed in 3 main themes: learning planning, responsive teaching, and learning documentation, supporting the child's overall learning experience.
19	Iryouw & Pamungkas (2025)	3R-Based Tifa Papuan Music Art Learning Innovation to Develop Creativity at Bhayangkari 04 Sentani Kindergarten	The 3R-based tifa music learning model is effective in increasing children's creativity, sound exploration, collaboration, reflection, as well as fostering environmental awareness and cultural identity from an early age.
20	Rs. et al. (2025)	AUD Art Packaging Management	Effective art packaging in early childhood education requires structured planning, the use of local materials, thematic approaches, and parental involvement to support the development of children's expression and creativity.

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that art-based learning, learning management, and learning environment management have an important role in supporting the development

of early childhood creativity. These findings will be discussed in more depth in the discussion section.

Discussion

Children's Art and Creativity Based Learning

Arts-based learning has a significant role in developing early childhood creativity. Art activities such as drawing, painting, music, dance, and drama provide opportunities for children to express ideas, develop imagination, and build creative thinking skills (Salma & Nurlina, 2024). Children's involvement in art activities has been proven to improve children's creative thinking, imagination, and self-expression skills (Alghufali, 2024; Andersen et al., 2019).

These findings are in line with research showing that art activities contribute positively to a child's cognitive, social-emotional, and learning development (Nugraheni & Pamungkas, 2022). Learning art based on natural materials has been proven to be able to significantly improve children's aesthetic experience (Fajrie et al., 2024). In addition, the use of an art approach in learning can also increase children's involvement and provide a more meaningful learning experience (Davis, 2018).

Furthermore, the art-based learning approach focuses not only on the end result, but also on the process of exploration that children experience (Eiserman et al., 2017). Children are given the opportunity to experiment and develop ideas freely, which has an impact on increasing confidence and divergent thinking skills (Blaisdell et al., 2018). This shows that art-based learning provides space for children to develop their creative potential optimally (Siette et al., 2024).

The implications of these findings show that art-based learning needs to be optimally integrated in learning activities in Early Childhood Education. Teachers need to provide a wide space for children to express themselves through various art media and create a learning environment that supports exploration and creativity (Stevens-Ballenger & Wilson, 2024). Thus, learning is not only results-oriented, but also in the process of developing children's creativity.

Theoretically, these findings are in line with Vigotsky's view (Veerman et al., 2023) which emphasizes that children's creativity develops through social interaction and symbolic experiences, including through artistic activities. In addition, Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences (Fadhilaturrahmi et al., 2024) it also explains that children's intelligence is not singular, but diverse, including musical, visual-spatial, and kinesthetic intelligence that can be developed through art-based learning.

Arts-Based Learning Management

Based on the results of the analysis, art-based learning management is an important factor in supporting the success of early childhood creativity development. Structured learning management allows art activities not only to take place spontaneously, but to be systematically designed to achieve children's developmental goals. This can be seen from the application of management functions such as planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating in art learning activities (Nugraini & Pamungkas, 2023).

Effective learning management strategies are demonstrated using diverse approaches, such as project-based learning, interactive learning, and the integration of technology in art activities. This approach has been proven to be able to increase children's creativity because it provides an opportunity to actively participate and explore ideas more broadly (Salma & Nurlina, 2024).

In the context of implementation, the role of teachers is very crucial in managing art-based learning. Teachers not only play the role of facilitators, but also as activity designers, directors of the learning process, and evaluators of child development. Research shows that the integration of the arts in learning requires careful planning, responsive teaching, and ongoing learning documentation (Stevens-Ballenger & Wilson, 2024).

Other findings also show that good management of art learning requires synergy between activity planning, selection of appropriate media, and involvement of the surrounding environment, including parents. Well-organized management will create a more meaningful learning experience and support the optimal development of children's creativity (Rs. et al., 2025).

The implications of these findings suggest that art-based learning management needs to be designed comprehensively and sustainably. Educators in Early childhood are expected to be able to integrate management principles in every stage of learning, so that art activities are not only an additional activity, but also an important part of a directed and effective learning process.

These findings can be interpreted through the lens of educational management theory proposed by George R. Terry (Nugraini & Pamungkas, 2023), which emphasizes four essential management functions: planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling. In the context of early childhood education, the reviewed studies indicate that effective arts-based learning environments are not created incidentally but through systematic management processes. The planning function is reflected in teachers' preparation of creative learning spaces, selection of age-appropriate artistic materials, and design of activities that encourage exploration and self-expression. The organizing function is evident in the arrangement of classroom spaces, learning resources, and artistic materials to ensure accessibility and flexibility for young children. Meanwhile, the actuating function is demonstrated through teachers' active facilitation of arts-based activities that encourage children to experiment, communicate ideas, and engage in imaginative play. Finally, the controlling function appears in the continuous observation and evaluation of children's participation, creative behaviours, and learning outcomes, enabling teachers to refine and improve the learning environment.

These findings also support Mulyasa's concept of learning management (Bahera & Nurlina, 2024), which argues that effective learning outcomes depend on teachers' ability to systematically plan, implement, and evaluate educational activities. In the PAUD context, the literature reviewed shows that children's creativity develops more optimally when teachers intentionally manage arts-based learning environments through structured planning, responsive implementation, and ongoing evaluation. For instance, classrooms that provide diverse artistic materials, flexible learning spaces, and opportunities for child-led exploration tend to foster higher levels of imagination, originality, and creative expression. Therefore, the present findings suggest that the development of creativity in early childhood is influenced not only by participation in arts activities themselves but also by the quality of management practices that shape and sustain the arts-based learning environment.

Creative Learning Environment Management

The learning environment has a very important role in supporting the development of early childhood creativity, especially in the context of art-based learning. A properly designed environment can provide stimuli that encourages children to explore, imagine, and express themselves freely. Good environmental management includes not only

physical aspects, but also a conducive learning atmosphere and supports children's active interaction (Clough & Nutbrown, 2019).

The findings show that a learning environment that is media-rich, flexible, and aesthetically pleasing can increase children's involvement in learning activities. Space arrangement, availability of tools and materials, and access to various art media are important factors in creating a meaningful learning experience (Hayes et al., 2021). An environment that provides a wide selection of activities allows children to choose, try and develop ideas independently (Suryana et al., 2022).

In addition, the use of contextual media such as natural materials and recycled materials has also been proven to increase children's creativity. Activities that involve direct exploration of the surrounding environment provide a more concrete and engaging learning experience for children. This can be seen in the application of art learning based on natural materials and the 3R approach that encourages children to be creative while getting to know the environment and surrounding culture (Fajrie et al., 2024; Iryouw & Pamungkas, 2025).

An art-based learning environment also plays a role in building children's emotional and social engagement. Art activities carried out in a supportive environment allow children to collaborate, communicate, and develop confidence in expressing ideas. A creatively designed environment not only encourages cognitive development, but also the social-emotional aspects of the child (Chapman & Gorman, 2022).

The implications of these findings suggest that the management of an arts-based learning environment needs to be a major concern in early childhood education. Teachers are expected to be able to design a learning environment that is not only safe and comfortable, but also rich in stimuli that can trigger children's creativity. A well-planned environment will create a more meaningful learning experience and support a child's development holistically.

Theoretically, these findings are in line with the concept of the learning environment in the Reggio Emilia approach which views the environment as *the third teacher*, namely as an important element that also influences the child's learning process. In addition, Bronfenbrenner's theory (Nurlina et al., 2025; Rukajat et al., 2025) about developmental ecology also emphasizes that the environment has a big role in shaping children's development, including in aspects of creativity and social interaction.

Innovation and Implementation of Art Learning in Early Childhood Education

Innovation in art learning is one of the important factors in improving the quality of early childhood learning and creativity. Various studies show that the application of innovative art learning models can provide a more interesting, contextual, and meaningful learning experience for children. This innovation is not only related to methods, but also media, approaches, and the integration of cultural and environmental values in learning (Fajrie et al., 2024).

The findings show that the use of natural materials-based learning models and the 3R (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) approach is one of the effective forms of innovation in art learning. Activities that involve making artwork from recycled materials not only increase children's creativity, but also foster environmental awareness and understanding of local culture (Iryouw & Pamungkas, 2025; Fajrie et al., 2024). In addition, cultural-based art learning such as the use of traditional musical instruments also provides a contextual learning experience and strengthens children's cultural identity.

Art learning innovations are also seen in the application of collaborative and integrative approaches, where art activities are associated with various aspects of child

development, such as cognitive, social-emotional, and language. This approach allows children to learn holistically through fun and meaningful experiences. In addition, the integration of art in various learning activities can also increase children's involvement and enrich their learning experience (Hamilton et al., 2019).

In a broader context, art learning innovations are also supported by technological developments and modern learning approaches. The use of digital media and a cross-cultural collaborative approach show that art learning can be developed more broadly and adaptive to the needs of the times. This provides an opportunity for educators to create a more varied and innovative learning experience (Chien & Yang, 2019).

The implications of these findings show that innovations in art learning need to be continuously developed to address the challenges of early childhood education in the modern era. Teachers are expected to be able to develop various learning models that are creative, contextual, and in accordance with the characteristics of children. These innovations not only increase children's creativity, but also shape attitudes, values, and skills needed in life.

Theoretically, these findings are in line with the theory of constructivism (Piaget) (Nurlina, 2023) which emphasizes that children build their knowledge through direct experience and interaction with the environment. In addition, the creative approach according to Craft (Salpina et al., 2026) it also emphasizes that children's creativity can develop optimally, they are given the opportunity to explore, innovate, and be actively involved in the learning process.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that art-based learning has a significant role in developing early childhood creativity, especially when supported by planned learning management and a conducive learning environment. These findings reinforce the initial assumption that children's creativity is not only influenced by the arts activities themselves, but also by how such learning is systematically managed and implemented in the context of early childhood education.

The results of the study show that effective learning management, a stimulating learning environment, and innovation in the use of media and learning approaches are key factors in optimizing children's creativity development. The integration of art in learning not only has an impact on cognitive aspects, but also on social-emotional development, self-expression, and the formation of children's values and character.

Overall, this study confirms that art-based learning needs to be positioned as an integral part of early childhood education, not just as a complementary activity. Therefore, educators are expected to be able to design, manage, and develop art learning creatively and contextually according to the needs of children.

This research is still limited to literature review, so further research is recommended to conduct empirical studies in the field to directly test the effectiveness of art-based learning management models. In addition, further research can also explore the integration of technology and other innovative approaches in art learning to support the development of children's creativity in the modern era.

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