

**Learning To Read More Fun: Loose Parts Approach For Children Aged 5-6
Years At Bukit Permai 2 Kindergarten**

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Abstrak

Pengabdian ini bertujuan untuk menggambarkan secara mendalam bagaimana pendekatan loose parts dapat dimanfaatkan untuk mendukung keterampilan awal membaca pada anak usia 5-6 tahun di TK Bukit Permai 2. Konsep loose parts merujuk pada berbagai benda lepas yang tidak memiliki bentuk atau fungsi tetap, seperti tutup botol, batu, stik es krim, atau kancing warna-warni, yang memungkinkan anak untuk memanipulasi, menggabungkan, dan mencipta sesuai imajinasi mereka. Pendekatan ini diyakini mampu menstimulasi kreativitas, eksplorasi, serta keterampilan literasi awal secara menyenangkan dan sesuai dengan tahap perkembangan anak usia dini. Metode yang digunakan dalam pengabdian ini adalah kualitatif deskriptif dan penelitian tindakan kelas (PTK) dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi langsung terhadap kegiatan anak di kelas dan dokumentasi visual selama proses berlangsung. Hasil pengabdian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan loose parts dalam pembelajaran membaca mampu menciptakan suasana belajar yang lebih aktif, interaktif, dan bermakna. Anak-anak menjadi lebih antusias dalam mengenal huruf, membedakan bunyi awal, serta menyusun suku kata atau kata sederhana melalui permainan bebas yang terstruktur. Selain itu, pendekatan ini juga mendorong keterlibatan sosial, komunikasi, dan kepercayaan diri anak selama proses belajar berlangsung.

Kata Kunci: *Loose Parts*; Keterampilan Membaca Awal; Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini; Literasi Dini; Pembelajaran Menyenangkan.

Abstract

This community service aims to deeply describe how the loose parts approach can be utilized to support early reading skills in 5-6 year old children at TK Bukit Permai 2. The concept of loose parts refers to various detached objects that do not have a fixed shape or function, such as bottle caps, stones, popsicle sticks, or colorful buttons, which allow children to manipulate, combine, and create according to their imagination. This approach is believed

to stimulate creativity, exploration, and early literacy skills in a fun way and in accordance with the developmental stages of early childhood. The method used in this service is descriptive qualitative and classroom action research (CAR) with data collection techniques through direct observation of children's activities in the classroom and visual documentation during the process. The results of the service show that the application of loose parts in reading learning is able to create a more active, interactive, and meaningful learning atmosphere. Children become more enthusiastic in recognizing letters, distinguishing initial sounds, and arranging syllables or simple words through structured free play. In addition, this approach also encourages social involvement, communication, and self-confidence of children during the learning process.

Keywords: *Loose Parts; Early Reading Skills; Early Childhood Education; Early Literacy; Fun Learning*

Introduction

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is a very important early stage in forming the basis of child development. In this golden age, children have great potential to learn through hands-on experience. Therefore, the learning process at this level needs to be designed with a fun, concrete, and meaningful approach according to the characteristics of students.

Reading skills are one of the main bases in building children's literacy skills from an early age. Reading activities are not only limited to the recognition of letters and words, but also become an initial bridge for children to understand meaning, expand their horizons, and develop thinking skills. Therefore, the introduction of reading skills needs to be done gradually and funly, according to the stage of children's cognitive development. Children aged 5–6 years are in an exploratory period, where they learn through real experiences, play, and social interaction in the surrounding environment.

But in reality, the learning to read given in early childhood is often formal and academic. This approach is not in accordance with the characteristics of children's learning, so it is not uncommon to cause boredom, even making children lose interest. Learning at this age should be fun, flexible, and prioritize the process of active play as part of learning. Therefore, creative and child-friendly learning methods are needed so that reading activities become more interesting and meaningful.

One approach that can be used is loose parts, which is the use of loose objects such as bottle caps, pieces of wood, ice cream sticks, or small stones. These objects are open and do not have a single function, so they can be used freely by children according to their imagination and needs. This concept was developed by Simon Nicholson (1971) in his theory which states that children's creativity will increase when they are given access to an environment rich in open materials. In the context of learning to read, loose parts can be a medium

to introduce letters, initial sounds, and string words through free exploration and physical activity.

This approach is particularly relevant to the learning principles in the Independent Curriculum for Early Childhood Education, which emphasizes the importance of play, active participation, and learning through hands-on experience. The use of loose parts not only supports the development of early literacy, but also provides benefits for fine motor aspects, imagination, and social interaction between children. In addition, the materials used generally come from the surrounding environment, so they strongly support the value of locally-based education and sustainability.

In Bukit Permai 2 Kindergarten, this approach began to be applied in reading learning activities for group B children (ages 5–6 years). Teachers use objects such as letter buttons, ice cream sticks, and painted stones as children's learning medium. Children are invited to compose names, form letters, and play with initial sounds in a fun way. This process not only develops basic reading skills, but also encourages children's activeness and creativity during learning.

This article aims to describe in more detail the practice of learning to read with loose parts carried out at Bukit Permai 2 Kindergarten. In addition, this article also explores the influence of this approach on children's interest and involvement in early literacy activities. It is hoped that this paper can inspire early childhood educators to develop literacy strategies that are more fun and in accordance with the world of children. That way, the process of learning to read becomes not only a routine, but also an enjoyable and meaningful experience for children.

METHOD OF IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES

This service was carried out using a descriptive qualitative approach combined with the Class Action Research (PTK) model. The purpose of this approach is to obtain an in-depth picture of the process of learning to read in early childhood through the use of loose parts media. Because learning in early childhood education takes place naturally and in a real social context, a qualitative approach is considered appropriate to present a complete, contextual, and situation-appropriate description on the ground.

The service model used refers to PTK, which is a form of activity carried out by teachers in their own classrooms to improve the quality of the process and children's learning outcomes. In line with Arikunto (2010), PTK is seen as a means of continuous reflection for teachers to improve learning practices. In this service, the PTK stages follow the framework of Kemmis and McTaggart which consists of four main steps: (1) planning, (2) implementation, (3) observation, and (4) reflection. The action cycle can be repeated until a significant improvement in children's reading skills is obtained through loose parts media.

The service activity was carried out at Bukit Permai 2 Kindergarten, Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi. The selection of the location was carried out

purposely because this school has used loose parts media in learning activities and has a commitment to developing children's literacy through a play approach.

The subjects of the activity were 12 children of group B aged 5–6 years old who came from diverse family backgrounds. The classroom teacher plays the role of the main implementer as well as a reflection partner with the service team to assess the effectiveness of learning.

The stages of service include:

1. Planning: The team and the teacher developed a loose parts-based literacy learning plan by preparing materials such as small stones, ice cream sticks, and bottle caps for letter recognition, word assembly, and initial sound exercises.
2. Implementation: The teacher implements the learning plan by making loose parts the main medium. Children are directed to recognize letters and compose words through exploratory and fun play activities.
3. Observation: The team recorded the level of involvement, interest, focus, and verbal interaction of children during the activity using the observation sheets that had been prepared.
4. Reflection: The results of the observation are discussed with the teacher to review the advantages and disadvantages of the activity, as well as formulate improvements for the next cycle.

Data collection is carried out through three main methods, namely:

- a. Direct observation: The researcher observes the child's behavior during learning. The main focus is how children are involved in the use of loose parts as well as in letter recognition activities.
- b. Structured interviews: Classroom teachers are interviewed to obtain information about the implementation of learning, children's responses to activities, and teachers' views on the use of loose parts in early literacy.
- c. Documentation: Physical evidence such as photographs, videos, and children's work is collected to supplement the data obtained from observations and interviews. This documentation is used as additional analytical material and supports reflection in the PTK cycle.

Some of the research instruments used include:

- 1) The observation sheet contains indicators about children's activities in recognizing letters, initial sounds, and arranging words.
- 2) Interview guidelines as a reference in exploring teachers' opinions regarding the learning process.
- 3) Field records containing important findings during the process.
- 4) Visual documentation in the form of photos and children's works as a complement to field data.

The data obtained were analyzed thematically qualitatively through three main stages:

- a) Data reduction: This process involves sorting and filtering data, so that only information relevant to the effectiveness of learning to read through loose parts is further analyzed.

- b) Data presentation: The summarized data is compiled in the form of descriptive narratives, tables, and supported by visual documentation to make the results easier to understand and structure.
- c) Conclusion drawn: Conclusions are drawn based on important patterns or findings that emerge from the data, and then linked to theories and previous research results to strengthen the validity of the findings.

IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSIONS

Results of Observation and Children's Activities

In the implementation of loose parts-based literacy activities in class B of Bukit Permai 2 Kindergarten, children are invited to get to know letters and words through concrete and fun activities. The activity was carried out for two weeks and involved 12 children aged 5-6 years. Some of the forms of activities provided include:

Compose letters using ice cream sticks and colorful buttons

The results of the observations showed that the children seemed more enthusiastic and actively involved in the activities. Children who were initially passive in reading activities began to show interest by mentioning letters and arranging their own names. In fact, children began to help each other compile letters from their friends' names.

In addition, this activity also has an impact on the development of children's fine motor skills. The activity of arranging small objects to form letters or patterns improves their eye and hand coordination. Children also learn to recognize the letter order in their own names, simple words, and the initial sound of words.

Loose Parts and Early Literacy

The results of the activity show that the use of loose parts in literacy learning provides a more flexible and fun learning atmosphere. Children not only see letters as visual symbols, but also as part of playful activities. When children compose letters from concrete materials, they gain a more meaningful multisensory learning experience.

This is in line with the theory of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (Bredekamp & Copple) which emphasizes the importance of learning that is appropriate to the child's developmental stage. Early childhood learns through hands-on experience and concrete activities. Loose parts provide that experience naturally.

Increased Interest and Participation

Loose parts as open-ended media allow children to experiment and imagine. This medium provides many possible uses, which are adapted to the child's creativity. When children are free to choose and use media, they feel more involved and have control over the learning process.

Activities such as making names, recognizing the initial letters of objects, and playing word guessing provide fun challenges for children. They do not feel that they are "learning to read" in a rigid academic sense, but rather

playing while recognizing language symbols. This increases the child's participation naturally.

Support for Social and Emotional Development

Learning with loose parts also has a positive impact on children's social interaction. They learn to work together, share materials, and discuss while composing letters together. Some children even give each other ideas about letters or words that can be formed from certain objects. In addition, children feel proud when they successfully arrange their letters or names. Confidence increases when their work is appreciated by friends and teachers. This strengthens positive self-concept and increases intrinsic motivation in learning.



Figure 1. Getting to know the letters



Figure 2. Wording

The Role of the Teacher and Reflection

Teachers play an important role in designing a learning environment that supports the use of loose parts. Teachers need to prepare materials, arrange classrooms, and provide appropriate examples and instructions. However, teachers also provide space for children to try on their own and learn from the process.

In the implementation of activities, teachers observe and record the progress of children. This data is used in reflection to design future activities that are more challenging and in accordance with children's learning needs. With this approach, teachers are not only teachers, but also facilitators and observers of child development.

Linkage with the Independent Curriculum

The loose parts approach is very relevant to the spirit of the Independent Early Childhood Education Curriculum, which encourages contextual, exploratory, and child-centered learning. Loose parts allow teachers to create literacy activities that are flexible, engaging, and inclusive, without relying on expensive print media or tools.

In the Independent Curriculum, teachers are given the freedom to adjust activities to the needs and characteristics of children. The use of surrounding objects as learning tools also reflects the values of local wisdom and environmental friendliness. Children not only learn to read, but also learn to create and explore the surrounding environment.

During the two weeks of literacy activities using loose parts, children showed an increase in interest and involvement in learning to read. Loose parts provide a fun learning experience and are appropriate for the child's developmental stage. This approach supports contextual, active, and inclusive literacy learning. Teachers play the role of creative and reflective facilitators in accompanying the learning process. These findings reinforce that literacy learning does not have to be formal and academic from an early age. With the right approach such as loose parts, children can love reading activities from the beginning in a meaningful play atmosphere.

CONCLUSION

Based on the loose parts-based initial literacy learning activity carried out for two weeks in class B of Bukit Permai 2 Kindergarten, several important points were obtained as follows:

1. The use of loose parts media has been proven to support the learning process of reading in early childhood in a more interesting and relevant way to student development.
2. Children show increased interest and involvement in literacy activities.
3. Media loose parts function not only as a cognitive learning tool, but also support other development such as fine motor coordination, cooperation, and social and emotional abilities.

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