MENTORING TEACHERS AND PARENTS IN DEVELOPING LITERACY AND NUMERACY EDUCATIONAL PLAY TOOLS TO OPTIMIZE EARLY CHILDHOOD STIMULATION

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Abstrak

Tujuan kegiatan ini adalah meningkatkan kompetensi guru dan orang tua dalam merancang, membuat, dan memanfaatkan alat peraga edukatif sederhana berbasis bahan lokal dan barang bekas. Melalui pendampingan terstruktur, peserta mampu memahami konsep literasi dan numerasi dini, serta mengimplementasikannya melalui kegiatan bermain yang menyenangkan di sekolah dan di rumah. Metode pelaksanaan meliputi tiga tahap, yaitu perencanaan dan penyusunan materi pendampingan, meliputi survei kebutuhan mitra dan persiapan bahan; pelaksanaan pengabdian dan praktik pembuatan alat peraga edukatif, dengan kegiatan pelatihan, demonstrasi, dan praktik langsung; serta evaluasi dan pendampingan lanjutan, melalui observasi, angket, dan refleksi hasil kegiatan. Mitra kegiatan adalah guru dan orang tua anak usia dini di Kota Baubau. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan adanya peningkatan pemahaman guru dan orang tua terhadap konsep literasi dan numerasi dini, meningkatnya keterampilan dalam membuat alat permainan edukatif berbahan lokal dan barang bekas, serta terjalinnya kolaborasi yang lebih kuat antara guru dan orang tua dalam stimulasi anak di sekolah dan di rumah. Kegiatan ini menghasilkan berbagai produk alat permainan edukatif yang siap digunakan dalam pembelajaran serta mendukung pengembangan literasi dan numerasi anak usia dini secara berkelanjutan. Kontribusi kegiatan ini terletak pada penguatan kapasitas komunitas pendidikan anak usia dini melalui model pendampingan kolaboratif guru–orang tua, penyediaan contoh praktik baik pemanfaatan bahan lokal dan barang bekas sebagai media pembelajaran, serta pengembangan pendekatan berkelanjutan dalam stimulasi literasi dan numerasi anak usia dini yang kontekstual dan aplikatif.

Kata kunci: Alat Peraga Edukatif, Literasi, Numerasi, Guru, Orang Tua.

Abstract

The purpose of this activity is to improve the competence of teachers and parents in designing, making, and utilizing simple educational aids based on local materials and used goods. Through structured mentoring, participants are to be able to understand the concepts of literacy and numeracy early, and implement them through fun play activities at school and at home. The implementation method includes three stages, namely planning and preparation of mentoring materials, including surveying partner needs and preparing materials; the implementation of service and the practice of making educational teaching aids, with training, demonstration, and direct practice activities; as well as evaluation and follow-up assistance, through observation, questionnaires, and reflection on the results of activities. The partners of the activity are teachers and parents of early childhood in Baubau City. The results of the activity showed an increase in teachers' and parents' understanding of the concept of literacy and early numeracy, an increase in skills in making educational toys made from local and used goods, and a stronger collaboration between teachers and

parents in stimulating children at school and at home. This activity produces various educational game products that are ready to be used in learning and support the development of early childhood literacy and numeracy in a sustainable manner. The contribution of this activity lies in strengthening the capacity of the early childhood education community through a collaborative teacher-parent mentoring model, providing examples of good practices in the use of local materials and used goods as learning media, and developing a sustainable approach in stimulating contextual and applicative early childhood literacy and numeracy.

Keywords: Educational Play Tools, Literacy, Numeracy, Teachers, Parents.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is in a golden age of development (Trinova, 2020) where appropriate stimulation can influence all aspects of growth, including early literacy and numeracy skills (Gusmarni, 2022). Teachers and parents have an important role in creating an educational and enjoyable play environment (Firman et al., 2022). However, in the field, the following problems are still found: teachers and parents do not have sufficient understanding of the concept of early literacy and numeracy (Ratnasari, 2020). Teachers' and parents' skills in designing and making creative educational play tools are still low. There is minimal collaboration between teachers and parents in stimulating children at home. In fact, literacy and numeracy stimulation from an early age is an important foundation for children's learning readiness at the next level (Mahmud, 2019). Children who are accustomed to play activities that involve reading pictures, counting objects, and recognizing patterns have better academic readiness (Bucsea et al., 2023).

Teachers and parents have a strategic and complementary role in providing stimulation for early childhood development, especially in literacy and numeracy aspects (Najwa, 2024). Teachers play the role of learning facilitators in the school environment who design meaningful, structured, and appropriate play experiences for children's development (Santoso et al., 2024). Through planned play activities, teachers can stimulate children's ability to recognize symbols, languages, numbers, and patterns in a fun way (Rahim, 2023). Meanwhile, parents play the role of the child's main companion in the home environment, which contributes to strengthening and continuing the stimulation obtained at school (Purba et al., 2024). The active involvement of parents in providing a conducive learning environment, as well as utilizing daily activities as a means of educational play, is an important factor in supporting the consistency of children's literacy and numeracy development (Putri et al., 2024). Synergy between teachers and parents is needed so that the stimulation provided takes place in a sustainable, contextual, and harmonious manner between school and home, so that early childhood development can be optimized holistically (Trinova, 2020).

This mentoring activity is important to provide knowledge, skills, and direct practice to teachers and parents so they can create simple literacy and numeracy

(Ulfadilah et al., 2024) using inexpensive and easily found local materials (Susanti, 2022). Through this activity, it is hoped that synergy will emerge between school and home in optimizing children's stimulation. Early childhood (0–6 years) is a very critical developmental phase. According to brain development research, appropriate stimulation during this period greatly influences the formation of neural pathways that support cognitive, language, and mathematical abilities later in life (Isna, 2019). Literacy and numeracy are basic competencies that must be introduced early so that children are ready to learn at the next level. Specifically, early childhood literacy is not only about reading and writing skills, but also includes understanding symbols (Hasanah, 2023), recognizing letters or numbers, phonological awareness, understanding words, and communication functions (listening, speaking).

Various community service activities have previously focused on the development of educational game tools for early childhood, both in the context of increasing teacher creativity and the use of simple learning media. However, most of these activities are still oriented towards separate teacher training and have not optimally involved parents as strategic partners in stimulating children's literacy and numeracy (Gonçalves, 2022) (Ragni et al., 2023). In addition, services that integrate continuous mentoring, the use of local materials and used goods, and the strengthening of collaboration between teachers and parents in one activity model are still relatively limited (Gumbi et al., 2024). Therefore, service activities are needed that not only improve technical skills in making educational playground equipment, but also build synergy between schools and homes in supporting the development of early childhood literacy and numeracy in a sustainable manner (Damayanti, 2025).

This service activity offers solutions in the form of structured assistance for teachers and parents in developing and utilizing literacy and numeracy educational play tools that are simple, contextual, and based on local materials and used goods. Mentoring is designed not only in the form of theoretical training, but also through demonstrations and hands-on practice of making educational playground equipment that can be applied in a school and home environment (Bleses et al., 2021). This activity emphasizes strengthening collaboration between teachers and parents in order to create harmony in providing children's literacy and numeracy stimulation in a sustainable manner (Kim et al., 2024). Through a participatory and applicative approach, teachers and parents are expected to have the same understanding and practical skills in designing play experiences that are fun, meaningful, and appropriate to the stages of early childhood development (Najwa, 2024).

The purpose of this activity is to improve the competence of teachers and parents in designing, making, and utilizing simple educational aids based on local materials and used goods. Through structured mentoring, participants are to be able

to understand the concepts of literacy and numeracy early, and implement them through fun play activities at school and at home.

METHODS

The activity employed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Service-Learning approach, grounded in the principle of active partnership among the service team, teachers, and parents. This activity was conducted in the Batauga District and involved 25 early childhood education teachers and 12 parents. Most early childhood education teachers in Batauga have diverse educational backgrounds, not all of whom are early childhood education graduates. Furthermore, parents of early childhood children generally have lower secondary education, so their knowledge of the importance of literacy and numeracy stimulation is still limited.

In the Participatory Action Research framework, participants were actively involved in planning, implementation, reflection, and corrective actions through a cyclical process. The Service-Learning approach emphasises the application of knowledge through direct service to the community. The activity was structured into four main phases: preparation, training and development, implementation, and evaluation. The following is a flowchart of the literacy and numeracy mentoring activities for early childhood, which is described in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Flowchart of Literacy and Numeracy Activities

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Result

The preparation stage for community service activities begins with the process of identifying needs through focus group discussions and initial observation of early childhood literacy and numeracy learning practices in the target environment. This activity involves Early Childhood Education teachers and parents as the main partners to get a real picture of learning conditions, media availability, and stimulation strategies that have been implemented. The results of initial observations show that literacy and numeracy learning are still dominated by conventional activities, such as the limited use of worksheets and symbol recognition. Most Early Childhood Education units have not made optimal use of educational play tools. From the observation results, it was found that around 67% of numeracy activities were carried out through oral repetition and writing numbers, while manipulative-based play activities were still very minimal. In addition, the media available are generally finished products and have not been adapted to the local context or the needs of children's development.

The focus group discussion revealed that teachers and parents faced obstacles in designing and utilizing educational play tools independently. One of the teachers said,

> "We actually want to use toys, but we don't understand how to design educational toys that suit the goals of literacy and numeracy."

The statement shows that the limitations are not only in the availability of media, but also in the conceptual understanding of the pedagogical function of educational game tools.

The results of interviews with parents also reinforced these findings. An old man stated,

> "At home, children learn more often with books; we don't know what games can help children recognize numbers and letters."

This condition shows that literacy and numeracy stimulation in the family environment has not been integrated with a play approach that is in accordance with the characteristics of early childhood. In addition to identifying problems, the preparation stage also explores local potential that can be used as the basic material for educational game tools. Based on the results of the discussion, it was found that the surrounding environment has various materials that are easy to obtain, such as used cardboard, bottle caps, ice cream sticks, and grains, which have not been used as learning media so far. A teacher said,

"Actually, there are a lot of materials around us, but they have never been directed to be used as educational toys."

Based on the results of these observations and interviews, it can be concluded that there is a real need for mentoring activities that focus on improving the understanding of teachers and parents in developing contextual literacy and numeracy educational tools. The findings at this preparation stage then became the basis for the design of mentoring materials and the design of educational play tools that are in accordance with the characteristics of early childhood development, in line with the principles of play while learning and a participatory approach.

Training and Development Phase of community service activities regarding assistance in making educational play tools for literacy and numeracy for teachers and parents to stimulate early childhood went well and involved the active participation of all participants. This activity was carried out on October 25, 2025, in the Batauga District. The first stage is to increase participants' understanding of the concepts of early childhood literacy and numeracy, the principles of play while learning, and the characteristics of effective and safe educational play tools. The material that will be explained at the training stage is explained in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Numeracy Literacy Educational Play Tools Material

Participants were given conceptual reinforcement regarding literacy and early numeracy, emphasizing that these skills are not limited to letter and number recognition, but include language skills, symbol comprehension, grouping, simple measurement, and problem solving through play activities. The presentation of the material was accompanied by concrete examples of literacy and numeracy practices that are in accordance with the characteristics of early childhood, so that participants understood the difference between formal academic approaches and play-based developmental stimulation.

Furthermore, the training is focused on the principle of playing while learning as the main foundation of early childhood learning. Participants are invited to understand that play is a natural means for children to learn and explore the

environment. In this session, the facilitator invited participants to discuss their experiences in accompanying children to play, as well as identify learning practices that have been oriented to worksheets and memorization. Through discussions and case studies, participants are directed to design meaningful play activities that are able to stimulate literacy and numeracy in an integrated manner.

Participants receive special training on the characteristics of effective and safe educational play tools. The materials include age-appropriate educational play tools criteria, the use of harmless materials, safe sizes and shapes, and attractive and functional designs. Participants were also introduced to the principle of using local materials and environmentally friendly used materials as an alternative to the development of an economical and sustainable educational play tools. In this session, participants were invited to analyze the examples of educational play tools that have been used in the Early Childhood Education unit and identify their advantages and disadvantages. The training stage is described in Figure 3.

Figure 3. The Training Activity

The activity continued with a discussion session, which provided space for teachers and parents to ask questions, share experiences, and identify obstacles that often arise in the use of educational play tools at home and at school. This discussion session strengthened the participants' understanding and generated new ideas for developing educational play tools that is relevant to children's needs. After the presentation of the material, the activity continued with a discussion session. The discussion was conducted using a participatory approach where teachers, parents, and the service team exchanged knowledge and experiences.

Teachers and parents conducted hands-on practice in making literacy and numeracy educational play tools. At this stage, participants were divided into groups and directed to create literacy and numeracy educational play tools according to a specified theme. The participants' enthusiasm was evident in their creativity and activity during the creation process. This activity not only improved technical skills

but also broadened participants' insights on how to modify educational play tools according to their respective learning contexts. The resulting educational play tools products were also diverse and could be directly used in children's daily play activities. Making literacy and numeracy educational play tools are explained in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Making a Numeracy Literacy Educational Play Tools

Each group then practiced the use of educational play tools that had been developed. This practice aims to assess the suitability of educational play tools with literacy and numeracy goals, the level of safety, and children's involvement during activities. Facilitators and other participants observed the process systematically and provided constructive feedback on the clarity of instruction, the effectiveness of the stimulation provided, and the possibility of refining the design and use of educational play tools. This feedback is a means of collective reflection that helps participants understand the advantages and limitations of the educational play tools developed, as well as encouraging improvement before being implemented more widely in early childhood learning activities. The practice of using educational play tools that has been made is explained in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Practice of Using Educational Play Tools

Community service activities in the form of mentoring in making educational play tools for literacy and numeracy were carried out by involving Early Childhood Education teachers and parents of early childhood children in Batauga District. In percentage terms, there was an increase in understanding of 61.5%. A total of 86.7% of participants stated that they better understood the concept of early literacy and numeracy as part of play activities, not formal academic learning. Participants' skills in making educational play tools were assessed through an observation sheet with indicators: design creativity, suitability to child development aspects, use of local materials, and media functionality. The assessment results showed that the level of participant participation during the activity was classified as very high. Based on the observation results: 93.3% of participants actively participated in discussions and questions and answers 96.7% of participants were directly involved in the practice of making educational play tools 90% of participants expressed confidence in implementing educational play tools at school and at home.

The final stage of the program focused on evaluation and follow-up, aiming to assess the effectiveness of the mentoring activities and to formulate sustainable next steps for teachers and parents. Evaluation was carried out through systematic observation of the educational play tools developed and implemented by participants, with particular attention to their functionality, safety, and relevance to early literacy and numeracy stimulation. The observations indicated that most of the educational play tools were successfully aligned with play-based learning principles and were able to actively engage children in recognizing letters, numbers, and simple problem-solving activities. Improvements were noted in the way teachers and parents integrated play into daily learning routines, both in early childhood education settings and at home.

In addition to observation, evaluation was strengthened through participant feedback and group reflection sessions, as well as follow-up interviews. Teachers and parents reported increased confidence in designing and using educational play tools independently. One teacher stated,

> "After this mentoring activity, I better understand how to use play tools to stimulate literacy and numeracy without forcing children to learn academically."

Similarly, a parent shared,

> "Now I know that simple materials at home can be turned into meaningful play activities that help my child recognize numbers and letters."

These reflections indicate that the mentoring activities not only enhanced participants' practical skills but also fostered a positive shift in mindset toward play-

based early childhood learning. The findings from this evaluation served as the basis for follow-up planning, including continued mentoring, refinement of educational play tools, and broader implementation within the early childhood education community.

Discussion

The findings of this community service program demonstrate that mentoring teachers and parents in developing educational play tools effectively enhances early literacy and numeracy stimulation in Early Childhood Education settings. Children learn best when actively engaged through meaningful play experiences rather than formal academic instruction (Anders, 2021). The use of educational play tools supports children's symbolic thinking, language development, and early mathematical understanding by allowing them to explore concepts through hands-on activities (Suggate, 2022). Moreover, integrating play into learning activities aligns with global recommendations that emphasize developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood education (Henny, 2018).

The participatory nature of the mentoring process also contributed significantly to the effectiveness of the program. By involving teachers and parents actively in planning, developing, and reflecting on educational play tools, the program fostered a sense of ownership and professional empowerment. This approach aligns with Participatory Action Research principles, which highlight collaboration and reflection as key drivers of sustainable change in educational practice (Casey, 2020); (Lestari et al., 2021). Previous studies have shown that parental involvement in early childhood learning positively influences children's literacy and numeracy outcomes (Astuti, 2025). Similarly, teacher professional development that is practice-oriented and collaborative has been found to improve instructional quality in early childhood settings (Khairiatunnisa, 2023)..

Furthermore, the evaluation results indicate that the use of locally sourced and low-cost materials in developing educational play tools enhances accessibility and sustainability. This finding supports prior research suggesting that contextually relevant learning materials are more effective in early childhood education than standardized commercial products (Neumann, 2021). Educational play tools designed with safety, flexibility, and cultural relevance in mind promote inclusive learning environments and encourage continuous use both at school and at home (Astuti, 2025); (Kim, 2021). Therefore, mentoring programs that integrate play-based pedagogy, community participation, and local resource utilization can serve as an effective model for strengthening early literacy and numeracy development in diverse educational contexts.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The community service activity on assistance in making literacy and numeracy educational play tools for Teachers and Parents in Batauga Lampanairi

District showed that this program was successful in providing understanding, skills and collaboration between teachers and parents in stimulating early childhood development. Through careful planning stages, providing comprehensive materials, participatory discussions, and direct practice in making APE from local materials, participants gained a better understanding of the concept of literacy and numeracy and how to apply it through interesting play media that are appropriate to the child's developmental level. The results of the activity also showed that participants were able to produce various creative and environmentally friendly educational play tools products that can be used in learning activities at school and at home. In addition, collaboration between teachers and parents is getting stronger so that the process of stimulating child development can take place sustainably. increased enthusiasm and involvement of children in the learning process, and the growing independence of Early Childhood Education in providing learning media based on local materials.

Based on the results of the activity, it is recommended that teachers continue to develop creativity and consistency in using educational play tools as an integral part of literacy and numeracy learning. Parents are expected to continue the stimulation that has been initiated through community services activities by utilizing simple educational play tools at home to ensure optimal child development. Early childhood education institutions should form educational play tools development working groups as a routine activity to ensure the availability of varied and sustainable media. Service teams or universities are expected to continue further mentoring in the form of monitoring or further training to ensure the continued improvement of teacher and parent skills and the optimal impact of the activity. Furthermore, local government support is essential, whether in the form of facilities, policies, or ongoing training, to strengthen the quality of early childhood learning based on local wisdom.

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