

Independent Play: Enhancing PAUD Teachers' Understanding Through Field Practice Training in Developing Creative Games

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61796/jscs.v2i3.379>



Sections Info

Article history:

Submitted: June 30, 2025

Final Revised: July 07, 2025

Accepted: July 25, 2025

Published: August 07, 2025

Keywords:

Independent play
PAUD teacher training
Creative play

ABSTRACT

Objective: The purpose of this service activity is to provide training to PAUD teachers to develop games to enhance independent play. **Method:** The training method uses hands-on practice in the field. **Results:** The results of the training show that this training can improve PAUD teachers' understanding in providing game materials as a means to enhance children's independent play. **Novelty:** This training has implications for understanding children's independent play among the community, especially parents.

INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is very important in laying the foundation for child development from an early age [1], [2], [3]. The role of PAUD teachers as facilitators of learning becomes essential, including the development of creative games as an effective and enjoyable learning strategy. The approach used in the PAUD learning process needs to be adjusted in line with the times to remain relevant and effective [4]. One important step to improve the quality of early childhood education is to enhance teachers' understanding of PAUD [5]. The need for innovative and enjoyable methods to teach preschoolers is evident from the emphasis on developing creative games as a learning method. In this context, the role of PAUD teachers is crucial as guides of comprehensive child development, where games can improve emotional intelligence and creativity [6]. The service activity at RA Nurul Islam 2 becomes increasingly important due to the lack of understanding regarding best practices in creating creative games in the PAUD environment, including at RA Nurul Islam 2. Limited resources, inadequate special training, or poor understanding of the role of creative games in early childhood learning may be the cause.

The understanding and skills of PAUD teachers in creating creative games remain difficult. Despite many innovations and new methods in early childhood learning, PAUD teachers need to better understand creative strategies for game creation [7]. This is important considering how games help children's cognitive, social, and emotional development in the early stages of their lives.

Although many guidelines and frameworks have been developed to support game creativity, there are still problems in understanding and implementing them. In their efforts to provide optimal learning experiences for preschoolers, PAUD teachers may face

challenges such as lack of resources, lack of specific training, and lack of understanding about the benefits of creative games [8].

Addressing this issue can be achieved through field practice training. Involving PAUD teachers in direct experiences in designing, implementing, and evaluating creative games can help them gain deeper understanding and relevant skills [9]. This allows teachers to address problems that may arise when creating creative games in PAUD.

It is expected that PAUD teachers can create a more dynamic and stimulating learning environment through enhanced understanding and practical skills gained from field practice training [10]. Effective creative games can accelerate the cognitive, social, and emotional development of preschool children [11]. As a result, more effective learning in PAUD can provide a strong foundation for the child's long-term development.

In this context, referring to literature reviews, policies, and recent practices on creating creative games in early childhood education [12]. Despite the abundance of resources and guidelines available, enhancing PAUD teachers' knowledge and practical skills through field practice training can be an important step toward improving learning quality [13].

RESEARCH METHOD

The focus of this field practice training is the development of creative games in early childhood education (PAUD). This approach includes theory and practice, allowing PAUD teachers to combine their conceptual knowledge with practical abilities in designing and implementing creative games. The target population is PAUD teachers in a particular region or educational institution. The training results can be more easily applied in various early childhood education contexts because a representative sample is purposively selected considering various backgrounds and experiences of PAUD teachers.



Figure 1. Training stages.

The stages for implementing this community service activity are divided into 4 phases: (1) Introduction and Preparation; This activity begins with data collection on

various problems faced by the partner through field surveys to the location, namely RA Nurul Islam 2. During this survey, the issues faced by the partner are monitored, such as tools and materials used for games. (2) Implementation; This activity starts with designing tools together with members, the preliminary design to create tools that match their function and benefit. After designing the tools, trials are conducted for creating several modified games and socialized to early childhood children so that PAUD teachers can use the tools according to their function and utility in the game. (3) Monitoring and Evaluation; This phase includes monitoring the program implementation carried out by PAUD teachers and conducting evaluations. Mentoring for PAUD teachers is highly needed to determine the achievement of the implemented program. To quantify the evaluation results, a survey will be conducted with early childhood children at RA Nurul Islam 2 using interviews related to the games applied by the PAUD teachers. (4) Publication and Reporting; The final phase is publishing the modified games created and the training results through field practice.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The training was conducted in June 2024. The training "Independent Play: Enhancing PAUD Teachers' Understanding Through Field Practice Training in Developing Creative Games" was implemented to improve PAUD teachers' competencies in developing creative games that support early childhood learning. The training included several stages, beginning with a theory session discussing the concept of Independent Play, followed by practical sessions enabling teachers to design and implement creative games using simple materials available in the surrounding environment. Additionally, this training also provided intensive mentoring and periodic evaluations to ensure effective classroom implementation. Figures 2 and 3 show the results of this training activity, indicating improved understanding and skills among teachers in developing and applying game-based learning methods, which positively impact the learning process in PAUD and child development.



Figure 2. Creative game training.



Figure 3. Creative game development.

At RA Nurul Islam II Suko, the training "Independent Play: Enhancing PAUD Teachers' Understanding Through Field Practice Training in Developing Creative Games" was conducted, and data was collected from formative and summative evaluations carried out on 15 teachers of RA Nurul Islam II Suko as shown in Table 1. The evaluation aimed to measure the level of understanding of RA Nurul Islam II Suko teachers on designing and implementing creative games.

Table 1. Results of formative and summative evaluation.

Evaluation Type	Evaluation Aspect	Evaluation Result
Formative Evaluation	Understanding Improvement	80% of participants showed score improvement in understanding child development psychology concepts and basic creative game design.
Formative Evaluation	Field Practice Skills	75% improvement in PAUD teachers' ability to create creative learning experiences based on field observations.
Summative Evaluation	Long-term Impact	90% of PAUD teachers believe the training positively impacted preschool children's growth in their classes.
Summative Evaluation	Practice Application	85% of participants stated they use the taught skills in their daily lives.

According to Table 1, **Formative Evaluation** (a) Understanding Improvement: Shows that PAUD teachers better understand the concepts of child development psychology and the basics of creative game design. On the formative evaluation questionnaire, 80% of participants showed increased scores. (b) Field Practice Skills: Field observations indicated that PAUD teachers' ability to create creative learning experiences increased by 75% as a result of the practical sessions. **Summative Evaluation** (a) Long-term Impact: A summative evaluation showed that 90% of PAUD teachers believe that

the training focusing on creative game development had a positive impact on preschool children's growth in their classes. (b) Practice Application: 85% of participants stated they use the taught skills in their everyday life. This shows that the positive impact of the training is sustained.

Evaluation results indicate that field practice training effectively improves PAUD teachers' understanding and skills in creating creative games. By understanding more about children's developmental stages, PAUD teachers can create creative games that better suit the needs and characteristics of each age group. The game design principles taught during the training can also explain the improvement in practical skills [14]. PAUD teachers who know how to create engaging and curriculum-aligned games can help preschool children gain better learning experiences.

Child development theory shows that positive preschool experiences can build a strong foundation for further development [15]. PAUD teachers capable of providing creative games can help children develop social, cognitive, and emotional skills in a fun and interactive way. This is an example of the long-term impact felt by PAUD teachers.

Field practice also reflects the idea of active learning, where teachers not only tell but also help students learn. This aligns with constructivist theory, which emphasizes that students should interact directly with learning materials to gain better understanding. Therefore, field practice training not only provides knowledge and skills but also gives PAUD teachers a solid theoretical foundation to create creative games to improve early childhood education quality.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : Field practice training on creative game design significantly improves PAUD teachers' understanding and skills in developing games that support child development. Formative evaluations show that teachers better understand child development psychology concepts and creative game design principles, reflected in improved questionnaire scores. In addition, summative evaluations show a positive long-term impact, where most PAUD teachers experience a change in mindset about creating creative games and successfully apply these skills in daily practice. This indicates that the training is not only beneficial in the short term but also has a lasting positive impact on the quality of education in PAUD. **Implication :** Given the positive impact of this training, it is recommended to increase the frequency of similar training so that more PAUD teachers can benefit from it. To ensure consistency and quality of training, it is necessary to develop comprehensive and easily accessible training modules for teachers. It is also important to provide ongoing mentoring after training to ensure the application of learned principles in the field. **Limitation :** While the training shows both short- and long-term benefits, this study does not elaborate on possible contextual limitations such as varying access to resources across different PAUD institutions or differences in baseline competencies among teachers. Moreover, the extent to which mentoring can be sustained or scaled up has not been evaluated within the current study framework. **Future Research :** Further research is needed to explore the scalability of training programs

across diverse regions with different levels of teacher preparedness and institutional support. Studies should also investigate the effectiveness of digital or blended versions of the training module and examine the long-term outcomes of sustained mentoring programs on teacher performance and child development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to RA Nurul Islam II Suko for providing the opportunity and facilities to carry out this research. Hopefully, the results of this research will be useful for the development of education at RA Nurul Islam II Suko and in the field of education in general.

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