

## **IMPROVING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS’ PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES THROUGH IN-HOUSE EARLY CHILDHOOD CREATIVE LEARNING TRAINING**

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### **Abstract**

This research describes the efforts made to contribute to the improvement of early childhood educators’ professional competence to be able to carry out their duties well through the application of in-house training. This study used collaborative action research methods, where researchers collaborate with the school, namely RA Al-Ihsan, with the number of participants as many as 8 Early Childhood Educators. The data collection used are observation, interview, and documentation techniques. The data analysis stage in this study goes through the data coding stage and groups the code into themes. The results showed that: (1) In the initial condition of educators experiencing problems related to professional competence, especially in developing materials and creative learning activities for early childhood. (2) The form and process of implementing in-house training include identifying the needs of participants, ideas or ideas related to implementation techniques, training design, implementation and evaluation, using face-to-face and online training techniques. (3) The professional competence of early childhood education (ECE) educators have improved well. Educators have begun to understand what needs to be owned and prepared by educators in developing creative learning materials and activities for early childhood so that the training form in house training can be used as an alternative to improve the professional competence of ECE educators.

**Keywords:** educators, professional, learning, training

### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini menjelaskan upaya-upaya yang dilakukan untuk memberikan kontribusi terhadap peningkatan kompetensi yang dimiliki oleh guru agar mampu melaksanakan tugasnya dengan baik melalui penerapan in house training. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian tindakan kolaboratif, dimana peneliti berkolaborasi dengan pihak sekolah yaitu RA Al-Ihsan dengan jumlah partisipan sebanyak 8 Orang Pendidik PAUD. Pengumpulan data yang digunakan yaitu teknik observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Adapun tahapan analisis data dalam penelitian ini melalui tahap pengodean data dan mengelompokkan kode ke dalam tema. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa: (1) Pada kondisi awal guru mengalami permasalahan terkait kompetensi profesional terutama dalam kemampuan mengembangkan materi dan kegiatan pembelajaran bagi anak usia dini. (2) Bentuk dan proses penerapan in house training meliputi identifikasi kebutuhan peserta, ide atau gagasan terkait teknik pelaksanaan, rancangan pelatihan, pelaksanaan dan evaluasi, dengan menggunakan teknik pelatihan tatap muka dan daring. (3) Kompetensi profesional Pendidik PAUD mengalami peningkatan yang baik, guru sudah mulai memahami apa saja yang perlu dimiliki dan disiapkan oleh guru dalam mengembangkan materi dan kegiatan pembelajaran bagi anak usia dini. Sehingga pelatihan bentuk in house training dapat dijadikan sebagai alternatif untuk meningkatkan kompetensi profesional guru PAUD.

**Kata kunci:** pendidik, profesional, belajar, pelatihan

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The research in early childhood educators' competence showed important fact that early childhood educators' competence is vital for high quality early childhood education (Hayati, 2015; Nurhayati, Sri and Rakhman, 2009; Tomo, 2008; Trisoni, 2016). Early Childhood Educators are professionals whose primary responsibility is to educate, teach, guide, direct, train, assess, and evaluate learners in early childhood education who are pursuing formal education, elementary education, or secondary education (Sistem Pendidikan Nasional No 20 Tahun, 2003). Early Childhood Educator as a profession can be defined as someone who possesses specific abilities such as teaching, managing classes, and designing learning programs. Additionally, the position of Early Childhood Educator can be obtained only through certain educational institutions whose graduates are prepared to teach, have an organization capable of accommodating their members' aspirations, and adhere to their code of ethics. Early Childhood Educators' available positions are governed by specific rules (Setiasih, 2008). Additionally, Early Childhood Educators are critical to enhancing the educational quality, which is contingent upon the quality of the learning process (Trisoni, 2016). As a result, increasing Early Childhood Educator professionalism, particularly in early childhood education, is critical. A Early Childhood Educator should possess a variety of supporting competencies (Gordon & Browne, 2011).

As Early Childhood Educator, one must understand and possess the ability to professionally implement early childhood services. The issue of Early Childhood Educator competence is that Early Childhood Educators do not yet possess the highest levels of professional competence, as demonstrated in RA Al-Ihsan Cibiru Hilir District Cileunyi Kacreaten Bandung. According to the researchers observations, the primary issue that Early Childhood Educators in RA Al-Ihsan face is the difficulties in developing material for early childhood development and creative learning. The following details describe the issue in greater detail:

- a. Early Childhood Educators face challenges in developing materials, structures, and concepts from scientific fields that support and align with the needs and stages of early childhood development in the context of curriculum implementation in ECE institutions.
- b. Early Childhood Educators frequently struggle with developing diverse development activities that adhere to the stages of early childhood development creatively. For instance, learning development activities such as assignments or paper-pencil tests tend to be monotonous for children.

Due to the aforementioned issues, it is anticipated that they will have a detrimental effect on the quality of Early Childhood Educator performance. As a result, efforts must be made to enhance Early Childhood Educators' ability to perform their duties to the fullest extent possible. Early Childhood Creative Learning In-house training for Early Childhood Educators at RA Al-Ihsan is being used to address the aforementioned problems in this study. In-house training is a program organized on-site to enhance educators' ability to perform their jobs more effectively by maximizing existing potentials (Corinorita, 2017). The purpose of in-house training is to equip early childhood educators with a variety of knowledge and accumulative skills, resulting in skill mastery and the development of existing potentials. According to research findings, in-house training is necessary in the field of education to boost performance, keep educators' expertise current with technological advancements, assist in resolving operational issues, and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of work in achieving set goals (Saroni, 2011). On the basis of the foregoing, this study will concentrate on studies involving the use of Early Childhood Creative Learning In-House training to improve the professional competence of Early Childhood Educators.

### ***In-House Training***

In-house training is a program designed specifically for the institution in question with the goal of increasing educators' competence in their work by optimizing existing capabilities (Corinorita, 2017). Concerning the in-house training that will be conducted, specifically direct training at the ECE institution in question and online mentoring via the WhatsApp and Edmodo platforms. According to research findings, in-house training is necessary in the field of education to boost performance, keep educators' expertise current with technological advancements, assist in resolving operational issues, and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of work in achieving set goals (Saroni, 2011).

### ***Early Childhood Educators' Professional Competence***

There is one profession that does require competency, and that is that of an educator. According to the Minister of National Education's Decree No. 045 of 2002, the competencies that Early Childhood Educator must master and own are as follows: "Competence is a collection of intelligent, responsible actions that a person must exhibit in order to be considered capable by the community of performing tasks in a particular field of work." In line with the definitions above, McAshan (1981) suggests in Mulyasa (2012) that competence can be defined as the knowledge, skills, and abilities mastered by someone who has integrated them into himself in order to perform cognitive, affective, and psychomotor behaviors optimally.

On the basis of these three concepts, it can be concluded that competence is a series of intelligent actions with full responsibility that have been assigned to an individual as a reflection of his or her actions as a result of acquired knowledge, skills, and ability to perform his or her societal responsibilities. According to Government Regulation No. 19 of 2005 on National Standards of Education Chapter IV Article 28 Paragraph 3, Early Childhood Educators must possess four competencies: pedagogical competence, interpersonal competence, social competence, and professional competence. Explanation of the four competencies that Early Childhood Educator must possess (Menteri Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2014; Setiasih, 2008):

- a. Pedagogical competence refers to Early Childhood Educator's capacity to comprehend students, serve as a role model for children, internalize values through action, and educate students with compassion.
- b. Personality competence refers to the Early Childhood Educator's ability to present himself or herself holistically, which includes being responsive, communicative, caring, respectful of children, patient, humorous, and responsible.
- c. Social competence, which refers to the capacity to comprehend children in a sociocultural context and to cooperate with the social environment, such as establishing positive relationships with children, parents, coworkers, and others, as well as involving family and community in children's education.
- d. Professional competence refers to the knowledge, abilities, and attitudes that a Early Childhood Educator must demonstrate in order to carry out his or her responsibilities professionally, such as comprehending the characteristics, needs, and development of students, planning and implementing the curriculum, and implementing various learning approaches that support and conduct assessments.

## **METHODS**

With Kemmis & MC Taggart, this research employs action research methods (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002). This type of research employs collaborative action research, in which researchers work directly with the school, RA Al-Ihsan, from the start to the finish. Plan,

execute, observe, and reflect are the four components of the action research design. The study collected data through three distinct methods: observation, interview, and documentation. Participatory observations are conducted in which the researcher observes ongoing activities. The researchers's observations are summarized in the form of field notes to assist researchers in recording events in writing, particularly when implementing in-house training to enhance the professional competence of Early Childhood Educators. The researchers conducted interviews in order to elicit information about the Early Childhood Educators initial identification of professional competence. An interview with Early Childhood Educator at RA Al-Ihsan provided the basis for this article. It is expected that information regarding weaknesses, obstacles, and areas for improvement as perceived by the Early Childhood Educator can be accommodated to the fullest extent possible during this interview. Documentation is chosen to collect data directly from the research site, such as activity reports, photographs, activity recordings, and other pertinent information.

In this study, the following stages of data analysis were used (Alwasilah & Setiawan, 2011; Thomas & Harden, 2008):

- a. Coding; in this stage, the researchers identifies data from observations in the form of field notes and interview results using specific codes that can assist the researchers in answering research questions about the application of in-house training in enhancing the professional competence of PAUD Early Childhood Educators at RA Al-Ihsan.
- b. Categorizing Codes into Themes, the researchers's second stage involves categorizing the codes that appear in the data according to a theme determined by the research questions.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

#### ***Initial Condition of Early Childhood Educators' Professional Competence in RA Al- Ihsan***

According to the researchers' observations, Early Childhood Educators at RA Al-Ihsan report having difficulties with early childhood material development and creative learning. Early Childhood Educators face challenges in developing materials, structures, and scientific concepts that support and align with the needs and stages of early childhood development during the curriculum implementation process in ECE institutions. According to interview excerpts from sources, Early Childhood Educators face challenges in selecting materials/materials that will pique children's interest and correspond to their characteristics, as well as mastering the material. Additionally, Early Childhood Educators struggle with developing a variety of creative development activities that correspond to the stages of early childhood development, such as providing activities, media, and creative learning ideas that correspond to children's development and characteristics. According to interviews with sources, the barrier for Early Childhood Educators in developing learning activities is more about media selection, strategies/methods, and creativity in developing learning activities themselves. Numerous issues are feared to have a detrimental effect on the quality of PAUD Early Childhood Educator performance due to the nature of the Early Childhood Educator's ability; consequently, efforts must be made to improve Early Childhood Educators' competence in order for them to perform their duties to the fullest extent possible. In-house training for Early Childhood Educators at RA Al-Ihsan is being used to address the aforementioned problems in this study.

#### ***In-House Training***

As previously stated, one of the efforts to enhance the professional competence of Early Childhood Educators will be accomplished through in-house training. According to the findings of related interviews, most Early Childhood Educators indicated that they require training and collaboration with colleagues in order to improve their competence. Because it

adapts to changing conditions, in-house training combines face-to-face instruction and mentoring with online learning. Mentoring takes place via WhatsApp and Edmodo. Materials developed for this study include the following:

**Table 1.** Materials for In-House Professional Development for ECE Educators

No	Training Materials	Focused Training Materials
1	Early Childhood Curriculum Development	a) Early Childhood Foundational Learning Concepts b) Early Childhood Instructional Principles c) Materials development for early childhood mathematics education d) Early Childhood Science Education Materials Development e) Materials development for early childhood language learning f) Development of material in early childhood social studies g) Early Childhood Art Education Materials Development
2	Early Childhood Activity Planning: Developing Creative Activity Plans	a) Identifying and Developing Educational Themes. b) Development of an instructional strategy (Semester Program, Weekly Plan and Daily Plan)

### ***In-House Early Childhood Creative Learning Training Implementation***

The researchers developed and implemented an in-house training program at RA Al-Ikhsanin cycles I, II, and III. Additionally, the researchers develops various media such as booklets and other supporting materials for the in-house training program's implementation. Cycle I actions are carried out in accordance with a predetermined plan and in real-world scenarios. In cycles II and III, due to association restrictions aimed at containing the spread of Covid-19, training is conducted online via the WhatsApp platform, which is then equipped with an Edmodo platform. Additionally, the researchers prepares various media for the implementation of the in-house training program, such as soft file material and other supporting media.

Observation occurs concurrently with this activity. During this first cycle, the following steps will be taken to implement the in-house training program:

- a) The researchers develops necessary tools and materials for face-to-face or online in-house training activities, such as parenting booklets and stationery.
- b) The researchers works in collaboration with a co-researchers who will convey information pertaining to various predefined materials. The assigned topic for cycle I is the creation of educational materials. The topics discussed in cycle II pertain to the development of learning themes. In cycle II, the topic is the preparation of educational plans.
- c) The speaker presents the material in a manner consistent with the predetermined subject. Additionally, there is a question-and-answer/discussion period following the presentation of the topic.
- d) Early Childhood Educators are expected to communicate what they have learned today about the topics they have been assigned and how it contributes to their professional competence.
- e) Following the discussion, the researchers submits a schedule of the following day's training activities.

The implementation of in-house training programs in cycles I, II, and II is proceeding well, and all participants can participate in in-person or online training. In cycle I, the researchers makes observations about the Early Childhood Educator's professional competence as demonstrated by the Early Childhood Educator's capacity to create and compose instructional materials. The findings indicated that in cycle 1, the use of in-house training programs demonstrated the capacity to compile learning materials. The implementation of the in-house training program in cycle I is proceeding well, and all participants can attend this in-house training activity. When the discussion began, the Early Childhood Educator remained silent and appeared to listen more than speak. Even when the speaker permits questioning, the Early Childhood Educator appears hesitant to inquire. At the subsequent meeting, Early Childhood Educators became more engaged and responsive after being exposed to materials related to the development of ECE learning materials. Additionally, Early Childhood Educators have begun to organize early childhood educational materials.

In cycle II, the researchers makes observations based on discussions about the Early Childhood Educator's professional competence, which is manifested in the Early Childhood Educator's ability to comprehend and compose the learning theme. The findings indicated that Early Childhood Educators demonstrated an increased capacity for structuring learning themes during this cycle. This cycle's implementation of the in-house training program is progressing well, and all participants can participate in the in-house training program via online training. The ostensible impediment is online communication, which occasionally encounters technical difficulties such as insufficient signal strength. The discussion is also conducted online, and the majority of it is quite effective. Additionally, Early Childhood Educators are required to develop learning themes, which the majority of Early Childhood Educators are capable of doing.

Additionally, in cycle III, observations are based on discussions about the Early Childhood Educator's professional competence as demonstrated by the Early Childhood Educator's ability to comprehend and create a learning plan. The findings indicated that in cycle III, Early Childhood Educators began to demonstrate the ability to create learning plans. This cycle's implementation of the in-house training program is progressing well, and all participants can participate in the in-house training program via online training. The ostensible impediment is online communication, which occasionally encounters technical difficulties such as insufficient signal strength. The discussion is also conducted online, and the majority of it is quite effective. Additionally, Early Childhood Educators must create learning plans, which the majority of Early Childhood Educators are already capable of creating.

### ***Early Childhood Educators' Professional Competence after The Training***

Initially, Early Childhood Educators struggled to develop materials, structures, and concepts in the scientific field that support and align with the needs and stages of early childhood development when implementing the curriculum in ECE institutions. After receiving training, Early Childhood Educators are already capable of developing quite effective learning materials. Additionally, the Early Childhood Educator stated that the obstacles encountered must be resolved and improved by the Early Childhood Educator, one of which is training.

According to interview excerpts from sources, the Early Childhood Educator already understands the critical nature of efforts to improve the quality of early childhood learning material development. Motivation is improving not only through discussions but also through the preparation of excellent early childhood learning materials. After completing this application process, it is clear that Early Childhood Educators can study fundamental scientific

concepts in the fields of mathematics, science, language, social studies, art, and religion in accordance with their students' needs, developmental stages, and early psychomotor childhood development. Early Childhood Educators can also organize fundamental scientific concepts in early childhood development as tools, activities, and content.

Early Childhood Educators initially struggled with developing innovative early childhood activity plans. Early Childhood Educators who have received training are quite adept at developing learning themes and creating early childhood learning plans. Additionally, the Early Childhood Educator stated that the obstacles encountered must be resolved and improved by the Early Childhood Educator, one of which is training. From the discussion excerpts, it is clear that Early Childhood Educators have begun to grasp what Early Childhood Educators must own and prepare when developing early childhood learning activities. Additionally, Early Childhood Educators are able to formulate the objectives of each development activity, analyze early childhood development in each field of development, select material for various development activities based on the level of early childhood development, and organize creative development activities based on the level of early childhood development following the training process. This ability is demonstrated through the practice of developing early childhood learning plans.

## **Discussion**

The findings indicated that prior to implementing training at RA Al-Ihsan, Early Childhood Educators expressed a proclivity for encountering difficulties with curriculum implementation, particularly with regard to material development and creative learning in early childhood. This is a professional competency issue. According to Permendikbud No. 137 of 2014 on the National Standards of PAUD, Early Childhood Educators must possess the following professional competencies: a. The ability to study fundamental scientific concepts in mathematics, science, language, social studies, art, and religion in accordance with students' needs, developmental stages, and early psychomotor childhood development.

- a. The capacity for organizing fundamental scientific concepts in early childhood development as tools, activities, and content.
- b. capability of formulating development objectives for each activity d. capability of conducting an analysis of early childhood development in any area of development.
- c. The capacity to select materials for a variety of developmental activities based on the child's stage of early childhood development.
- d. Capability to organize creative development activities in accordance with the developmental stage of early childhood

The six abilities outlined above exemplify Early Childhood Educators' professional competence. This issue of professional competence cannot be ignored because relevant research indicates that Early Childhood Educators' professionalism has an effect on performance and contributes to the overall quality of ECE services (Boyd-Swan & Herbst, 2020; de Roos et al., 2010; Lin & Magnuson, 2018; Peterson et al., 2016), as well as on the quality of interaction between Early Childhood Educators and learners (Pianta et al., 2014).

The application of in-house training in this research takes the form of direct training in the paud institution in question and online mentoring via the WhatsApp and Edmodo platforms, with a focus on the participants' needs, specifically on professional competence. This is consistent with Corinorita's (2017) assertion that house (training is a training program designed specifically for the institution in question in order to enhance educators' competence in carrying out their work by optimizing existing potentials. The implementation process is conducted in

person once, and the remainder is conducted via an online platform. Mentoring conducted via online learning is one of the conditions that has resulted in the inability to conduct face-to-face activities to prevent COVID 19 in particular in 2020. The study's technical change from face-to-face training to online training is based on the Minister of Education and Culture's Circular Letter No. 3 of 2020 on COVID-19 Prevention in the Education Unit, the Governor of West Java's Circular Letter No. 400/26/HUKHAM on Increasing Vigilance Against the Risk of Coronavirus Disease-19 Infection (COVID-19) Transmission, and Bandung.

The technical changes outlined previously in this study are quite feasible. WhatsApp and Edmodo are the platforms used for follow-up training with Early Childhood Educators. Early Childhood Educators continue to be trained using the stages of in-house training, which include identifying participant needs, developing ideas or concepts related to implementation techniques, designing the training, implementing it, and evaluating it (Greenblatt, 2017). Online training that is delivered in-house retains the characteristics of in-house training, namely that it is still tailored to the participants' needs. Additionally, Ayuningtyas, Slameto, and Dwikurnaningsih (2017) stated that in-house training can be conducted in schools or other locations, using equipment and materials pertinent to the issues at hand. The objective is to foster the development of competence in the form of abilities, knowledge, and attitude.

After implementing the in-house training, Early Childhood Educators gained a better understanding of what needs to be owned and prepared by Early Childhood Educators when developing early childhood learning materials and activities. Additionally, after completing the training process, Early Childhood Educators are able to formulate the objectives of each development activity, analyze early childhood development in all areas of development, select material for various development activities based on the level of early childhood development, and organize creative development activities based on the level of early childhood development. This ability is demonstrated by Early Childhood Educators' ability to create learning materials, develop themes, and create early childhood learning plans. This demonstrates that training benefits the professional competence of Early Childhood Educators. According to Heisner and Lederberg (2011), Early Childhood Educator training primarily focuses on improving the Early Childhood Educator's ability to understand child development as a precursor to improving the quality of chasing after children. Additionally, research indicates that providing Early Childhood Educators with training can help them improve their professionalism when providing early childhood services (Ejuu, 2012; Landry et al., 2017). Training is also critical for curriculum implementation, as it results in the development of Early Childhood Educators' professional expertise and skills (Karila et al., 2005) and is critical for professional actors, particularly those in the field of education (Pineda-Herrero et al., 2010).

## **CONCLUSION**

The in-house training conducted in this study may be used in lieu of traditional methods for enhancing the professional competence of Early Childhood Educators. Early Childhood Educators initially face difficulties with professional competence, particularly when it comes to developing materials and activities for early childhood. The basis for improving the professional competence of Early Childhood Educators through in-house training is in the form and process of application, which includes identifying participant needs, developing ideas or concepts for implementation techniques, designing, implementing, and evaluating training sessions using both face-to-face and online training techniques. Early Childhood Educators' professional competence has significantly improved. This can be seen in the continued development of Early Childhood Educators' abilities to conduct studies of fundamental scientific concepts in the fields of mathematics, science, language, social studies, art, and



religion while taking into account student needs, developmental stages, and early psychomotor childhood, organizing fundamental scientific concepts as tools, activities, and content in early childhood development, and formulating the goals of a program. Development, which includes selecting materials for various development activities based on the early childhood development stage and organizing creative development activities based on the early childhood development stage.

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