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Creative Storytelling Through Sock Puppet Media For IGRA Teachers In North Bengkulu

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Abstract. This community service activity aims to enhance the storytelling skills of IGRA teachers through creative methods using sock hand puppets as instructional media. Conducted by lecturers from the Early Childhood Teacher Education Program (PGPAUD) of Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu, the activity took place on May 24, 2025, at the PD IGRA Secretariat in North Bengkulu and involved 50 RA teachers. The implementation included interactive lectures, demonstrations, hands-on practice, and reflective sessions. The results showed increased teacher competence in creating and utilizing sock puppets effectively. Furthermore, the activity fostered collaborative networks between the university and early childhood educators. It is recommended that similar activities be continued regularly to support the improvement of early childhood education quality.

Keywords: *Community Service, Storytelling, Hand Puppet, IGRA Teachers, Early Childhood Education, Creativity.*

INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is an important foundation in shaping the quality of human resources in the future. Early childhood is a golden age that only occurs once in a child's life and cannot be repeated. During this period, all aspects of a child's development—physical, cognitive, language, social-emotional, and moral-spiritual—experience rapid growth. Therefore, the learning process in the PAUD stage must be conducted in a fun, interactive, and meaningful manner, aligned with the characteristics of children's development. One relevant and effective approach in PAUD learning is through storytelling activities. Storytelling is not merely an entertaining activity but a means to instil moral values, expand vocabulary, foster imagination, and enhance children's language skills. Unfortunately, in practice, many early childhood education teachers have not optimally utilised storytelling as a learning strategy. Some teachers struggle to bring stories to life, maintain children's attention, or use engaging media during storytelling.

Engaging learning media are essential to support the success of storytelling. One proven effective medium is the hand puppet. Hand puppets can help teachers bring story characters to life, capture children's attention, and create more dynamic two-way interactions. However, such media are often considered expensive or difficult to obtain, so they are rarely used regularly in classrooms. As a solution to this challenge, a team of lecturers from the Early Childhood Education Program at Dehasen University in Bengkulu conducted a community service activity in the form of a training session titled 'Creative Storytelling with Sock Hand Puppets' for teachers at IGRA in North Bengkulu. Socks were chosen as the base material because they are inexpensive, easily accessible, and can be creatively modified into educational hand puppets.

This activity aims to enhance teachers' understanding of the importance of storytelling and equip them with the skills to create and use hand puppets in the learning process. With this enhanced competence, it is hoped that teachers will be able to create a more enjoyable and meaningful learning environment for children. Additionally, this activity also strengthens collaborative relationships between higher education institutions and the teacher community in joint efforts to improve the quality of early childhood education.

RESEARCH METHODS

This community service activity was held on 24 May 2025 at the Secretariat of PD IGRA Bengkulu Utara, Jalan Prof. M. Yamin, SH, Kelurahan Gunung Alam, Kecamatan Kota Argamakmur. The activity involved 50 teachers from various RA (Raudhatul Athfal) educational institutions that are members of the IGRA Bengkulu Utara organisation. The activity was implemented using a participatory approach through four main stages: (1) Socialisation and interactive lectures on the importance of storytelling in early childhood education, (2) Demonstration of making hand puppets using socks as the main material, (3) Group-based practical sessions where participants create and decorate their own hand puppets, and (4) Simulation and reflection, where participants practise storytelling using the media they have created, followed by discussions and evaluations. This approach was designed to create an active, enjoyable, and directly applicable training environment in the participants' workplace. All activities were facilitated by lecturers from the Early Childhood Education Department at Dehasen University in Bengkulu as resource persons and activity supervisors. Documentation in the form of photos, videos, and participants' works were used as supporting data in evaluating the success of the activity.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The community service activity themed 'Creative Storytelling with Sock Puppets' went smoothly and was enthusiastically received by the participants. The event was attended by 50 IGRA teachers from various sub-districts in North Bengkulu Regency. The event began with an opening ceremony by the organising committee and a welcome address from the Chairman of the PD IGRA Bengkulu Utara, followed by a presentation of the material by the PGPAUD lecturers from Dehasen University Bengkulu.

The first topic discussed was the importance of storytelling in early childhood education. During this session, it was explained that storytelling is not only a form of entertainment but also an effective teaching method for instilling character values, enriching vocabulary, and enhancing children's imagination and social skills. Participants were highly engaged and actively participated in the question-and-answer session, indicating that the topic was relevant to their needs in the field.

Following the awareness session, the activity continued with a demonstration on creating hand puppets using old socks. The community service team demonstrated the production process, starting from material selection, sewing, adding ornaments such as eyes, mouths, and hair, to how to use the hand puppets in storytelling activities. Participants were highly interested because this process does not require expensive costs and can be made from materials available at home.

Next, participants were divided into several groups to engage in hands-on practice. Each group was asked to create at least one hand puppet with a free design. This activity was one of the most enjoyed by participants, as it allowed them to express their creativity. Some participants even successfully created puppet characters with their own stories, such as animal characters, professional figures, and folk tale characters.

After the puppet creation was completed, participants participated in a storytelling simulation. In this session, they were asked to practise telling short stories using the media they had created. Many participants initially appeared nervous, but after a while began to perform confidently and expressively. This simulation provided participants with the opportunity to apply vocal techniques, intonation, and facial expressions that supported the story's flow. Additionally, participants received direct feedback from the facilitators and their peers.

The activity concluded with a reflection and evaluation session. In the discussion, most participants stated that the training was highly beneficial and provided new experiences that could be directly applied in the classroom. They acknowledged that they had previously rarely used media in storytelling, and after participating in this training, they were motivated to be more creative. Some participants even expressed their intention to share this experience with their colleagues at their respective schools.

Based on observations and documentation of the activities, it can be concluded that the programme successfully achieved its main objective, which was to enhance teachers' knowledge and skills in creating and using hand puppets for storytelling activities. The active

participation of participants in every stage of the activity served as an indicator of the success of the participatory approach employed by the outreach team.

The results of this activity are also in line with Roekhan's (2016) findings, which state that the use of visual and manipulative media such as hand puppets in early childhood education can increase children's attention and deepen their understanding of the messages conveyed. Additionally, this training supports the development of teachers' pedagogical competencies, particularly in terms of innovative learning media, as suggested in the Early Childhood Education Learning Development Guidelines by the Ministry of Education and Culture (2008).

From the perspective of strengthening collaboration, this activity also had a positive impact on building collaboration between higher education institutions and teacher professional organisations. Lecturers not only acted as facilitators but also as learning partners for teachers in the field. This serves as a good model for the implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, particularly in the aspect of community service oriented towards empowerment.



Figure. Delivery of opening remarks by the Chairman of PDIGRA Bengkulu Utara



Figure 2. Presentation of Material



Figure 3. Signing of MOU between PGPAUD Unived Study Programme and PDIGRA BU

CONCLUSION

This community service activity successfully improved the skills and understanding of IGRA teachers in North Bengkulu in creative storytelling using hand puppets made from socks. Through participatory training, teachers not only gained insight into the importance of storytelling in early childhood education but also gained hands-on experience in making and

utilising simple, inexpensive, yet effective media. Participants' responses indicated that the activity was highly beneficial, practical, and encouraged innovative spirit in the classroom learning process.

The success of this activity was evident not only from the participants' enthusiasm but also from the hand puppet creations they produced and their ability to practise storytelling expressively. This activity also strengthened collaboration between higher education institutions and the teacher community as part of collective efforts to improve the quality of early childhood education.

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