Board Game Training: Professional Development for Facilitators at Eka Learning Center (ELC) Lhokseumawe

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Info Artikel

Abstract

Eka Learning Center (ELC), a non-formal education institution in Lhokseumawe, Aceh, faces challenges in maintaining student focus and engagement. To address this, a training program was conducted to equip facilitators with the skills to use board games as interactive learning tools. The program consisted of needs analysis, training in board game creation, implementation mentoring, and evaluation. Findings indicate that the use of board games significantly enhances student focus and engagement, creating a more interactive and stimulating learning environment. Facilitators also improved their competencies in innovative teaching methods. The developed board game is currently being prepared for intellectual property registration, reflecting its potential for broader application. This initiative not only strengthens the learning experience at ELC but also promotes innovation in non-formal education, contributing to the advancement of local educational practices.

Abstrak

Eka Learning Center (ELC), lembaga pendidikan nonformal di Lhokseumawe, Aceh, menghadapi tantangan dalam mempertahankan fokus dan keterlibatan siswa dalam pembelajaran. Untuk mengatasi hal ini, pelatihan diselenggarakan guna membekali fasilitator dengan keterampilan dalam memanfaatkan *board game* sebagai alat pembelajaran interaktif. Program ini mencakup analisis kebutuhan, pelatihan pembuatan *board game*, pendampingan dalam penerapan, serta evaluasi. Penggunaan *board game* secara signifikan meningkatkan fokus dan keterlibatan siswa, menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang lebih interaktif dan menarik. Selain itu, fasilitator juga mengalami peningkatan kompetensi dalam menerapkan metode pengajaran inovatif. *Board game* yang dikembangkan juga sedang dipersiapkan untuk pendaftaran hak kekayaan intelektual untuk penerapan yang lebih luas. Inisiatif ini tidak hanya memperkuat pengalaman belajar di ELC, tetapi juga mendorong inovasi dalam pendidikan nonformal, berkontribusi pada pengembangan praktik pendidikan di tingkat lokal.

Introduction

Eka Learning Center (ELC), a non-formal education and training institution in Lhokseumawe, Aceh, Indonesia, plays an essential role in supporting children's learning journeys. Offering programs such as English for Kids, English for Teens, and Mathematics for Children, and religious studies, ELC bridges the gap between formal education and practical skills development. With a team of 12 facilitators, the center serves 120-150 students each semester, creating a nurturing environment for holistic growth. However, facilitators often struggle with maintaining student focus and engagement, particularly in creating interactive learning atmosphere. Additionally, there is a lack of training in using interactive learning media, such as educational games, and a shortage of innovative teaching materials, like board games, specifically designed to support the learning process. Furthermore, ELC's limited multimedia resources hinder the optimal application of technology-based learning methods. In response, this community service aims to address these issues by equipping facilitators with the skills to effectively implement board games in the classroom in order to enhance students' focus and involvement.

Children, especially younger ones, naturally have limited attention spans, often lasting only a few minutes before their focus changes (Ruff & Lawson, 1990). When lessons become repetitive or intensive, students' focus might decrease, reducing learning outcomes and overall effectiveness (Marnaeni et al., 2017). Recognizing this, ELC has embraced the integration of games into its teaching practices as a strategy to enhance learning (Arfani & Sulistia, 2019). Games not only captivate students' attention but also encourage critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration (Tagayeva & Maxanova, 2023). They empower learners to express their ideas confidently, engage in meaningful discussions, and seek support from teachers when needed. By breaking the monotony of traditional methods and refreshing the classroom atmosphere, games help reignite enthusiasm and sustain focus, ultimately enhancing the overall learning experience (Bisson & Luckner, 1996; Rahmadani & Saman, 2024).

Lecturers from various universities have conducted community services (known as Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat or PkM) aimed at enhancing teachers' abilities to maintain students' focus during learning activities. (Mardhiah et al., 2024) stated that PkM is effective in helping the development of literacy and skills, namely the Fun Holiday with English program as an alternative effort for children in filling holidays, aiming to increase English literacy through interactive and fun ways, and use a service-learning approach to attract children to participate. The results show that children are more mastered by basic vocabulary, with 80% of participants can reinstate and use the taught vocabulary. Students also learn how to manage class, change teaching methods, and reflection. (Mulyana, 2020) implemented a PkM initiative at SDN Tajurhalang 03 to introduce teachers and students to seven ice-breaking techniques designed to restore learning focus. This program included teacher training and mentoring in the application of these techniques. Similarly, (Silaban et al., 2023) carried out a game-based PkM program addressing common challenges faced by students in learning English.

Conducted on May 17, 2023, the activity involved 32 students from SMP Negeri 3 Jalan Lagu Boti Ujung Pematangsiantar. The results indicated that students were more motivated to learn English through discussions following the delivery of learning materials. The programs effectively utilized ice-breaking activities and games as strategies to boost students' motivation and focus during lessons.

The explanation above highlights that incorporating games into learning is an effective strategy for creating a more dynamic and engaging atmosphere. This approach aims to extend children's attention spans and enhance their involvement in the learning process. Integrating game into education has been proven to effectively improve students' focus, engagement, and learning outcomes (Mardhiah, Solekhah, & Helmiyadi, 2024). (Solihat et al., 2020) emphasize that games play a significant role in reducing students' stress and boredom, fostering a more enjoyable and conducive learning environment prior to the serious instructional activities.

A positive and enjoyable learning atmosphere not only supports active student participation but also serves as a key factor in improving the overall effectiveness of teaching. However, games must be carefully designed to align with the intended learning objectives (Harvey, 2018). Additionally, selecting games that are appropriate for students' age and abilities is crucial to ensuring their effectiveness (Farwati, Rahmah, & Sutisna, 2019).

The focus of the training program is the development and implementation of board games as an educational tool. Board games have been identified as an effective medium for enhancing practical skills and knowledge across various age groups and subject areas (Anggraeni et al., 2022). When well-designed and aligned with specific learning objectives, board games offer high educational value and are highly practical for classroom use (Wong & Yunus, 2021). According to (Lee, 2012), well-crafted board games provide significant educational benefits, encouraging players to acquire new knowledge and use target languages during gameplay.

Although the benefits of board games in promoting interactive learning are widely acknowledged, much of the existing literature focuses on theoretical advantages, often overlooking the practical experiences of teachers integrating this method into their instruction. Board games offer facilitators a means to reduce student boredom, foster social interaction, and create a more conducive learning environment.

In response to these opportunities, professional development training for facilitators at ELC will focus on the use of board games tailored to the materials and needs of children. This training aims to equip facilitators with the skills to plan, design, and teach effectively using board games, making classrooms more engaging and learning more enjoyable, ultimately optimizing learning outcomes.

Method

The approach implemented in this community service (PkM) activity involves a series of systematic steps, including training, discussions, and mentoring. The PkM team began by visiting the partner location, Eka Learning Center (ELC), to engage in in-depth discussions with the stakeholders in order to identify the challenges faced by the institution, particularly those related to the difficulties facilitators encounter during the learning process. During the visit, a situational analysis was also conducted to assess factors that could impact the quality of learning at the partner site.

Based on the problem identification results from the initial visit, the PkM team selected the most significant issues that could be addressed through an applicable approach, namely, a professional development training. This training is expected to provide concrete solutions to the problems facilitators face in enhancing the quality of teaching. This PkM activity follows a structured procedure with the following steps:

1. Visit, Situational Analysis, and Needs Analysis: The first step involves visiting the partner location to interact directly with the relevant parties and conduct a situational analysis. The purpose of this analysis is to understand the conditions and needs in the field, as well as to identify problems that require further attention in the context of teaching at the institution.

2. Consultation with Partners and Proposal Development: Based on the situational and needs analysis, further consultations were conducted with partners to agree on the steps to be taken. This stage was followed by the preparation of a proposal outlining the objectives, activities, and methods for the Community Service Program (PkM) to address the identified issues.

3. Formation of a Committee with Partners: After drafting the proposal, the next step involved forming a joint team or committee with partners. This committee was tasked with ensuring the smooth implementation of the activities and coordinating roles and responsibilities among the stakeholders.

4. Training and Mentoring: Training was the core component of this PkM activity, where twelve facilitators were provided with materials relevant to the challenges they faced. The training aimed to enhance the facilitators' skills and competencies in addressing existing teaching challenges, enabling them to implement the agreed-upon solutions. In this context, the utilization of board games was introduced to restore students' focus. Following the training, facilitators collaborated in designing board games tailored to students' English proficiency levels and the needs of other assigned classes.

5. Evaluation: An evaluation was conducted after the training to measure the extent to which the PkM activities positively impacted the quality of teaching and learning. The evaluation also identified any challenges encountered and assessed the effectiveness of the training, enabling necessary adjustments or improvements.

By following structured steps adapted from the PkM methods outlined by (Kosasih, Juhana, and Suratinah, 2021), this program is expected to make a tangible

contribution to improving educational quality at the partner institutions, particularly by enhancing the facilitators' capacity to address educational challenges effectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Human resource development requires a change in approach because of the industrial revolution 4.0. In this case, board games are used as materials to improve competence and learn new things that are fun (Mangundjaya et al., 2022). (Fadhillah Putri et al., 2019) also mentioned that one way to teach English is to use media board games where students will be invited to learn while playing so that it will make it easier for students to remember and discourage the boredom of learning. It is certain that learning activities using board games are efforts to support student learning outcomes by fostering teachers to produce a media that is able to provide understanding or facilitate the delivery of material and can use various teaching techniques so that learning activities become more interesting (Gunawan Sakti, 2023). Hence, board game training is very necessary for teachers to improve competence and skills in attracting students to learn.

This report outlines the outcomes of the Community Service Program (PkM) titled "Training on the Utilization of Board Games: Professional Development for Facilitators at Eka Learning Center (ELC) Lhokseumawe, Aceh." The program was designed to achieve its targeted objectives and deliver meaningful results for the facilitators and students involved.

The first session, held on November 1, 2024, marked the introductory phase of the program. A focused group discussion (FGD) was conducted between the PkM team and representatives of the ELC facilitators. This discussion provided an opportunity to collaboratively identify relevant learning materials tailored to meet the specific needs of the students. Held in the ELC's learning space, the session fostered a constructive dialogue and resulted in a shared agreement on the schedule for the program's subsequent activities. This agreement not only reflects the collaborative spirit of the program but also lays a solid foundation for ensuring its continuity and effectiveness in supporting the professional development of the facilitators and enhancing the quality of education provided at ELC.

Figure 1. Situation analysis and discussion with facilitator representatives from ELC

The communication process for Session 2 (Consultation with Partners and Proposal Development) and Session 3 (Formation of a Committee with Partners), conducted between November 2 and November 28, 2024, was carried out via WhatsApp with the partners. As a result, the second session in the series of PkM activities was successfully planned and mutually agreed upon by the PkM team and the partners.

The second session, held on November 29, 2024, focused on presenting material about the fundamental concepts of board games as learning tools. The participants, comprising facilitators from Eka Learning Center (ELC), were introduced to the definition of board games, their benefits in enhancing students' focus and engagement, and various types of board games relevant to classroom learning. Examples of educational board games, such as learning adaptations of Monopoly, Scrabble, and Snakes and Ladders, as well as games that can be customized to suit specific lesson content, were also shared to inspire the facilitators.

During the third session, held on November 30, 2024, participants engaged in hands-on practice designing board games tailored to the subjects they teach. Each facilitator, guided by representatives from the PkM team, created board games based on the content currently being taught in their classrooms. The designs considered factors such as difficulty level, students' learning needs, and instructional goals. This activity resulted in several board game prototypes, which are ready to be tested in classroom settings.

Figure 2. Monitoring and Evaluation Visit

During the fourth meeting, held on December 6, 2024, the PkM team conducted a monitoring visit to classrooms to observe the implementation of the designed board games. The visit involved observing and evaluating the effectiveness of board games in enhancing students' focus and interest in learning. The monitoring results indicated that students were more enthusiastic and actively engaged in the learning process. This finding is in line with the study conducted by Booker & Mitchel (2021). They find that not only the use of board game boost students motivation to learn, it also enhances their engagement during the class session. Furthermore, ffacilitators of ELC also provided positive feedback on the ease of integrating board games with their teaching materials. This evaluation served as valuable input for further improvements and development of

the initiative. The evaluation was carried out based on the following criteria:

Table 1. Achievements of the PkM Activities

No	Points	Score			
		4	3	2	1
1	Knowledge of board game usage gained after the activity	X			
2	Skills related to board game usage gained after the activity		X		
3	Partners' enthusiasm for the activity	X			
4	Partners' participation during the activity	X			
5	Partners' understanding of board game usage after the activity		X		

(Rating Scales: 4 = Very Good, 3 = Good, 2 = Fair, 1 = Poor)

Conclusion

The implementation of the Community Service Program (PkM) at Eka Learning Center (ELC) in Lhokseumawe, Aceh, has made a positive contribution to the development of more engaging and effective teaching methods through the use of board games. The program aimed to introduce a teaching method that enhances student focus and engagement, particularly within the context of non-formal educational institutions. Through the training provided, ELC facilitators gained new insights into how to design and implement board games as learning tools, facilitating a more interactive and enjoyable learning process.

Throughout the program, several challenges faced by the facilitators were identified, such as difficulties in maintaining students' attention and limitations in using innovative learning media. However, the use of board games proved effective in addressing these issues by offering a more enjoyable learning experience and encouraging students to engage more actively in the learning process. Furthermore, the documentation of the games developed during this program provides valuable resources for facilitators and opens up the potential for similar methods to be applied in other educational institutions.

This program not only had a positive impact on ELC, but it also paved the way for further research on the effectiveness of using board games in education, both in terms of developing academic skills and enhancing students' social-emotional aspects. Moving forward, these board games can be further developed and adapted for other subjects, contributing even more to the quality of learning in non-formal educational settings.

Thus, the implementation of this PkM highlights the importance of innovative approaches in education that combine elements of fun with meaningful learning. The

outcomes achieved during this program serve as a foundation for the development of more effective teaching methods that can be widely applied across various educational contexts.

Acknowledgement

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