



Implementation of the Play-Based Learning Method in Dance Arts Learning to Enhance Early Childhood Creativity at As-Solehah Kindergarten, Bawen

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the implementation of the play-based learning method in dance education as a strategy to enhance early childhood creativity at TK As-Solehah Bawen. Creativity is an essential aspect of child development that can be nurtured through expressive, arts-based activities. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The research subjects included a dance teacher, the school principal, and early childhood students. The findings reveal that play-based learning was implemented through activities that integrate play, imagination, and movement exploration, such as role-playing, improvisational dance, and thematic movement. The teacher acted as a facilitator who provided movement stimuli and allowed space for the children to express themselves freely. This method was proven to increase student engagement, self-confidence, and originality in movement. Furthermore, a joyful and contextual learning environment helped strengthen the growth of children's creativity. The analysis of this study draws on Vygotsky's sociocultural development theory, particularly the concepts of the zone of proximal development, scaffolding, and imaginative play, which emphasize the role of social interaction and play in supporting children's cognitive and creative development. This study recommends strengthening teachers' capacity to design systematic and sustainable play-based dance education in early childhood learning settings.

Keywords: play-based learning, dance education, creativity, early childhood, early childhood education

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan penerapan metode play-based learning dalam pembelajaran seni tari sebagai strategi untuk meningkatkan kreativitas anak usia dini di TK As-Solehah Bawen. Kreativitas merupakan aspek esensial dalam perkembangan anak yang dapat diasah melalui aktivitas ekspresif berbasis seni. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Subjek penelitian meliputi guru seni tari, kepala sekolah, dan peserta didik PAUD. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa metode play-based learning diterapkan melalui kegiatan yang memadukan unsur permainan, imajinasi, dan eksplorasi gerak, diantaranya bermain peran, tari improvisasi, dan gerak tematik. Guru berperan sebagai fasilitator yang memberikan stimulus gerak dan ruang kebebasan berekspresi bagi anak. Penerapan metode ini terbukti mendorong peningkatan keaktifan, rasa percaya diri, dan orisinalitas gerakan anak. Selain itu, suasana pembelajaran yang menyenangkan dan kontekstual turut memperkuat tumbuhnya kreativitas peserta didik. Penelitian ini dianalisis menggunakan teori perkembangan sosial Vygotsky, khususnya pada konsep zone of proximal development, scaffolding, dan imaginative play, yang menekankan pentingnya peran interaksi sosial dan aktivitas bermain dalam mendukung perkembangan kognitif dan kreativitas anak. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan penguatan kapasitas guru dalam merancang pembelajaran seni tari yang mengintegrasikan pendekatan bermain secara sistematis dan berkelanjutan untuk pendidikan anak usia dini.

Kata Kunci: play-based learning, seni tari, kreativitas, anak usia dini, pendidikan PAUD

INTRODUCTION

Education is a teaching and learning process between teachers and students, with teachers playing a primary role in shaping and providing understanding to students (Etivali & Alaika M, 2019). Through education, individuals acquire not only knowledge and skills but also moral, social, and cultural values that shape their personality and contribution to society. Latief (2020) emphasized that education is a fundamental human right and a key foundation for sustainable development. Early childhood, aged 0–6, is in a period of rapid development and defines the golden age.

According to Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, early childhood education is a development effort aimed at children from birth to six years of age, carried out through the provision of educational stimulation to support physical and spiritual growth and development so that children are prepared to enter further education (Fauziddin & Mufarizuddin, 2018).

Early childhood education plays a strategic role in establishing the foundations of children's development, including cognitive, affective, social, and psychomotor skills. Child development is a process of change in various aspects, such as movement, thought processes, feelings, and interactions with the surrounding environment (Ramadhan Lubis et al., 2025). One crucial aspect of development at this stage is creativity. Creativity in early childhood encompasses the ability to freely express ideas, feelings, and imagination through various activities, including art. Arts education, particularly dance, is an effective medium for stimulating children's natural expression

and creativity. Through movement, rhythm, and imagination, children can learn to develop motor skills, coordination, and emotional sensitivity (Uminah et al., 2023).

Dance is a form of cultural work owned by traditional communities as an intellectual creation (Sukihana & Kurniawan, 2018). Dance is not only understood as a form of cultural expression or entertainment, but has also developed as a highly effective alternative learning strategy. In the process of dancing, children not only move their bodies mechanically but also engage in emotional, social, and sensory experiences that enrich their learning process holistically (Kamal, 2024).

Dance activities can develop gross and fine motor coordination, improve body balance, and enhance children's rhythmic abilities and kinesthetic perception (Haida et al., 2023). Beyond simply teaching body movements, dance also fosters self-confidence, social awareness, imagination, and discipline.

In the context of early childhood, dance education provides a medium for playful learning, allowing children to express themselves, build social relationships, and develop their gross and fine motor skills. Furthermore, dance education serves as a means to introduce, maintain, and instill artistic values in students in a creative, innovative, and enjoyable way, fostering an interest in learning culture and the arts, particularly dance (Utomo et al., 2020). One way to acquire dance education is through education.

However, in practice, dance education in early childhood education institutions still faces various challenges. Preliminary studies indicate that most dance education in kindergartens remains instructional and emphasizes

memorization of uniform movements (Kumala, 2022). Children are expected to imitate the teacher's movements without being given space for exploration and creative freedom. This demonstrates a gap between the ideal characteristics of play-based early childhood education and the monotonous practice of dance education. The lack of an appropriate approach to children's play is one factor hindering the optimization of creative development in the context of arts learning. Play-based learning is a frequently used learning method in early childhood education to enhance this approach (Wahjusaputri et al., 2024).

Play-based learning is a pedagogical approach that places play activities at the core of early childhood learning. The learning process, particularly in dance, requires the integration of a playful approach to ensure comprehensive delivery (Nurlina & Bahera, 2024). In the context of dance, this approach provides space for children to move imaginatively, improvise, and develop their own movement ideas in a fun atmosphere. Several studies have shown that this method not only increases children's motivation and active participation but also significantly influences the development of creativity and self-confidence (Fitriani & Rokhman, 2023). However, the application of play-based learning methods in dance instruction in formal educational settings such as kindergartens has not been extensively studied, particularly in local contexts such as As-Solehah Kindergarten in Bawen.

The urgency of this research lies in the importance of developing a dance learning model that not only educates technical skills but also stimulates children's creative potential from an early age. With a play-based approach, arts learning can be more contextual and relevant to children's developmental stages. In addition, the results of this study are expected to provide alternative

learning strategies that are in accordance with the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes meaningful and enjoyable learning.

The uniqueness of this research lies in its exploratory focus on the application of play-based learning methods in the context of dance as a medium for developing creativity in early childhood education units. This research not only describes learning activities but also reveals teacher involvement, children's responses, and the dynamics of the learning environment in supporting creativity. This study is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of adaptive and transformative arts learning in early childhood education.

RESEARCH METHODS

The method used in this research is a qualitative descriptive approach. This approach is based on theories relevant to the problem and research field, utilizing literature sources such as books and scientific journals. This method was chosen because the researcher conducted observations to obtain a general overview of student activities in implementing play-based learning in dance lessons, as well as how this approach contributes to the development of early childhood creativity at As-Solehah Bawen Kindergarten.

This research used observation, interviews, and literature review as data collection techniques. The research location was As-Solehah Bawen Kindergarten, located in Bawen District, Semarang Regency. The research was conducted in the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year within the school environment. The subjects in this study consisted of one dance teacher, the principal, and early childhood education students who participated directly in the activities. Subjects were selected purposively, considering their direct involvement in the play-based dance learning process.

Data collection was conducted through participatory observation during learning activities, semi-structured interviews with teachers and principals, and documentation in the form of photographs, activity notes, and recordings of children's activities. The researcher served as the primary instrument in data collection and interpretation, supported by observation guidelines, interview guides, and documentation sheets developed based on creativity indicators and play-based learning principles.

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data validity, source and technical triangulation techniques were used, namely by comprehensively comparing data from observations, interviews, and documentation (Miles & Huberman, 1992). This process aimed to produce a complete and reliable picture of the application of play-based learning methods in the context of early childhood dance instruction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Play-Based Dance Learning Planning

Dance learning at As-Solehah Kindergarten in Bawen is designed with a structured and thematic approach. In the first week of the semester, teachers, along with the principal, develop an academic calendar (*kaldik*), which includes planning for arts learning activities, including dance. Each class is assigned to perform a dance based on the school's annual theme. The theme for the 2024/2025 academic year focuses on the local culture of Semarang Regency, and one implementation is the introduction of regional dances such as Ayo Dolani from Semarang Regency.

Teachers obtain dance movement references from YouTube videos and adapt them to the abilities and characteristics of the children in each class. Selecting one

dance per class is a realistic and focused strategy for building in-depth learning. With this approach, children can better understand and internalize each movement and the meaning contained in the dances they learn. The practice process is carried out in stages and repeatedly, so that children have sufficient time to understand movement patterns, musical rhythms, and appropriate expressions. Teachers also incorporate local cultural values into each practice session, such as introducing the origins of the dances, the meaning of costumes, and ethics in artistic performances.

This planning demonstrates educators' awareness of the importance of social and cultural context as a foundation for early childhood learning. From Vygotsky's theoretical perspective, the social and cultural environment plays a central role in children's cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). Knowledge is not constructed individually, but through active interaction between children, teachers, and the surrounding socio-cultural context. Therefore, the introduction of regional dance as a learning theme actualizes the sociocultural learning principle in Vygotsky's theory, where children construct understanding through meaningful activities embedded in their own culture.

Furthermore, the implementation of this method facilitates teachers in managing classroom learning and adapting teaching materials to the developmental stages of their students. Children are given the freedom to explore dance movements according to their own style and creativity, while remaining within directed pedagogical boundaries. This structured freedom of expression contributes to increasing children's self-confidence during learning. Within Vygotsky's theoretical framework, this is closely related to the concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), the

developmental zone where children can learn optimally with the support of adults or more capable peers.

In several sessions, teachers also involve children in role-playing activities as dancers and audience members to help them understand the flow and situation of the performance from various perspectives as one implementation of the play-based learning method component. This approach makes dance learning not only a means of developing motor expression, but also an educational medium to instill an appreciation and love of local culture from an early age. One example of its application can be seen in activities when children watch dance practice videos on YouTube. Through these audio-visual displays, children gain a clear and engaging picture of the dance movement forms, thus enabling them to build initial understanding before they perform them directly in learning activities.



Figure 1 Learning Activity: Watching Dance Practice Videos from YouTube.

Teacher-Student Interactions in the Dance Learning Process at As-Solehah Kindergarten, Bawen

Dance learning activities at As-Solehah Kindergarten, Bawen, are conducted daily in stages and continuously. The learning process begins with an introduction to dance movements through videos on a smart TV connected to the YouTube platform. Following this visual introduction, teachers guide the children in practicing the movements together, while implementing a playful approach. Children are then given the opportunity to memorize and perform the movements independently. This process

lasts approximately six months, from the beginning to the end of the semester, culminating in a dance performance that concludes the learning series.

Throughout the process, teachers consistently create a positive learning atmosphere by greeting the children warmly, beginning sessions with light games, and allowing children to express themselves through flexible movement. This approach not only makes children feel comfortable and relaxed but also builds an emotional bond between teacher and students. Children appear enthusiastic and confident in participating in activities because they feel safe, valued, and free to explore without pressure.

From Vygotsky's theoretical perspective, this process reflects the application of the concept of scaffolding, which is the provision of temporary assistance by teachers to support children's development in completing tasks within their Zone of Proximal Development. Teachers do not simply leave children to learn independently, but rather provide guidance through movement demonstrations, repetition, and verbal encouragement that support children's abilities until they are able to perform independently with confidence.

Furthermore, the application of play methods in the dance learning process aligns with the concept of imaginative play in Vygotsky's theory. Play is not merely a recreational activity but also an important vehicle for developing children's symbolic abilities, imagination, and creativity. In dance activities, children not only imitate movements mechanically but also act out specific roles, adapt facial expressions, and relate movements to stories or cultural meanings conveyed by the teacher. These activities enrich their aesthetic and emotional experiences, simultaneously strengthening their cognitive and social aspects.

Teachers also demonstrate flexibility in adapting learning strategies to

the individual interests and abilities of the children. A relaxed yet focused learning atmosphere is a hallmark of the play-based learning method implemented at this school. By integrating play into every stage of the activity, children are able to develop motor, cognitive, social, and emotional skills in a balanced manner.

This approach creates a constructive and enjoyable learning environment, where children feel free to explore and express themselves without fear of failure. Figure 2 shows a moment when students are practicing dance movements through a playful approach. During this activity, the children enthusiastically follow the teacher's movements, reflecting the success of a learning strategy oriented toward enjoyable and meaningful experiences.



Figure 2 Learning Activities: Students Practicing Dance Movements Demonstrated by the Teacher

The dance teacher at As-Solehah Kindergarten in Bawen, Mrs. Puput, not only serves as a presenter but also as a facilitator who understands the characteristics and developmental needs of her students. During her lessons, she doesn't force children to immediately imitate dance movements perfectly. Instead, she provides space and time for them to progress through the learning process at their own developmental stage. This approach has proven more effective than her previous experience when the school used an external dance instructor. At that time, the children displayed tension and discomfort due to the rigid teaching methods and overemphasis on final results.

This experience demonstrated that an authoritarian approach is less appropriate for dance instruction in early childhood education.

The teacher's approach reflects the principles of Vygotsky's theory of social development, particularly the concept of scaffolding, which involves providing temporary assistance tailored to the child's abilities. The teacher provides guidance gradually and reduces it as the child begins to demonstrate independence in performing dance movements. This strategy demonstrates the teacher's understanding of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the developmental zone where a child can complete specific tasks with the support of a more competent adult. The application of scaffolding in dance learning helps children build self-confidence, independence, and a sense of security in exploring.

By implementing a humanistic and responsive approach to child development, teachers can create a learning process that focuses not only on outcomes but also values individual development. This approach reinforces the understanding that early childhood dance instruction is part of creating meaningful, enjoyable learning experiences that align with child development principles. Figure 3 shows the learning outcomes of students who implemented the teacher-student interaction component.



Figure 3 Dance Performance of Student Learning Outcomes

The Socio-Cultural Context of Dance Learning at As Sholehah Kindergarten

Contextual Support for Creativity Development is one of the socio-cultural-based learning efforts.

The socio-cultural context of dance learning at As Sholehah Kindergarten in Bawen serves as an important foundation for creating a meaningful learning process. Contextual support for creativity development is a socio-cultural-based learning effort that not only introduces children to the art of dance but also instills the values of local wisdom they live by daily. Children learn dance not simply as a physical activity, but as a form of self-expression aligned with their cultural identity. In this regard, the social environment, traditions, and local values serve as sources of inspiration in the development of learning materials and methods.

Dance learning at As Sholehah Kindergarten features themes and movements that are close to the children's lives in the school environment. For example, dance movements are inspired by activities such as planting rice, picking vegetables, and playing in nature. This makes dance not something foreign or difficult, but rather a fun part of everyday life. The use of regional songs such as "Gundul-Gundul Pacul" or "Cublak-Cublak Suweng" also strengthens children's connection to local culture through rhythms and lyrics that are familiar to their ears since childhood.

As an educational institution located in a Javanese Muslim community, As Sholehah Kindergarten also integrates religious and moral values into dance instruction. The dances introduced adhere to norms of politeness and Islamic values, such as maintaining respectful body movements and appropriate attire. Dance activities are often linked to religious events or local traditions, such as the celebration of the Prophet's Birthday, Kartini Day, or cultural parades. This demonstrates that dance learning is

inseparable from the socio-religious context surrounding the children.

Parental and community support is also crucial in creating contextual dance instruction. The school involves parents in arts performances, inter-kindergarten dance competitions, and even the creation of dance costumes from local materials. This not only strengthens the relationship between the school and the family but also strengthens the children's cultural identity through cross-cultural collaboration. Children who perform in front of the community feel pride in their culture and gain confidence in expressing themselves.

Throughout the process, teachers act as facilitators, sensitive to children's cultural backgrounds and able to bridge the gap between play and culture. Teachers don't simply teach dance movements mechanically, but instead encourage children to understand the meaning behind those movements. For example, during a dance involving planting movements, the teacher will engage the children in a dialogue: "How does it feel to plant rice with my mother in the rice field?" This approach encourages creative exploration and personal reflection on their own cultural experiences.

Contextual support is also evident in the use of dance props and instruments based on local culture. Batik scarves, wooden masks, hats, or other traditional equipment are used as learning media that stimulate imagination and expression. This not only helps children understand the function of these instruments but also fosters a sense of ownership of their cultural heritage. By role-playing using these props, children are encouraged to create original dance movements based on their own interpretations.

Furthermore, socio-cultural-based dance learning at As Sholehah Kindergarten aims not only to develop artistic skills but also to develop social and emotional intelligence. Children learn to work collaboratively while dancing in

groups, learn to appreciate differences in movement, and receive feedback from peers and teachers. These interactions provide an important space for building empathy, tolerance, and respect—social values that grow alongside the development of creativity.

By integrating a concrete socio-cultural context into dance instruction, As Sholehah Kindergarten in Bawen has exemplified how early childhood education can be holistic, relevant, and empowering. Children not only learn to dance, but also learn to become individuals who are proud of their culture, open to differences, and courageous in expressing themselves. Through this approach, dance instruction becomes more than just a supplementary activity, but also a vital vehicle for developing children's identity and creativity from an early age.

CONCLUSION

Based on research conducted at As-Solehah Kindergarten in Bawen, it can be concluded that the application of play-based learning methods in dance instruction significantly contributes to the development of creativity in early childhood. The learning process is structured through the development of a thematic educational calendar focused on local culture and implemented through play activities involving watching dance videos, practicing gradual movements, and providing space for children to express themselves independently. This strategy has proven effective in creating a learning environment that is enjoyable, contextual, and developmentally appropriate.

Teachers act as facilitators, assisting children with an empathetic, non-pressurizing approach and providing stimuli that encourage courage, initiative, and active participation in dance. Evaluation is processual and holistic, emphasizing courage, expression, and children's involvement throughout the learning process, rather than solely

focusing on movement perfection. Furthermore, institutional support from the school and outing activities that highlight local cultural and environmental values contribute to enriching children's learning experiences socioculturally.

Thus, the play-based learning method has proven effective in creating meaningful, adaptive, and relevant dance learning experiences aligned with early childhood education principles. This method is a suitable alternative learning model in early childhood education institutions, particularly to support the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes fun, child-centered learning, and encourages comprehensive creativity.

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Curriculum Vitae

Nama Saya Novia Ayu Aulia, lahir di Kabupaten Semarang pada tanggal 5 November 2002. Saya menempuh pendidikan dasar di SD Negeri Kupang 01 Ambarawa dan lulus pada tahun 2015, melanjutkan ke SMP Negeri 3 Ambarawa hingga lulus pada tahun 2018, dan menyelesaikan pendidikan menengah atas di SMA Islam Sudirman Ambarawa pada tahun 2021. Saat ini, saya merupakan mahasiswa aktif di Universitas Negeri Semarang, Jurusan Pendidikan Seni Tari, Drama, dan Musik, Program Studi Pendidikan Seni Tari, Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni.

Di luar kegiatan akademik, Sejak tahun 2022, saya juga menjadi relawan di komunitas **Svaranusa**, sebuah ruang kolaboratif yang bergerak dalam pengembangan seni dan budaya.