

THE IMPACT OF HAND PUPPET MAKING TRAINING AS A LEARNING MEDIA IN THE CARNATION CLUSTER IN BENGKULU CITY

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the impact of hand puppet-making training in Gugus Anyelir on the improvement of skills and professional attitudes of early childhood educators. The study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The results indicate that the hand puppet-making training provided meaningful learning experiences for early childhood educators. Changes observed after the training included an increase in educators' knowledge of the pedagogical functions of hand puppets, enhanced skills in creating and using hand puppet media, growth in autonomy in designing learning media independently, and increased confidence in conducting creative teaching. The findings confirm that practical skill-based training has a tangible impact on improving educators' professional capacity through changes in experience, knowledge, skills, autonomy, and self-confidence.

Keywords: Skills training, hand puppet, early childhood educators

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan dampak pelatihan pembuatan boneka tangan (hand puppet) di Gugus Anyelir terhadap peningkatan kemampuan dan sikap profesional pendidik PAUD. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pelatihan pembuatan hand puppet memberikan pengalaman belajar pendidik PAUD. Perubahan yang terjadi setelah pelatihan meliputi peningkatan pengetahuan pendidik PAUD mengenai fungsi pedagogis hand puppet, peningkatan keterampilan dalam pembuatan dan penggunaan media hand puppet, tumbuhnya kemandirian dalam menciptakan media pembelajaran secara mandiri, serta meningkatnya kepercayaan diri pendidik PAUD dalam melaksanakan pembelajaran yang kreatif. Temuan penelitian menegaskan bahwa pelatihan berbasis keterampilan praktis memberikan dampak nyata terhadap peningkatan kapasitas profesional pendidik melalui perubahan pengalaman, pengetahuan, keterampilan, kemandirian, dan kepercayaan diri.

Kata kunci: Pelatihan Keterampilan, hand puppet, pendidik PAUD

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INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is a level of education that plays a strategic role in laying the foundation for holistic child development. During this period, children are in a phase of rapid development, so the learning process needs to be designed appropriately, contextually, and engagingly. Learning in PAUD emphasizes not only cognitive achievement but also language, social-emotional, creativity, and character development (Masnipal, 2018).

Data from the Central Statistics Agency shows that the quality of PAUD services is an important indicator in supporting children's readiness to enter the next level of education (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024). Therefore, early childhood education (PAUD) requires the support of educators who possess professional competence and are able to deliver learning that is appropriate to children's developmental characteristics. PAUD educators play a central role as learning facilitators, capable of creating a fun and meaningful learning environment for children.

The professionalism of PAUD educators is characterized by the ability to design, implement, and evaluate learning creatively and effectively (Danim & Khairil, 2013). This also emphasizes that the professionalism of PAUD educators is the ability to develop and utilize learning media that is appropriate to the world of children (Suyanto & Jihad, 2013). Learning media serves as a means to help children understand concepts concretely, increase attention span, and foster motivation to learn. However, in practice, early childhood education educators in the Anyelir Cluster still tend to rely on manufactured learning media and are less than optimal in developing their own media. This condition is generally influenced by educators' limited knowledge, skills, and confidence in innovation.

Hand puppets are an effective learning medium used in early childhood education. They can be used in storytelling, role-playing, and interactive communication between educators and children. Hand puppets can stimulate children's imagination, language skills, and social-emotional development by incorporating elements of expression, dialogue, and playful interaction (Putra et al., 2025). The use of hand puppets allows for more interactive communication between educators and children, making learning more lively and enjoyable. Furthermore, hand puppets can be tailored to the learning theme and children's characteristics, especially when created independently by educators. Thus, educators' ability to create and use hand puppets reflects creativity and professionalism in early childhood education.

Hand puppet making training is a form of non-formal education that plays a role in improving the competency of early childhood education (PAUD) educators. Non-formal education is characterized by flexibility, participatory learning, and orientation to the needs of participants, allowing educators to learn based on direct experience and real-world problems (Kamil, 2012). Through training, educators have the opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills, while simultaneously developing a professional attitude in carrying out their roles. Furthermore, training is a systematic process for improving individual work abilities through mastery of knowledge, skills, and attitudes relevant to their assigned tasks (Hamalik, 2007).

Adult learning which is the basis for early childhood education teacher training is in line with the principles of andragogy. Knowles et al. (2014) explains that adult learning will be effective if it is relevant to the role and needs of the learner, and involves direct experience. This principle is reinforced by Yusri & Syafri (2021) which states that andragogical learning positions participants as active subjects who learn through experience, reflection, and problem-solving. Hand puppet making training provides a space for early childhood educators to learn actively through hands-on practice, discussion, and reflection on classroom learning experiences.

The results of previous research show that training and mentoring oriented towards creativity and skills can improve the performance and self-confidence of PAUD educators. Hernawan (2013) revealed that PAUD cluster-based activities play a significant role in improving the competence of non-formal PAUD educators through collaboration and collaborative learning.

Mutoharoh et al. (2023) also shows that improving the performance of PAUD teachers is influenced by the provision of training relevant to learning needs. In addition, Wulandari & Mumtaz (2023) emphasized that teacher creativity in creating educational play tools contributes to the quality of early childhood education. However, studies specifically examining hand puppet-making training as a process of empowering early childhood educators are still relatively limited.

Based on these conditions, hand puppet making training needs to be studied not only as an effort to improve technical skills, but also as a strategy to empower early childhood education educators. The impact of the training can be seen in changes in learning experiences, increased knowledge about the pedagogical function of hand puppets, improved skills in making and using learning media, growing independence in creating media independently, and increased self-confidence in implementing creative learning.

Based on the background and literature review, this research focuses on the impact of participating in hand puppet-making training on PAUD educators in the Anyelir Cluster. This research explores the changes experienced by educators after participating in the training, including their experience, knowledge, skills, independence, and self-confidence. In line with these issues, the purpose of this study is to describe the impact of hand puppet-making training on educators in the Anyelir Cluster and the supporting and inhibiting factors.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. This approach was chosen because it aims to deeply understand the processes, experiences, and meanings constructed by early childhood education educators regarding their empowerment after participating in hand puppet making training. Qualitative research allows researchers to explore social realities naturally and contextually, according to field conditions (Sugiyono, 2023). The descriptive method is used to systematically and factually describe the phenomena being studied, especially changes in the experiences, knowledge, skills, independence and self-confidence of PAUD educators and the meanings constructed as a result of the training process.

This research was conducted in the Anyelir Cluster, a coordination forum for early childhood education (PAUD) educators in Muara Bangkahulu District, Bengkulu City. The research subjects consisted of PAUD educators who participated in hand puppet-making training, as well as cluster managers involved in the planning and implementation of the training activities. The research subjects were selected purposively, with the consideration that informants had direct and relevant experience with the training implementation and the changes that occurred afterward. This approach enabled the researchers to obtain rich and in-depth data in accordance with the research objectives.

Data collection was conducted using three main techniques: interviews, observation, and documentation. First, interviews were used to explore the experiences, perceptions, and meanings given by early childhood education educators to the hand puppet-making training. Through these interviews, researchers obtained information regarding changes in educators' experiences, knowledge, skills, independence, and self-confidence after participating in the training.

Second, observations were conducted to directly observe the training process and the implementation of hand puppet use in early childhood education (PAUD) learning activities. Observations focused on educators' activities during the puppet-making practice, how

educators used the media in post-training lessons, and interactions between educators and students. This observation technique enabled researchers to obtain factual data regarding educator behavior and skills that cannot always be revealed through interviews.

Third, documentation was used as a supporting technique to strengthen the data from interviews and observations. Documents collected included photographs of training activities, educators' hand puppet creations, training notes, and other relevant supporting documents. Documentation data served as empirical evidence that enriched and strengthened the research findings.

Data analysis in this study was conducted interactively and continued throughout the research process. The stages of data analysis included data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Sugiyono, 2023). First, data reduction is carried out by selecting, focusing, and simplifying raw data obtained from the field to align with the research focus. Second, the reduced data is then presented in a systematic, descriptive narrative to facilitate researchers in understanding the patterns, relationships, and meaning of the data obtained. Third, conclusions are drawn gradually and continuously verified with field data to ensure credible and accountable conclusions.

The validity of the data in this study was maintained through triangulation techniques. First, source triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from various informants, such as early childhood educators and cluster managers. Second, technical triangulation was conducted by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure data consistency. Third, temporal triangulation was conducted by collecting data at different points in time to observe the consistency of changes experienced by educators after participating in the training. This triangulation application aims to increase the validity and reliability of the research results.

By applying a descriptive qualitative approach with these data collection and analysis techniques, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive and in-depth picture of the empowerment of early childhood educators through hand puppet making training in the Anyelir Cluster, both in terms of the process and the outcomes experienced by the educators.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This research began with the identification of educators in the Anyelir Cluster, who exhibited a high dependence on manufactured learning media. These media tended to be used repeatedly without modification, resulting in a lack of contextualization with classroom learning themes. Furthermore, limited technical knowledge and low self-confidence were major barriers to educator innovation. As a solution, a hand puppet-making training program was designed using a participatory, hands-on approach. This training not only provided theory but also actively involved educators, from the design planning stage, through material selection from waste fabric, through sewing techniques, to simulations of puppet use in classroom learning interactions.

This research revealed a comprehensive competency transformation among educators in the Anyelir Cluster after participating in hand puppet-making training. Cognitively, a paradigm shift occurred regarding the function of learning media. Educators no longer viewed hand puppets as merely decorative playthings, but rather as strategic pedagogical instruments to

stimulate children's language development, imagination, and social-emotional intelligence in an integrated manner. This new understanding enabled educators to design more meaningful and child-centered learning narratives.

From a technical skills perspective, this training successfully equipped educators with the ability to independently manufacture media. Educators demonstrated proficiency in processing local materials and fabric waste into varied and engaging puppet characters. In addition to visual skills, mastery of performative aspects was another important achievement; educators were able to integrate vocal techniques (changes in intonation), facial expressions, and body gestures when playing with puppets. This combination of technical and performative skills created more dynamic learning interactions and increased children's attention in the classroom. This transformation also had a direct impact on increasing educator independence and self-efficacy. Successfully creating media independently broke the chronic dependence on manufactured teaching aids that were often irrelevant to the needs of the local context. This independence in providing media automatically fostered a strong sense of self-confidence. Educators are now more confident in exploring innovative learning strategies and experimenting with creative storytelling methods, without hesitation in communicating educational messages. This change in professional behavior is a strong indicator of the success of the educator empowerment process within the Anyelir Cluster.

Throughout the training, a strong collaborative learning dynamic emerged within the Anyelir Cluster. The training space transformed into an idea laboratory where educators worked not only individually but also synergized with one another. Educators with greater expertise in sewing or design techniques spontaneously provided technical assistance to colleagues experiencing motor skills difficulties. These interactions generated organic discussions about implementing hand puppets into various curriculum themes, from self-awareness to environmental awareness, ensuring that the resulting media possessed high functional relevance for the needs of each class.

Although this empowerment process faced real challenges, such as limited time amidst the administrative burden of teaching and varying initial abilities of participants, these obstacles were successfully mitigated by a solid support system. The role of cluster administrators as supportive facilitators, along with the high internal motivation of educators, were catalysts for the training's success. This spirit of collaborative learning helped to erode reluctance to try new things, so that technical obstacles were no longer viewed as obstacles but as part of the group learning process.

Overall, this series of activities sparked a fundamental shift in the professional paradigm of educators in the Anyelir Cluster. The training went beyond producing physical hand puppets, but also fostered "creative independence," empowering educators to independently provide learning media. The initiative to shift from prefabricated media to innovative media relevant to the developmental characteristics of early childhood is clear evidence of the effectiveness of this participatory approach in raising competency standards and the quality of educational services at the cluster level.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of hand puppet making training through a participatory approach and direct practice has successfully improved the competence of PAUD educators in the Anyelir Cluster in Bengkulu City in developing independent learning

media. This improvement in competence is clearly visible in the educators' ability to create more creative and contextual media, as well as their success in integrating performative techniques such as vocal and gesture exercises after the training series was completed. This transformation proves that interventions oriented to real needs can break educators' dependence on manufactured media and foster creative independence in the classroom learning process.

Experiences of Early Childhood Education Teachers After Participating in Hand Puppet Training

The learning experiences of educators in the Anyelir Cluster reflect a holistic and transformative adult learning cycle. Unlike conventional seminars, which tend to be passive and theoretical, this training provides space for educators to engage in the stages of "concrete experience" and "reflective observation." Based on the principles of Andragogy, Knowles et al. (2014), Early childhood education educators demonstrate greater learning effectiveness when training materials directly relate to real-world problems, such as student boredom with static, manufactured media. By creating hand puppets, educators not only process new information but also reconstruct how they interact with children in the classroom.

Furthermore, the dynamics created during the training go beyond simply transferring technical skills; they foster a supportive peer-to-peer learning ecosystem. Collaborative interactions during the design and sewing of doll characters enable a horizontal exchange of knowledge. Educators no longer position themselves as passive recipients of information from instructors, but rather as practitioners who inspire each other through discussions about the learning challenges they face daily (Hernawan, 2013). This experience provides a sense of ownership over the media they create, ultimately strengthening the emotional connection between educators and the material being taught.

The reflection process that occurs during the training also encourages educators to re-evaluate their role as facilitators of children's creativity. By experiencing the creative process of transforming waste materials, educators gain intuitive insights into how to foster children's curiosity through storytelling. This immersive experience serves as a crucial foundation for creating a sustainable learning culture within the Anyelir Cluster, where every educator feels empowered to continue learning and innovating collectively.

Changes in Aspects of Knowledge, Skills, Independence, and Self-Confidence of Educators

The competency transformation experienced by educators in the Anyelir Cluster is a systemic impact of a comprehensively designed training process, encompassing the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains.

Knowledge and Skills: Cognitively, educators experienced a repositioning of their understanding of the essence of learning media. Media are no longer viewed as mere classroom decorations or static props, but rather as dynamic instruments for stimulating development. This paradigm shift is fully supported by increased technical skills in media manufacturing. Mastery of hand puppet making techniques from local materials allows educators to manifest their creative ideas into functional physical forms. As emphasized by Masnipal (2018), In-depth and personal mastery of media enables educators to design more meaningful learning scenarios (meaningful learning), because they understand every detail of the character and educational potential of the media they create themselves.

Independence and Self-Confidence: Successfully producing hand puppets independently has significant sociological and psychological implications, namely breaking the chain of chronic

dependence on manufactured media that is often expensive and non-contextual. The main psychological impact of this independence is increased self-efficacy, or confidence in one's ability to complete professional tasks. Based on this thinking Sutrisno (2023), When an educator feels capable of mastering and creating his or her own work tools, the mental barriers to innovation will fall away, replaced by the courage to experiment with riskier yet more innovative teaching methods in the classroom.

This increase in self-efficacy was also reinforced through external validation mechanisms. The positive responses, enthusiasm, and increased attention of children during the hand puppet simulation provided empirical evidence for educators that their innovation was paying off. This validation, according to Putra et al. (2025), It serves as a reinforcement of professional self-belief, which is crucial for the sustainability of innovation in schools. Thus, this training not only produces hand puppets but also produces educators who are more resilient, independent, and confident in managing the dynamics of instruction in Early Childhood Education.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Empowerment Process

The empowerment of educators through this training does not occur in a vacuum, but rather is the result of dynamic interactions within the Anyelir Cluster ecosystem. The success of competency transformation is largely determined by the extent to which supporting factors are optimized and inhibiting factors are mitigated.

Supporting Factors: The primary driving force behind this change lies in the educators' intrinsic motivation to improve the quality of service to their students. This motivation is complemented by solid structural support from the Anyelir Cluster management, which provides a safe and supportive learning environment. From an organizational perspective, the cluster serves as a psychological safety net, enabling educators to boldly experiment and try new things without the fear of failure. As explained by Hernawan (2013), A culture of mutual assistance within professional communities creates strong social cohesion, enabling technical difficulties in media creation to be overcome through a spirit of collectivity. This support provides crucial social capital, ensuring that innovation doesn't stop at the individual level but spreads to become a group standard.

Inhibiting Factors and Mitigation Strategies: On the other hand, this study also identified real challenges that could potentially hinder the effectiveness of empowerment. Time constraints were the most dominant obstacle, given the administrative burden and busy teaching hours of PAUD educators. Furthermore, variations in early motor skills in sewing and doll design activities sometimes led to disparities in production speed among participants.

However, these findings indicate that these obstacles do not kill the creative process. In accordance with the empowerment theory of Haerana et al. (2023), These obstacles were successfully mitigated through a participatory-inclusive approach. The "peer tutoring" strategy, or mentoring by more advanced participants, proved effective in mitigating these motor skill differences. This process ensures that empowerment remains sustainable, with solutions not coming from outside (instructors) but rather emerging from the community's own internal strengths. Thus, existing challenges become opportunities for educators to strengthen their solidarity and professional resilience.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the hand puppet making training conducted in the Anyelir Cluster is an effective and meaningful empowerment strategy for Early Childhood Education (PAUD)

educators. The training serves not only as a means of improving technical skills but also as a non-formal learning process that encourages transformation in educators' experiences, attitudes, and professional identity. Through a participatory and practice-based approach, educators are actively engaged in a learning process relevant to the needs of PAUD learning.

The impact of the training on PAUD educators is formed through interrelated changes in experience, knowledge, skills, independence, and self-confidence. Educators gain hands-on learning experiences that broaden their insights into the use of hand puppets as a pedagogically valuable learning medium. This increased knowledge is accompanied by the development of educators' skills in making and using hand puppets creatively in learning activities. These skills extend beyond the technical aspects of media creation to encompass communication, expression, and managing educational interactions with children.

These changes are also evident in the increasing independence of educators in developing learning media independently. Educators are no longer entirely dependent on manufactured media, but are instead able to utilize simple materials and local resources to create media tailored to the themes and needs of children. This independence strengthens educators' positions as learning subjects who have control over the learning process. Concurrently, educators' self-confidence has increased, particularly in implementing creative learning and daring to experiment with new strategies in the classroom.

The implications of this research indicate that non-formal education-based training designed in a participatory and contextual manner can serve as a model for the ongoing professional development of early childhood educators. Institutional support, a collaborative learning environment, and ongoing mentoring are important factors in strengthening the educator empowerment process. Further research is recommended to examine the long-term impact of creative learning media training on the quality of early childhood education and child development, as well as to explore the model of educator empowerment based on learning communities in broader contexts.

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