

TEACHERS' STRATEGIES in DEVELOPING EARLY CHILDHOOD CREATIVITY at RA AL-KHAIRAT MUARASIPONGI

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Abstract

This article examines teacher strategies for developing early childhood creativity in the context of RA Al-Khairat Muarasipongi. Creativity is understood as a child's capacity to generate ideas, approaches, expressions, or products that are new to the child and meaningful within the learning situation. The development of creativity in early childhood cannot be confined to drawing, colouring, or craft activities. Teachers need to design learning environments that are safe, open, play-based, and rich in choices so that children can observe, ask questions, experiment, combine materials, solve simple problems, and communicate the outcomes of their learning experiences. This article employs a narrative literature review of 25 references covering creativity theory, early childhood education, play-based learning, developmental assessment, education regulations, and relevant publications by Bahtiar Siregar, Hadi Saputra Panggabean, Mhd. Habibu Rahman, Mhd. Yunan Harahap, Charles Rangkuti, and Danny Abrianto. The analysis groups findings into planning, facilitation, media use, assessment, and support-system dimensions. The review identifies six principal strategies: mapping children's interests and readiness, providing open-ended play experiences, using divergent questions, utilising flexible media and materials, documenting the creative process, and building partnerships with families. The article proposes the KREASI-RA model, comprising the stages of Knowing the Child, Designing the Environment, Exploring through Play, Appreciating the Process, Stimulating Ideas, Interpreting Documentation, and Adapting Follow-up Actions. The model offers a practical framework for teachers to develop creativity systematically while respecting religious values, developmental needs, and individual differences. As the article is grounded in a literature review, it does not claim to present empirical findings on the actual conditions at RA Al-Khairat Muarasipongi. Field research is still required to examine the implementation of the model, contextual constraints, and its effects on children's creative development.

Keywords: teacher strategies, early childhood creativity, RA, play-based learning, learning environment

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Introduction

Early childhood is a developmental phase characterised by strong curiosity, a need for movement, an inclination to imitate, and the capacity to construct meaning through direct experience. At this stage, creativity is not an additional ability that appears only when children produce artwork. It includes the courage to propose ideas, the flexibility to modify approaches, sensitivity to recognising problems, persistence in trying, and the ability to connect new experiences with prior knowledge. In early childhood education, creativity should be understood as a developmental capacity that can be stimulated through high-quality interactions among children, teachers, peers, play materials, and the learning environment (Runco & Jaeger, 2012; Vygotsky, 2004).

Raudhatul Athfal has a strategic responsibility to provide learning experiences that are appropriate to children's developmental stages while remaining aligned with Islamic values. Children need to encounter religious teachings through experiences that are enjoyable, concrete, and meaningful. Storytelling about prophetic role models, role-play, observing God's creations, producing work from natural materials, singing, moving, and engaging in simple discussions can support creative development when teachers do not confine children's answers or products to a single uniform form. Through this approach, religious values are not delivered as isolated memorisation, but are embedded in the ways children learn gratitude, responsibility, cooperation, and respect for difference (Suyadi & Ulfah, 2013; Yunan Harahap et al., 2023).

RA Al-Khairat Muarasipongi provides an important context for discussing teacher strategies because local early childhood education institutions frequently encounter intersecting demands. Teachers are expected to nurture faith and moral character, address children's developmental needs, manage classes with limited resources, and communicate with families. The challenge is not merely to select attractive activities, but to ensure that those activities allow children to make choices, formulate questions, take safe risks, and develop confidence in their own ideas. Teacher strategies determine whether learning merely produces uniform products or genuinely cultivates children's creative thinking processes (Rachmawati & Kurniati, 2011; NAEYC, 2020).

The literature on creativity indicates that children are more likely to develop ideas when the environment provides manipulable materials, sufficient time for exploration, and adult responses that are not overly controlling. Children need opportunities to play with multiple possibilities rather than simply complete step-by-step instructions. When teachers rigidly prescribe a model product, mandate particular colours, or assess work solely on neatness, children tend to pursue safe answers. Conversely, when teachers provide material choices, ask open-ended questions, and value children's explanations of their work, the learning process can foster fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration of ideas (Torrance, 1974; Craft, 2002).

Creativity development is also closely related to teachers' pedagogical competence. Teachers need to understand children's developmental characteristics, organise play activities, select appropriate media, manage interactions, document processes, and interpret developmental evidence to determine follow-up actions. Such competence cannot be demonstrated merely through mastery of teaching materials. Teachers need the sensitivity to recognise differences in children's interests, home experiences, communication styles, and support needs. In the context of Islamic education, teacher strategies must also consider how creativity can be fostered responsibly and in ways that remain connected to adab, social care, and appreciation of God's creations (Panggabean et al., 2024; Siregar et al., 2025).

Early childhood education regulations position the development of religious and moral values, physical-motor skills, cognition, language, socio-emotional capacity, and the arts as interrelated domains. This framework suggests that creativity does not stand alone as a single

activity or indicator. Creativity can develop when children observe the texture of natural materials, construct with blocks, create patterns, compose stories, develop movement and songs, try solutions when a structure collapses, or express feelings through their work. Teachers need to connect such activities with clear developmental objectives without turning early childhood education into excessive academic drill (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2022; Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2024).

Attention to creativity has become increasingly relevant because children's learning environments now face recurring worksheets, overly structured activities, and digital media exposure that does not always provide active experiences. Children need a balance of meaningful technology, sensory-motor play, dialogue, outdoor activities, and exploration of real materials. Teachers do not need to reject technology categorically; however, they must ensure that the media used enrich children's experiences rather than replace the processes of observing, experimenting, interacting, and creating. Learning media can support children's engagement when selected according to pedagogical objectives and teacher capacity (Panggabean et al., 2024; Davies et al., 2013).

Based on this rationale, this article discusses teacher strategies for developing early childhood creativity in the context of RA Al-Khairat Muarasipongi. The review focuses on: (1) the theoretical foundations of early childhood creativity; (2) the teacher's role in preparing learning environments and activities; (3) learning strategies that can stimulate creative ideas; (4) assessment and documentation of creativity development; and (5) the KREASI-RA conceptual model. The article aims to provide a framework that teachers and educational institutions can use to design more responsive, purposeful, and developmentally appropriate learning practices.

Literature Review

2.1 Early Childhood Creativity

Creativity generally refers to the capacity to generate ideas or products that are novel and valuable within a particular context. In early childhood, novelty does not need to be judged against the standards of scientific discovery or professional work. An idea may be regarded as creative when it represents a new way for a child to understand, combine, or express personal experience. A child who uses blocks to construct a "rain house," creates the sound of rain using classroom objects, or transforms a simple story into role-play is demonstrating creativity at an appropriate developmental level (Runco & Jaeger, 2012; Vygotsky, 2004).

Developmental perspectives view creativity as a process related to imagination, cognition, emotion, motor activity, language, and social relationships. Children do not only require materials for making things; they also need opportunities to observe, encounter uncertainty, try several possibilities, and accept minor failures as part of the process. These experiences strengthen children's ability to solve problems, plan actions, regulate emotions, and communicate ideas. Creativity should therefore not be reduced to work that appears neat or unique to adults (Berk, 2013; Hurlock, 1978).

From Torrance's perspective, creativity can be observed through fluency in generating ideas, flexibility in moving from one approach to another, originality of responses, and the ability to elaborate ideas with detail. These indicators may be used cautiously by RA teachers as observation guides rather than as instruments for labelling children. Teachers can observe whether children dare to offer more than one idea, try alternative materials, explain their work, or extend play independently. Such observations are more meaningful than comparing one child's work with another's (Torrance, 1974; Munandar, 2012).

Creativity is also closely linked to play. Piaget positioned play as a space in which children construct symbols, repeat experiences, and adapt their understanding of the environment. Vygotsky emphasised that imaginative play enables children to act beyond their everyday behaviour through the use of symbols, role rules, and social communication. Accordingly, play in RA should not be treated as a break after learning. Play is the primary medium of learning that provides children with conditions for creating, negotiating meaning, and developing self-regulation (Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 2004).

Within an Islamic educational framework, creativity should develop together with value awareness. Children can be introduced to creativity as a way of expressing gratitude for the abilities granted by Allah, caring for the materials they use, cooperating, and valuing their friends' work. Learning activities can connect creative work with stories of creation, the beauty of nature, the adab of asking questions, and environmental care. This approach helps children understand that creativity is not freedom without direction, but the ability to use ideas constructively, responsibly, and beneficially (Yunan Harahap et al., 2023; Suyadi & Ulfah, 2013).

2.2 The Teacher's Role in Creativity Development

Teachers design learning conditions, facilitate interaction, observe development, and model attitudes toward new ideas. In creativity development, the teacher's role does not lie in producing the most attractive example of a finished product. The central role is to create a learning space in which children feel safe to try, explain their reasoning, and revise their ideas. Responsive teachers do not immediately provide answers when children encounter difficulty. Instead, they may offer sufficient prompts, ask questions, or provide additional materials so that children remain the primary agents in the problem-solving process (Craft et al., 2012; NAEYC, 2020).

This role requires teachers to understand differences in children's characteristics. Children's interests in drawing, constructing, storytelling, movement, or role-play may vary. Likewise, some children speak spontaneously, whereas others need time to observe before participating. Teachers need to provide diverse avenues for participation so that creativity is not visible only among children who are the most active or verbally fluent. This principle requires assessment that is sensitive to process rather than limited to the final product (Rahman et al., 2020; Berk, 2013).

In RA learning, teacher strategies should also avoid the dominance of one-way instruction. Teachers can initiate activities through provocation, such as by bringing natural materials, environmental photographs, picture stories, simple musical instruments, or safe recycled objects. The purpose of provocation is to awaken curiosity and open possibilities for action. Subsequently, teachers should allow children to choose materials, work individually or in small groups, and explain their processes. Such activities are more effective in fostering creativity than those in which every step has been prescribed in advance (Davies et al., 2013; Craft, 2002).

Teachers' competence in using media is an important element of this strategy. Media may include digital tools, pictures, audio, educational play equipment, natural materials, loose parts, or simple equipment available in the surrounding environment. Selection should consider safety, children's age, exploratory potential, and alignment with developmental objectives. Effective media need not be expensive. Leaves, stones, cardboard, tissue rolls, bottle caps, fabric, and sand can become creative materials when teachers design appropriate questions and challenges (Panggabean et al., 2024; Mulyasa, 2017).

Teachers also serve as models of creative language. The use of open-ended questions such as "What material do you think could make this bridge stronger?", "Is there another way?", or "How do you think this story ends?" helps children extend their thinking. By contrast, questions that demand only one correct answer may restrict exploration. Teachers need to

balance convergent questions for checking basic understanding with divergent questions that create space for multiple ideas (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999; Rachmawati & Kurniati, 2011).

2.3 Play-Based Learning Environments and Islamic Values

The learning environment constitutes a part of pedagogical strategy. Spatial arrangement, access to materials, storage practices, displays of work, lighting, and rules for the use of play corners influence children's choices and the quality of their exploration. A creative environment does not need to be filled with decoration. It needs materials that can be touched, moved, combined, dismantled, and reused. Children also need areas that support collaborative work, quiet areas for reading or drawing, and outdoor spaces for movement and observation of nature (Davies et al., 2013; NAEYC, 2020).

Play-based learning recognises that children learn when they are actively involved and have purposes they can understand. Teachers can organise activity centres for art, construction, language, simple science, role-play, and religious exploration. Activities in these centres should not be treated as separate. For example, a theme on "water" can connect observing rain as God's creation, experimenting with floating objects, stories about maintaining water cleanliness, role-play as sanitation workers, and making rain collages. Such integration enables children to develop ideas through multiple languages of expression (Suyadi & Ulfah, 2013; Craft et al., 2012).

Islamic values can be integrated without diminishing the nature of play. Teachers can link creative activities to the habits of praying, using *thayyibah* expressions, maintaining cleanliness, sharing materials, queuing, appreciating friends' work, and caring for the environment. Value reinforcement should be provided through concrete action and simple language. Children understand the meaning of trustworthiness more readily when they are asked to return tools to their proper places or tidy materials together than when they only hear abstract explanations. In this way, creativity and character develop within a single learning experience (Yunan Harahap et al., 2023; Siregar et al., 2024).

The use of open-ended materials, or loose parts, can support flexibility in play. Open-ended materials do not have a single predetermined function, allowing children to transform them into different forms according to their imagination. Pebbles may become food in role-play, leaves may become decorations, boxes may become vehicles, and fabric may become tents or a character's clothing. Teachers need to ensure the safety of materials and provide simple rules, but they do not need to immediately prescribe each material's function. This openness gives children opportunities to make decisions and develop personal ideas (Rachmawati & Kurniati, 2011; Piaget, 1962).

2.4 Assessing Early Childhood Creativity

Assessment of creativity in early childhood should focus on process and context. Teachers are not advised to judge creativity based on a single product or a single activity. Children may show courage to try on one day and prefer to observe on another occasion. Such variation is normal in development. Teachers can therefore use anecdotal observations, simple checklists, process photographs, work portfolios, recordings of children's comments, and brief post-activity conversations (Rahman et al., 2020; Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2022).

Good documentation helps teachers and families perceive development concretely. Photographs of children's work should be accompanied by notes on how the child selected materials, what the child said, difficulties encountered, and strategies used. When documentation displays only the product, the child's thinking process can be lost. In contrast, process documentation enables teachers to provide appropriate follow-up, such as offering additional materials to a child who is becoming interested in construction or giving language

support to a child who has ideas but cannot yet explain them fluently (NAEYC, 2020; Mulyasa, 2017).

Teachers also need to ensure that assessment does not become a tool of competition. Assessment should not be used to identify the “most creative” child, but to understand each child’s developmental opportunities. Thus, assessment supports pedagogical decision-making, such as adjusting challenges, adding material choices, forming small groups, or communicating with families. This principle is consistent with early childhood assessment approaches that are developmental, contextual, and oriented toward follow-up actions (Rahman et al., 2020; Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2022).

Table 1. Dimensions of Early Childhood Creativity and Teacher Observation Indicators

Dimension	Operational Indicator	Example of Behavioural Evidence
Idea fluency	The child can generate more than one possibility.	Mentions several ways to make a house roof from blocks.
Flexibility	The child is willing to change an approach when encountering obstacles.	Changes materials because a cardboard tower is unstable.
Personal originality	The child combines experiences or materials in a distinctive way.	Creates a new story from pictures and objects in the classroom.
Elaboration	The child adds details or enriches an initial idea.	Adds roads, a garden, and characters to a constructed building.
Courage of expression	The child is willing to explain choices, work, or opinions.	Explains the reasons for selecting particular colours and materials.

Research Methodology

This article employs a narrative literature review with a conceptual analytical orientation. The method was selected because the purpose of the article is to develop a framework of teacher strategies for fostering early childhood creativity, rather than to measure empirical conditions or generalise about RA Al-Khairat Muarasipongi. The institution is positioned as an implementation context that may become the focus of subsequent field research. The literature review enables the authors to integrate creativity theory, principles of early childhood education, play-based approaches, learning regulations, developmental assessment, and relevant Islamic education publications (Runco & Jaeger, 2012; Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2022).

The review corpus consists of 25 references, including academic books, journal articles, policy documents, institutional guidelines, and national publications. Sources were selected according to four criteria: relevance to early childhood creativity, connection to teacher roles and strategies, compatibility with play-based learning, and relevance to Islamic educational values and practices. Six references by Bahtiar Siregar, Hadi Saputra Panggabean, Mhd. Habibu Rahman, Mhd. Yunan Harahap, Charles Rangkuti, and Danny Abrianto were used to extend the discussion of teacher competence, learning media, early childhood assessment, value education, and Islamic learning practices.

The analysis proceeded through four stages. The first stage identified key ideas in each reference, particularly those concerning the definition of creativity, developmental

characteristics of children, learning-environment conditions, facilitation strategies, media, assessment, and supporting factors. The second stage involved thematic coding to group ideas into the domains of planning, implementation, assessment, and follow-up. The third stage synthesised similarities and differences among recommendations across sources. The fourth stage formulated the KREASI-RA model as an integration of the conceptual findings.

Analytical trustworthiness was maintained by comparing classic and contemporary references, prioritising sources that directly address creativity or early childhood education, and explicitly presenting the limitations of the review. This article does not provide numerical data, observation findings, interview quotations, or claims about the actual practices of teachers at RA Al-Khairat Muarasipongi because primary data are not available. The results presented in the following section are positioned as a literature synthesis that can guide the design of qualitative research, classroom action research, or programme development within educational institutions.

Results

4.1 Mapping Children's Interests, Readiness, and Experiences

The synthesis indicates that teacher strategies should begin with a simple mapping of children's interests, readiness, and experiences. Mapping is not a formal test that makes children feel judged; rather, it is an observational process conducted through conversation, choices of play centres, responses to stories, ways of using materials, and patterns of interaction with peers. These data help teachers understand which activities may attract children's attention, what type of support is needed, and which challenges remain within children's developmental reach (Berk, 2013; Rahman et al., 2020).

At RA Al-Khairat Muarasipongi, mapping can be conducted at the beginning of a theme and updated periodically. Teachers may record children's interests in drawing, constructing, singing, role-play, observing nature, or using particular materials. Teachers can also observe children who are more comfortable working alone, children who speak actively, children who persist in completing tasks, and children who require support to begin. These records should not be used to assign fixed labels; instead, they should inform how the environment and activities can become more inclusive.

This mapping approach is consistent with the principle that creativity development is influenced by children's internal conditions and environmental responses. A child who appears passive is not necessarily uncreative. The child may have strong ideas but lack language, a sense of safety, or opportunities to express them. Teachers need to provide wait time, offer non-verbal response options, and build non-judgmental relationships. When children feel accepted, they are more likely to take intellectual risks and try new approaches (NAEYC, 2020; Craft, 2002).

4.2 Planning Open-Ended Play-Based Learning

The second strategy is the planning of open-ended play-based learning. Teachers need to establish clear developmental objectives and then design play situations with more than one possible process and outcome. Objectives may relate to language, arts, socio-emotional development, cognition, motor skills, religious values, or a combination of these domains. However, activities do not need to direct all children to produce the same product. Open planning allows children to choose materials, working methods, sequences of action, and forms of expression that correspond to their interests (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2022; Rachmawati & Kurniati, 2011).

For example, under the theme "My Environment," teachers can provide leaves, twigs, small stones, paper, cardboard, clay, fabric scraps, and pictures of the surrounding environment. Teachers can present a general challenge, such as "Let us make something that shows a place we want to protect." Children may create a garden, a house, a clean river, a rubbish bin, or a waste-collection vehicle. Teachers do not need to prescribe a model product.

Their role is to ensure safety, provide time and materials, and ask prompting questions that enable children to develop their ideas.

Such designs foster creativity because children do not merely imitate; they interpret the theme through their own experiences. Every material choice requires a decision. Every difficulty invites experimentation. Every conversation with peers opens the possibility of new ideas. This process is more important than uniformity in the appearance of products. Teachers need to value differences in outcomes as evidence that children are constructing meaning through personal experience (Craft et al., 2012; Davies et al., 2013).

4.3 Divergent Questions, Dialogue, and Scaffolding

The third strategy involves the use of divergent questions and dialogue to help children extend their ideas. Divergent questions do not seek one correct answer; rather, they invite children to imagine, predict, compare, and propose alternatives. Teachers may ask, “What might happen if this bridge is exposed to rain?”, “How can we make it stronger?”, or “Is there another idea that would allow your friend to enter this house?” Such questions encourage children to use language to explain their thinking processes (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999; Torrance, 1974).

Teachers need to provide wait time after asking questions. Young children often require several seconds to understand a question, recall an experience, and formulate a response. When teachers answer too quickly, children’s opportunities to think are reduced. Wait time is also important for children who are shy or not yet fluent in language. Children may be given opportunities to respond through drawing, movement, object selection, or a simple demonstration before being asked to explain verbally.

Scaffolding occurs when teachers provide adequate support so that children can continue activities they are not yet able to complete independently. Support may take the form of a brief example, grouping of materials, guiding questions, assistance with starting, or division of tasks within a group. This support must not replace the child’s work. Teachers need to gradually reduce assistance as children begin to take ownership of the process. In this way, children experience success built from their own efforts and learn that difficulties can be overcome through experimentation (Vygotsky, 2004; Berk, 2013).

Table 2. Matrix of Teacher Strategies for Developing Children’s Creativity

Strategy	Teacher Action	Expected Impact
Initial provocation	Presents stories, objects, pictures, or phenomena that are familiar to children.	Curiosity and initial engagement increase.
Open-ended materials	Provides safe materials that can be selected, combined, and reused.	Children develop choice-making, imagination, and problem-solving.
Divergent questions	Uses questions such as “how,” “why,” and “what else.”	Idea fluency and flexibility develop.
Flexible grouping	Allows individual, paired, or small-group work.	Children learn to share ideas and negotiate.
Process appreciation	Reinforces effort, strategy, and the courage to try.	Children’s confidence and persistence strengthen.
Reflective documentation	Records processes, children’s comments, and changes in strategy.	Learning follow-up becomes more appropriate.

4.4 Meaningful Media, Natural Materials, and Technology

The fourth strategy is the use of meaningful media. Media should not be selected merely because they appear modern or attractive to adults, but because they open opportunities for children to experience, ask questions, create, and communicate. Natural materials and safe recycled objects often have high pedagogical value because they do not lead children toward a single predetermined outcome. Leaves, seeds, stones, sand, cardboard, paper rolls, fabric, and bottle caps can be used for sorting, arranging, building, storytelling, and role-play.

Digital media may be used in a limited way as a stimulus or source of information. Teachers can show a short video about plant growth, animal sounds, or social activities in the surrounding environment and then continue with direct exploration. Teachers need to ensure that devices do not displace active play time. Children continue to require sensory, motor, social, and emotional experiences that cannot be fully replaced by screens (Panggabean et al., 2024; NAEYC, 2020).

The use of media also requires teacher competence in preparing objectives, instructions, and follow-up actions. The same medium can produce different learning experiences depending on how the teacher facilitates it. For example, an environmental picture may function only as decoration if teachers merely ask children to name objects. However, it can stimulate creativity if teachers invite children to select an environmental problem, design a solution through role-play, and create collaborative work. Thus, the quality of the strategy lies in pedagogical decision-making rather than the sophistication of the equipment (Panggabean et al., 2024; Siregar et al., 2025).

4.5 Process Appreciation, Authentic Assessment, and Family Partnerships

The fifth strategy is to value the creative process and use authentic assessment. Teachers need to provide specific responses to children's actions, for example, "You tried two ways to keep your tower from falling," "You selected different leaves to create texture," or "You asked a friend for help when your materials were insufficient." Such responses are more educationally meaningful than general praise because they help children recognise the strategies they have used. Process appreciation also reduces children's tendency to pursue only products regarded by teachers as the best (Hurlock, 1978; Munandar, 2012).

Authentic assessment can be conducted through anecdotal records, photographic documentation, portfolios, voice recordings, and brief reflections with children. Teachers can develop simple observation indicators, such as courage to try, variation in ideas, ability to combine materials, persistence, ability to explain work, and ability to cooperate. These indicators should be used to interpret children's development and plan follow-up, rather than rank creativity. Documentation also provides more concrete material for communication with families (Rahman et al., 2020; Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2022).

Cooperation with families should be directed toward realistic forms of support. Teachers can encourage parents to provide simple playtime at home, collect safe recycled materials, read stories, or give children opportunities to assist with daily activities. Communication with families needs to explain that creativity does not grow from the number of finished products or extracurricular classes, but from children's opportunities to ask questions, experiment, speak, and revise their ideas. School-family collaboration is more effective when it focuses on child development rather than comparisons among children's achievements (Mulyasa, 2017; Suyadi & Ulfah, 2013).

4.6 Implementation Constraints and the Need for Support Systems

The implementation of creativity-development strategies may face constraints at the teacher, classroom, school, and family levels. At the teacher level, constraints may include an understanding that equates creativity only with artistic output, difficulty in designing open-ended activities, or habitual reliance on overly detailed instructions. At the classroom level,

class size, time constraints, and the need to maintain routines may make teachers hesitant to provide space for exploration. At the school level, availability of materials, management of learning spaces, and opportunities for professional learning influence the consistency of the strategy.

To address these constraints, schools need to establish support systems. Teachers can develop banks of open-ended play activities, share teaching materials, conduct peer observations, and discuss children's documentation within learning communities. The RA principal needs to provide teachers with space to plan, arrange the environment, and reflect on learning. Practice-based professional development is more relevant than training that focuses solely on theory. Teachers need concrete examples, opportunities to try, feedback, and time to refine their strategies (Siregar et al., 2025; Siregar et al., 2024).

Religious values should also become a support system rather than merely a slogan. A school culture that promotes gratitude, cleanliness, care, cooperation, honesty, and responsibility can reinforce children's creativity. Children who feel safe, valued, and heard are more willing to share their ideas. In the context of RA, teachers need to position creativity as part of children's holistic development rather than as a competition of products (Yunan Harahap et al., 2023; Siregar et al., 2024).

4.7. The KREASI-RA Model as a Practical Framework

Based on the literature synthesis, this article proposes the KREASI-RA model as a practical framework. KREASI-RA is not a standardised instrument that has been empirically validated; rather, it is a conceptual model intended to help teachers organise strategies systematically. The model begins with knowing the child and the context, followed by designing a supportive environment, opening opportunities for play exploration, appreciating the process, stimulating ideas through dialogue, interpreting documentation, and adapting follow-up actions.

The model emphasises that creativity cannot be produced through a single activity. Creativity develops through a recurring cycle among teacher observation, children's experiences, environmental responses, and reflection. When teachers find that children are more interested in construction than drawing, they can add building materials, connect them with a story, and provide an appropriate challenge. When children are already able to build stable structures, teachers can offer a new problem, such as constructing a bridge for a character in play. This cycle keeps activities challenging without exceeding children's capabilities (Vygotsky, 2004; Craft et al., 2012).

Table 3. The KREASI-RA Model for Developing Children's Creativity

Stage	Key Teacher Question	Pedagogical Decision
Know the child	What are the child's interests, initial abilities, and support needs?	Prepares initial observation notes and selects relevant provocations.
Design the environment	What materials, spaces, and rules enable safe exploration?	Organises play centres and provides open-ended materials.
Explore through play	How can children try more than one approach?	Provides process choices, flexible groups, and sufficient time.
Appreciate the process	What effort or strategy should the child become aware of?	Provides specific feedback on choices and persistence.
Stimulate ideas	What questions can extend the child's ideas?	Uses dialogue, stories, and divergent questions.

Stage	Key Teacher Question	Pedagogical Decision
Interpret documentation	What evidence demonstrates the child's creative development?	Analyses photographs, anecdotal notes, work samples, and children's comments.
Adapt follow-up actions	What needs to be changed in the next activity?	Adds materials, adjusts the challenge, or provides further support.

4.8 Practical Implications for Teachers and RA Principals

A practical implication of this review is the need to begin creativity development through small but consistent changes. Teachers do not need to wait for fully equipped facilities to provide creative experiences. One play corner can be reorganised using natural materials, safe recycled materials, paper, fabric, blocks, and drawing tools. These materials should be displayed where children can easily reach them, accompanied by clear rules for use, and renewed according to the theme. In this way, the learning environment becomes not merely a storage area for tools, but an invitation for children to observe, choose, experiment, and create (Mulyasa, 2017; Davies et al., 2013).

RA principals play a role in ensuring that creativity becomes part of learning planning and school culture. Principal support can be realised through weekly reflection schedules, gradual procurement of materials, the development of children's work documentation corners, and the facilitation of teacher learning communities. These communities can discuss examples of divergent questions, analyses of children's documentation, and experiences of managing activities with non-uniform outcomes. This collective approach helps teachers build confidence and reduces the assumption that creative activities are always difficult to manage or require high costs (Siregar et al., 2025; Siregar et al., 2024).

In addition, schools need to affirm that children's work should not be compared according to adult standards. Exhibitions, portfolio books, and communication with families should present children's processes, stories, and strategies, rather than only neat-looking final products. This principle supports a fairer culture of appreciation. Children learn that their ideas are heard, that peers may have different approaches, and that minor failures can become opportunities to try again. These values are consistent with the formation of adab, confidence, and responsibility, which are central to Islamic early childhood education (Yunan Harahap et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2020).

Conclusion

Teacher strategies for developing early childhood creativity in the context of RA Al-Khairat Muarasipongi should be understood as a planned, play-based pedagogical process that is responsive to each child's differences. Creativity cannot be sufficiently stimulated through drawing or uniform craft activities alone. Teachers need to provide safe and material-rich environments, allow space for choice, ask divergent questions, offer gradual support, and value children's processes as they experiment, modify their approaches, and explain their ideas. These strategies integrate cognitive, language, motor, socio-emotional, artistic, and religious-value development into a coherent learning experience.

The review identifies six principal strategies: mapping children's interests and readiness, planning open-ended play activities, using divergent questions and dialogue, employing flexible media, conducting authentic assessment through process documentation, and establishing family partnerships. The six strategies are interrelated. Mapping helps teachers determine appropriate provocations. Open environments and materials create opportunities for

exploration. Dialogue and scaffolding maintain children's engagement. Assessment provides evidence for determining follow-up actions. Family partnerships extend the consistency of creativity stimulation into the home.

The KREASI-RA model may serve as an initial guide for organising these strategies through the stages of Knowing the Child, Designing the Environment, Exploring through Play, Appreciating the Process, Stimulating Ideas, Interpreting Documentation, and Adapting Follow-up Actions. The model positions teachers as facilitators and decision-makers who use evidence of children's development. Its limitation is that it has not yet been tested through classroom observation, teacher interviews, children's portfolios, or action research at RA Al-Khairat Muarasipongi. Therefore, field research is required to assess the model's feasibility, implementation constraints, and changes in children's creative behaviour.

In practical terms, RA Al-Khairat Muarasipongi can begin programme development through simple steps, such as arranging one open-material corner, using one divergent question in each activity, documenting children's work processes, and conducting weekly teacher reflection. Gradual implementation is more realistic than attempting comprehensive change at once. Support from the RA principal, teacher learning communities, and communication with families will determine the sustainability of the strategy. Through this approach, children's creativity can develop as the capacity to think, feel, act, and make meaning positively in everyday life.

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