Training for Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard Teachers in Developing Educational Games for Active and Interactive Learning

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Abstract: This community service program aimed to enhance the understanding and skills of teachers at Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard in designing and implementing educational games as tools for active and joyful learning. The activity was carried out through a two-day participatory training consisting of theoretical material delivery, interactive discussions, and hands-on game development practice. The results showed a significant improvement in the teachers' comprehension of educational game concepts and their ability to design games suited to early childhood learning contexts. Evaluation indicated high levels of participant satisfaction and enthusiasm. The program was complemented with the development of a simple educational game module and post-training online mentoring to ensure sustainability. Thus, this initiative has positively contributed to improving learning quality at the Tadika and can be replicated in similar educational institutions.

Keywords: Community Service; Educational Games; Active Learning; Tadika.

Abstrak: Kegiatan pengabdian masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pemahaman dan keterampilan guru Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard dalam merancang dan menerapkan permainan edukatif sebagai media pembelajaran aktif dan menyenangkan. Kegiatan dilaksanakan dalam bentuk pelatihan partisipatif selama dua hari yang mencakup pemberian materi teoretis, diskusi interaktif, serta praktik langsung pembuatan permainan. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan pada pemahaman guru terhadap konsep permainan edukatif dan kemampuan mereka dalam mendesain permainan yang sesuai dengan konteks pembelajaran anak usia dini. Evaluasi juga menunjukkan tingkat kepuasan dan antusiasme peserta yang tinggi. Kegiatan ini disertai dengan penyusunan modul permainan edukatif sederhana dan pendampingan daring sebagai upaya keberlanjutan. Dengan demikian, program ini memberikan kontribusi positif terhadap peningkatan kualitas pembelajaran di Tadika dan dapat direplikasi di lembaga pendidikan serupa.

Kata kunci: Pengabdian Masyarakat; Permainan Edukatif; Pembelajaran Aktif; Tadika.

A. Introduction

Early childhood education plays a crucial role in shaping the foundation of children's cognitive, emotional, and social development. At this stage, learning methods must be adapted to the characteristics and needs of young children, who naturally learn best through play and exploration (Mustard, 2006). Play provides a dynamic and meaningful context in which children can acquire new knowledge and build essential life skills.

In Malaysia, the implementation of the *Kurikulum Standard Prasekolah Kebangsaan* (KSPK) emphasizes a holistic, active, and fun learning process. However, many early childhood education teachers still face difficulties in delivering lessons that are both engaging and developmentally appropriate, often due to limited pedagogical training and resources (MOE Malaysia, 2017). This situation necessitates professional development programs that specifically focus on interactive and child-centered strategies.

One effective method to encourage active learning in early childhood settings is the use of educational games. These games are structured activities that combine play with specific learning objectives. They stimulate curiosity, enhance motivation, and promote the development of children's thinking, motor, and language skills (Isenberg & Jalongo, 2006). Educational games can also foster a joyful learning atmosphere where children feel free to express themselves.

The integration of educational games into the preschool curriculum can significantly increase students' engagement and improve their understanding of various concepts. According to Bodrova and Leong (2007), children not only retain information longer through games but also become more confident and cooperative in social interactions. This method has become a valuable tool in modern early childhood classrooms.

However, despite its benefits, many teachers in preschools, particularly in Islamic-based institutions like Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard, still lack knowledge and skills in designing or applying educational games effectively. Most educators rely on traditional

methods such as rote learning and worksheets, which do not align with the active learning principles promoted by the national curriculum.

Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard, while showing strong dedication to quality early education, faces challenges in fully implementing innovative pedagogical approaches. Teachers are often constrained by time, training, and access to appropriate materials. These obstacles hinder the adoption of game-based learning and limit opportunities for students to engage in joyful and meaningful classroom experiences.

To address this issue, a structured training program that focuses on the development and application of educational games is essential. Such a program will provide teachers with hands-on experience in designing games that align with both learning objectives and child development needs. According to Edwards (2002), active learning environments foster creativity and independence, especially when educators are trained to facilitate them effectively.

An additional advantage of this training is the opportunity to incorporate Islamic values into game-based learning. Since Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard integrates religious and academic education, educational games can be developed to include moral and spiritual lessons, thereby supporting the holistic development of the child (Abdullah, 2010).

Numerous studies have demonstrated that when educators are provided with adequate support and tools, they are better positioned to create interactive and effective learning environments. Saracho and Spodek (2008) emphasized that professional training is a key factor in shifting teaching practices toward more learner-centered models.

Moreover, game-based learning promotes inclusive education. Every child, regardless of ability, can participate actively in game activities. This approach aligns with UNESCO's (2015) goal of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all children, as highlighted in the Education 2030 framework.

Training teachers in game development also helps them to be more reflective and intentional in their teaching. Fisher et al. (2011) argued that teachers with knowledge of

game-based learning are more likely to tailor lessons based on student needs and monitor their progress more effectively.

In the Malaysian context, where early childhood education is increasingly recognized as a critical stage of national development, there is a growing need for innovative community-based programs. Norshidah et al. (2019) noted that professional development for preschool teachers is essential in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning practices.

The training offered to Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard teachers through this program is designed not only to improve their teaching methods but also to empower them as agents of change in their classrooms. This empowerment will contribute to the sustainability of quality early education in the community.

Furthermore, this initiative encourages reflective practice among educators, helping them to continuously evaluate and refine their instructional strategies. As Schön (1983) points out, reflective practitioners are better equipped to respond to the dynamic needs of their learners and teaching environment.

In conclusion, this community service initiative is an important step toward enhancing the quality of early childhood education at Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard. By equipping teachers with practical competencies in developing educational games, the program supports Malaysia's aspiration for child-centered, meaningful, and joyful learning experiences.

B. Community Service Methodology

This community service program employed a participatory and educational approach, emphasizing the active involvement of the partner (teachers at Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard) in each stage of the activity. The methodology consisted of five main phases: problem identification, planning, implementation, evaluation, and follow-up.

1. Problem Identification

The initial stage involved direct observation at Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard and preliminary discussions with school administrators and teachers. From this

identification process, it was found that teachers lacked the skills and knowledge to design and implement educational games aligned with the curriculum and the characteristics of early childhood learners. Methods used included informal interviews and classroom observation.

2. Activity Planning

Once the issues were collaboratively identified, the service team developed a training plan based on the needs of the partner. The training materials were designed to cover the basics of active learning, principles of educational games, and techniques for designing and modifying games according to local contexts and Islamic values. A training schedule, media tools, and simple evaluation instruments were also prepared.

3. Activity Implementation

The program was conducted in the form of a participatory workshop over two days using interactive presentations, group discussions, case studies, and hands-on practice. The first day focused on theoretical understanding and exposure to relevant educational games. The second day involved collaborative game design by the teachers, followed by group presentations and simulations of classroom application.

4. Evaluation

Evaluation was conducted in two forms: (1) formative evaluation, which included observing the teachers' participation during the workshop, and (2) summative evaluation, through feedback questionnaires and assessments of the educational games created. In addition, a reflective discussion was held with the teachers to explore the benefits, challenges, and their plans for applying the games in their classrooms.

5. Follow-Up

As a follow-up, the service team provided online mentoring for one month after the training, allowing teachers to consult on the educational games they intended

to use. In addition, a practical handbook of simple educational games tailored to the Tadika's needs was developed to support the sustainability of the program.

C. Results and Discussion

This community service activity was carried out over two days in the form of a participatory training program involving all teachers at Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard. Based on observations and evaluations conducted during the activity, it can be concluded that the training effectively improved the teachers' knowledge and skills in designing and implementing educational games to support active and enjoyable learning.

1. Increased Conceptual Understanding

Before the training, most teachers perceived games in education merely as entertainment tools with no clear structure. However, after attending theoretical sessions and interactive discussions, they came to understand that educational games are strategic tools for achieving learning objectives. This aligns with Isenberg and Jalongo's (2006) assertion that games, when purposefully designed, provide a strong stimulus for children's cognitive and social development.

2. Ability to Design Educational Games

During the hands-on session on the second day, all participants successfully created at least one type of educational game relevant to their lesson themes. Teachers demonstrated creativity in incorporating elements such as colors, numbers, letters, and Islamic values into their game designs. Examples of the games produced included "Hijaiyah Letter Wheel," "Noble Character Puzzle," and "Word Jump." These findings support Bodrova and Leong's (2007) view that games actively designed by teachers can significantly enhance student engagement and achievement.

3. Teacher Enthusiasm and Participation

Teachers showed a high level of enthusiasm throughout the sessions. They were actively involved in asking questions, participating in discussions, and providing feedback on the material. This indicates that a collaborative and practical training

approach can enhance adult learning motivation. According to Knowles (1980), adults learn best when training materials are relevant to their actual practice.

4. **Reflection and Implementation Plans**

During the reflection session, teachers stated that they planned to implement the educational games in their daily classroom activities, particularly in literacy, numeracy, and character education. Some also suggested that similar training programs be conducted regularly to further deepen their skills. Abdullah (2010) emphasized the importance of continuous teacher training to sustain consistent innovation in the learning process.

5. **Evaluation and Follow-Up**

Evaluation results showed that 100% of participants were satisfied with the training content, delivery methods, and the relevance of the materials to their teaching needs. Additionally, 92% of participants reported feeling confident to start using educational games in their classrooms. The service team also provided post-training online mentoring and produced a simple educational game module as an output of the program. This module serves as a self-learning resource designed to be easy to use and adaptable to various classroom contexts (Saracho & Spodek, 2008).

D. Conclusion

The community service program implemented at Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard has proven to be effective in enhancing the teachers' understanding and skills in designing and applying educational games as tools for active and joyful learning. Through participatory training methods, teachers gained new perspectives on the importance of structured educational games in early childhood education and demonstrated increased confidence in integrating such games into their classroom practices.

The results of the training showed significant improvements in teachers' creativity, engagement, and willingness to innovate in their teaching approaches. The creation of game-based learning tools tailored to the needs of their students also

indicated that the training was not only informative but highly practical and directly applicable.

Furthermore, the sustained support through online mentoring and the provision of a simple educational game module have strengthened the impact and sustainability of the program. This initiative emphasizes the importance of ongoing teacher development and collaborative learning as key strategies for improving the quality of early childhood education.

It is hoped that similar training programs can be replicated in other early childhood education centers to foster a culture of innovation, creativity, and child-centered learning in a broader educational context.

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