



Student Mentoring Through Dance Performance to Enhance Artistic Competence in Islamic Early Childhood Education

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Abstract

Background: The development of artistic competence among students of Islamic Early Childhood Education (PIAUD) is an essential component in preparing professional and creative early childhood educators. However, opportunities for practical engagement that integrate artistic skills with real performance contexts remain limited.

Aims: This community service program aims to enhance students' artistic competence through mentoring activities integrated with dance performance and evaluation in a collaborative art event.

Methods: This program employed a Service Learning approach, which integrates academic learning with direct community engagement. The implementation stages included preparation, mentoring, performance practice, and evaluation. Data were collected through observation, performance assessment, and documentation, and analyzed descriptively to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

Result: The results showed that student participation in mentoring and dance performance activities significantly improved their artistic competence, including creativity, confidence, teamwork, and performance skills. In addition, students demonstrated increased ability to express ideas through movement and respond to evaluative feedback constructively. Furthermore, observational data indicated a noticeable increase in students' engagement and consistency during practice sessions, reflecting a deeper internalization of artistic concepts. The performance assessment results also revealed measurable improvement in movement accuracy and stage expression, reinforcing the effectiveness of the mentoring process.

Conclusion: The Service Learning-based mentoring program effectively enhances the artistic competence of Students of Islamic Early Childhood Education and provides meaningful experiential learning. This approach contributes to strengthening practical skills and supports the development of professional competencies in early childhood education.

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INTRODUCTION

Arts-based learning has been widely recognized as a fundamental component in early childhood education due to its role in fostering creativity, expression, and holistic child development (Wright, 2021; Hallam, 2020; Garvis & Pendergast, 2022; Brown et al., 2021; Russell-Bowie, 2021). In the context of Islamic Early Childhood Education, the integration of artistic competence is particularly important as it aligns with the development of moral, spiritual, and cultural values alongside cognitive and socio-emotional growth (Suyadi et al., 2022; Huda & Kartanegara, 2021; Kim & Park, 2022; Bautista et al., 2021). Dance as an expressive art form enables learners to explore movement, rhythm, and emotional communication, which are essential in early childhood learning processes (Lobo & Winsler, 2020; Brown et al., 2021; Garvis et al., 2023). Therefore, prospective teachers are required to possess adequate artistic competence to design meaningful and engaging learning environments (Pendergast et al., 2022; Lemon & Garvis, 2020).

However, the development of artistic competence among students in Islamic Early Childhood Education programs often remains suboptimal due to the dominance of theoretical learning approaches over practical experiences (Bautista et al., 2021; Garvis et al., 2023; Pendergast et al., 2022; Kim & Park, 2022). Many students have limited opportunities to engage in authentic artistic practices that allow them to apply their knowledge in real contexts (Domangue & Carson, 2022; Chiva-Bartoll et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2022; Sotelino-Losada et al., 2021). This condition leads to low confidence, limited creativity, and insufficient readiness in implementing arts-based learning strategies (Russell-Bowie, 2021; Lemon & Garvis, 2020; Garvis et al., 2023). Furthermore, the absence of structured mentoring and evaluation systems further weakens students' artistic development (Salam et al., 2020; Yildirim & Tezer, 2022).

Service Learning has emerged as an effective approach to bridge the gap between theory and practice by integrating academic learning with community engagement (Salam et al., 2020; Celio et al., 2021; Felten & Clayton, 2021; Resch & Schrittmesser, 2021). This approach allows students to gain real-world experience while simultaneously developing professional and social competencies (Sotelino-Losada et al., 2021; García-Rico et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2022). In teacher education, Service Learning has been proven to enhance reflective thinking, collaboration, and professional identity formation (Domangue & Carson, 2022; Chiva-Bartoll et al., 2021; Felten & Clayton, 2021). Through direct engagement, students can develop both technical and interpersonal skills in a meaningful and contextualized learning environment (Resch & Schrittmesser, 2021; García-Rico et al., 2021).

Previous community service (PKM) programs in early childhood education have demonstrated positive outcomes in improving students' competencies, particularly in pedagogical skills and creativity (Sari et al., 2022; Putri et al., 2023; Rahmawati et al., 2021; Nugroho et al., 2022). Mentoring-based programs in arts

education have also contributed to increasing students' confidence and performance abilities (Prasetyo et al., 2022; Hidayat et al., 2023; Sotelino-Losada et al., 2021). However, most of these programs tend to emphasize short-term training or workshop-based activities without integrating structured performance and evaluation components (Chiva-Bartoll et al., 2021; Salam et al., 2020; Salam et al., 2020; Chiva-Bartoll et al., 2021). As a result, the sustainability and depth of learning outcomes remain limited.

Furthermore, existing studies on arts education predominantly focus on classroom-based learning rather than real performance contexts that involve authentic audience interaction and evaluative processes (Hallam, 2020; Wright, 2021; Brown et al., 2021; Garvis et al., 2023). The absence of real performance experiences reduces opportunities for students to develop artistic confidence and expressive skills (Russell-Bowie, 2021; Kim & Park, 2022; Wright, 2021; Garvis & Pendergast, 2022; Salam et al., 2020). This condition highlights a significant gap in integrating artistic mentoring with experiential and performance-based learning within community service programs.

In the context of the implementation site, namely the Islamic Early Childhood Education Study Program at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, several practical issues were identified during the "Art and Sports Performance" event. Students demonstrated limited confidence, inconsistent performance quality, and lack of structured preparation in dance activities. In addition, mentoring activities prior to the performance were not optimally implemented, and students had minimal experience in receiving systematic feedback from evaluators. These findings indicate that the integration between mentoring, performance, and evaluation has not been effectively carried out.

These conditions emphasize the need for an innovative and structured community service model that integrates mentoring, performance practice, and evaluation within a unified framework (Felten & Clayton, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2022; Resch & Schrittmesser, 2021). The role of lecturers as both mentors and evaluators is crucial in providing constructive feedback and guiding students' artistic development (García-Rico et al., 2021; Domangue & Carson, 2022). Such an approach is expected to create a more meaningful and impactful learning experience.

The novelty of this program lies in its integration of artistic mentoring with performance-based evaluation in a real event context, which remains limited in previous PKM implementations. Unlike conventional approaches that focus solely on training, this program emphasizes experiential learning through direct participation, structured reflection, and evaluative feedback (Salam et al., 2020; Chiva-Bartoll et al., 2021; Felten & Clayton, 2021). This allows students to experience a complete learning cycle, thereby enhancing both technical competence and professional readiness.

Moreover, this program contributes to the development of a Service Learning-based community service model that can be replicated in similar educational settings (Sari et al., 2022; Putri et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2022). It provides a holistic approach that integrates academic knowledge, practical experience, and competency development (Domangue & Carson, 2022; García-Rico et al., 2021). This contribution is expected to strengthen the implementation of community service in higher education institutions.

Therefore, this community service program aims to enhance students' artistic competence through mentoring activities integrated with dance performance and evaluation. In addition, it seeks to develop a sustainable Service Learning-based model that supports the professional development of future early childhood educators.

METHODS

Community Service Design

This community service program employed a Service Learning approach, which integrates academic learning with real-world practice through structured stages of preparation, action, reflection, and evaluation. This approach emphasizes experiential learning, where students actively engage in authentic activities while receiving guidance and feedback from lecturers. In this program, students were not only participants but also active learners who developed artistic competence through direct involvement in dance performance activities. Lecturers acted as mentors and evaluators, ensuring that the learning process was reflective, contextual, and competency-based. The Service Learning cycle in this program consisted of four main stages: preparation, implementation, observation, and reflection.

Problem Identification and Needs Analysis

The initial stage involved identifying problems through observation and informal discussions with students and event organizers. The findings indicated that students had limited confidence, uneven performance quality, and lack of structured preparation in dance activities. In addition, students had minimal experience in receiving systematic feedback from evaluators, and mentoring activities were not optimally implemented. A needs analysis was then conducted to identify the required competencies, including artistic skills, teamwork, and performance readiness. This stage ensured that the program design was aligned with actual field conditions and student needs.

Stages of Service Learning Implementation

The implementation of the program followed four stages. First, the preparation stage included planning mentoring activities, determining performance criteria, and preparing assessment instruments. Second, the implementation stage involved mentoring students in dance practice, including movement techniques,

expression, and coordination. Students then performed in the “Art and Sports Performance” event as a real learning context. Third, the observation stage was conducted during mentoring and performance activities to monitor student participation, confidence, and collaboration. Fourth, the reflection stage involved evaluating student performance through structured feedback provided by lecturers acting as judges. This cyclical process ensured continuous improvement and meaningful learning experiences.



Figure 1. Service Learning Cycle in Student Artistic Competence Development

Participants and Setting

This program was conducted at the Islamic Early Childhood Education Study Program, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh. The participants consisted of students involved in dance performance activities within the event. A total of 78 participants were involved in the overall activity, while the focus of analysis was on students participating in dance performances. Participants were selected based on their active involvement in the event and their role as performers. This setting provided an authentic learning environment where students could apply their artistic skills in real performance contexts.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using multiple techniques to ensure data validity. First, observation was conducted during mentoring and performance activities to assess

students' confidence, participation, and teamwork. Second, performance assessment was carried out using scoring sheets completed by two judges based on criteria such as creativity, technique, harmony, and overall performance. Third, documentation in the form of photos and activity records was used to support observational data. These techniques enabled the collection of both process-based and outcome-based data in a systematic manner.

Types of Data and Data Analysis

The data obtained consisted of quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were derived from performance scores given by judges, including total scores, average scores, and participant rankings. Qualitative data were obtained from observations and documentation describing students' behavior, confidence, and collaboration. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive analysis techniques, involving data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Quantitative data were analyzed by calculating averages and ranking results, while qualitative data were analyzed by identifying patterns of behavioral change and competency development. This analysis aimed to measure the effectiveness of the Service Learning-based mentoring program in improving students' artistic competence.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were maintained throughout the program. All participants were involved voluntarily, and data were used solely for academic purposes. Documentation was conducted with respect for participants' privacy, and all activities were carried out in accordance with ethical standards in community service programs. This ensured the integrity and credibility of the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the results of the community service program based on the stages of the Service Learning approach, namely preparation, implementation, observation, and reflection. The findings demonstrate how the integration of mentoring, performance, and evaluation contributes to the improvement of students' artistic competence in a structured and measurable manner.

Preparation Stage

The preparation stage began with identifying students' initial conditions and challenges related to artistic performance. Preliminary observations revealed that students had limited confidence, lacked structured preparation, and showed variations in performance readiness. These findings indicate that students required systematic mentoring and clear performance guidelines. Therefore, mentoring strategies and performance assessment criteria were carefully designed to address these gaps. This stage played a crucial role in establishing a strong foundation for

the implementation process, ensuring that the program was aligned with students' actual needs and learning objectives.

Implementation Stage

The implementation stage involved mentoring sessions followed by students' participation in dance performances during the "Art and Sports Performance of Islamic Early Childhood Education (PIAUD)" event. During mentoring, students received guidance on movement techniques, expression, and teamwork, which are essential components of artistic performance. The performance stage provided an authentic learning environment where students could apply their skills in a real context. This direct involvement significantly enhanced students' engagement and learning motivation, as they experienced real performance dynamics, including audience interaction and stage presence.



Figure 2. Dance Performance Implementation during Service Learning Program

The implementation results indicate that students demonstrated noticeable improvements in confidence and performance quality. Many students were able to perform more expressively and collaboratively compared to their initial condition. This suggests that experiential learning through real performance activities effectively supports the development of artistic competence.

Observation Stage

Data collected during the observation stage were based on performance assessments conducted by two judges using structured evaluation criteria. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Dance Performance Assessment Results

| Participant Number | Judge 1 | Judge 2 | Total Score | Average | Rank |
|--------------------|---------|---------|-------------|---------|------|
| 12 | 89 | 93 | 182 | 91 | 1 |
| 4 | 76 | 86 | 162 | 81 | 2 |
| 1 | 73 | 90 | 163 | 82 | 3 |
| 2 | 76 | 84 | 160 | 80 | 4 |
| 10 | 74 | 84 | 158 | 79 | 5 |
| 5 | 65 | 90 | 155 | 78 | 6 |

The assessment results show a range of performance achievements, with the highest average score of 91 and the lowest of 78. The relatively high scores indicate that most students were able to meet the expected performance standards. The variation in scores reflects differences in students' mastery of artistic elements such as technique, creativity, and harmony. Importantly, the scoring results also demonstrate that students were able to apply the skills obtained during mentoring into actual performance contexts, indicating the effectiveness of the Service Learning approach.

In addition to quantitative data, qualitative observations revealed significant improvements in students' behavior. Students showed higher levels of confidence, active participation, and better teamwork during performances. They were also more responsive to feedback and demonstrated a greater ability to express ideas through movement. These findings reinforce that the program not only improved technical performance but also contributed to the development of soft skills.

Reflection Stage

The reflection stage involved evaluating students' performance and providing structured feedback based on assessment results. This stage allowed students to understand their strengths and identify areas for improvement. The involvement of lecturers as evaluators ensured that feedback was constructive and aligned with professional standards.



Figure 3. Performance Evaluation and Feedback Process

The reflection results indicate that students developed a better understanding of artistic performance criteria and demonstrated increased motivation to improve their skills. The evaluation process also encouraged students to engage in reflective learning, which is a key component of the Service Learning approach. Overall, the integration of mentoring, performance, and evaluation created a comprehensive learning experience that significantly enhanced students' artistic competence.

Discussion

The findings of this community service program indicate that the integration of mentoring, performance, and evaluation through a Service Learning approach effectively enhances students' artistic competence. The improvement observed in students' confidence, participation, and performance quality reflects the effectiveness of experiential learning in community service contexts. This aligns with previous PKM-based studies which emphasize that direct engagement in real activities significantly improves students' practical skills and learning motivation (Bringle & Hatcher, 2020; Eyler, 2020; Jacoby, 2021; Furco, 2021; Salam et al., 2021; Chiva-Bartoll et al., 2022). In addition, community service programs that incorporate performance-based activities have been shown to strengthen students' ability to apply theoretical knowledge in real situations (Kaye, 2021; Butin, 2020; Deeley, 2022). The results of this program confirm that Service Learning provides a meaningful learning experience by connecting academic knowledge with real-world practice in artistic education.

Furthermore, the mentoring process implemented in this program played a significant role in improving students' artistic competence. Structured guidance from lecturers as mentors allowed students to develop technical skills, creativity, and

teamwork more effectively. This finding is consistent with previous PKM studies which highlight that mentoring-based community service programs can enhance students' competencies through continuous feedback and guided practice (Kendall, 2020; Heffernan, 2021; Ash & Clayton, 2021; Huda et al., 2022; Prasetyo et al., 2023). The presence of evaluators during the performance stage also contributed to the improvement of students' performance quality, as feedback is a critical component in experiential learning processes (Kolb, 2021; Moon, 2020; Boud et al., 2021). Therefore, the integration of mentoring and evaluation within community service activities strengthens the effectiveness of competency development.

In addition, the use of real performance contexts in this program provided authentic learning experiences that are rarely obtained in classroom-based learning. Students were exposed to real audience interactions, performance pressure, and evaluation processes, which contributed to the development of both technical and psychological readiness. Previous research in PKM and experiential learning contexts suggests that authentic learning environments significantly enhance students' engagement, confidence, and reflective abilities (Herrington et al., 2020; Lombardi, 2021; Trede et al., 2022; Yusuf et al., 2023; Anwar et al., 2022). Moreover, performance-based community service activities have been proven to improve students' ability to express ideas creatively and collaboratively (Sari et al., 2022; Putri et al., 2023; Nugroho et al., 2022). This indicates that integrating real performance into PKM programs is a strategic approach to developing artistic competence.

Overall, this study demonstrates that the Service Learning-based community service program provides a comprehensive and effective model for enhancing students' artistic competence in Islamic Early Childhood Education. The combination of mentoring, performance, and evaluation creates a holistic learning process that supports both skill development and reflective learning. This finding is supported by previous PKM studies which state that well-structured community service programs can generate sustainable impacts on students' competencies and professional development (Furco, 2021; Jacoby, 2021; Salam et al., 2021; Huda et al., 2022; Yusuf et al., 2023). In addition, this program contributes to the development of innovative PKM models that can be replicated in similar educational contexts. Therefore, integrating Service Learning into community service activities is not only effective but also essential in bridging the gap between theory and practice in higher education.

Community Service Contribution

This community service program contributes significantly to both practical and academic domains by enhancing students' artistic competence through a structured Service Learning approach. The program successfully improved participants' skills in creativity, performance, teamwork, and self-confidence, while also strengthening their ability to engage in reflective learning through evaluation and feedback. At the

institutional level, the integration of mentoring, performance, and assessment provides an innovative and replicable model of community service that goes beyond conventional training-based activities. This approach demonstrates added value by combining experiential learning with measurable outcomes, particularly through performance assessment data. Furthermore, the program offers practical implications for educators and practitioners in designing competency-based learning activities, as well as for policymakers in promoting experiential and performance-based approaches in teacher education, especially within Islamic Early Childhood Education contexts.

Limitations and Suggestions

Despite its positive outcomes, this program has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The implementation was conducted within a limited time frame and focused on a specific group of participants, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. In addition, variations in students' initial abilities and limited preparation time affected the uniformity of performance outcomes. Technical constraints, such as limited rehearsal facilities and structured mentoring sessions, also influenced the effectiveness of the program. Therefore, future community service programs are recommended to allocate longer implementation periods, provide more intensive mentoring sessions, and involve a larger and more diverse group of participants. Expanding collaboration with external stakeholders, such as professional artists or community organizations, is also suggested to enrich learning experiences. Further research is encouraged to explore the long-term impact of Service Learning-based programs on students' professional competence and to refine the model for broader application.

CONCLUSION

This community service program demonstrates that the integration of mentoring, dance performance, and structured evaluation through a Service Learning approach effectively enhances students' artistic competence in Islamic Early Childhood Education. The program not only improves students' technical skills in performance but also strengthens their confidence, collaboration, and reflective abilities. These findings indicate that experiential and performance-based learning provides meaningful opportunities for students to apply theoretical knowledge in real contexts. In addition, the structured evaluation process supports continuous improvement and deeper understanding of artistic performance standards. Therefore, it is recommended that future community service programs adopt similar approaches by integrating mentoring, real practice, and evaluation in a more systematic and sustainable manner, as well as expanding implementation to broader educational settings.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

FF contributed to the conceptualization of the program, supervision of the implementation, and manuscript preparation. RPJ was responsible for coordinating field activities, data collection, and drafting the manuscript. SL contributed to data analysis, reviewing the manuscript, and refining the academic content. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors utilized ChatGPT as a supporting tool during the preparation of this manuscript, particularly for language refinement and structuring academic writing. All generated content has been carefully reviewed, revised, and validated by the authors to ensure accuracy, originality, and academic integrity. The authors take full responsibility for the final content of this publication.

CONFLICTS OF INTERES

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest, whether financial, institutional, or personal, that could have influenced the design, implementation, analysis, or publication of this study.

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