

Meaningful Literacy Learning in Early Childhood Education: An Analysis of Teacher Professional Development Needs

Dinar Nur Inten^{1✉}, Nurbiana Dhieni², Sri Wulan³,

^{1,2,3} Department of Early Childhood Education, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia

DOI: [10.31004/aulad.v9i2.1686](https://doi.org/10.31004/aulad.v9i2.1686)

✉ Corresponding author:

[dinar_1121925003@mhs.unj.ac.id]

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kebutuhan pengembangan profesional guru Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini (PAUD) dalam implementasi literasi bermakna di Kabupaten Bandung. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan survei deskriptif yang mengombinasikan data kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Sebanyak 89 guru PAUD berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini melalui kuesioner tertutup dan terbuka. Data kuantitatif dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif, sedangkan data kualitatif dianalisis secara tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar guru memiliki pemahaman yang baik tentang literasi bermakna dan telah menerapkannya melalui berbagai aktivitas pembelajaran yang berpusat pada anak, seperti bercerita, bernyanyi, bermain peran, dan membaca gambar. Namun, implementasi literasi bermakna masih menghadapi berbagai tantangan, termasuk keterbatasan media pembelajaran, akses pelatihan, pendanaan, serta tekanan orang tua dan masyarakat terhadap kemampuan calistung. Guru membutuhkan pengembangan profesional yang praktis, kontekstual, dan berkelanjutan melalui pelatihan berbasis praktik, pendampingan, dan komunitas belajar profesional untuk mendukung implementasi literasi bermakna secara efektif.

Kata Kunci: Literasi Bermakna; Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini; Pengembangan Profesional Guru; Kebutuhan Pelatihan; Literasi Anak Usia Dini.

Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the professional development needs of Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers in implementing meaningful literacy instruction in Bandung Regency. A descriptive survey approach combining quantitative and qualitative data was employed. A total of 89 ECE teachers participated in this study by completing closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that most teachers demonstrated a sound understanding of meaningful literacy and have implemented it through various child-centered learning activities, such as storytelling, singing, role-playing, and picture reading. However, the implementation of meaningful literacy continues to face several challenges, including limited instructional media, restricted access to professional training, inadequate funding, as well as persistent parental and societal pressure emphasizing early reading, writing, and numeracy skills. Teachers require practical, contextualized, and sustainable professional development through practice-based training, mentoring, and professional learning communities to support the effective implementation of meaningful literacy.

Keywords: Meaningful literacy; Early Childhood Education; Teacher Professional Development; Professional Development Needs; Early Literacy

1. INTRODUCTION

Literacy in early childhood provides a fundamental foundation for children's language, cognitive, social, and academic development and contributes significantly to future educational success. Early literacy experiences support language development, communication skills, meaning-making abilities, and school readiness (Nafiah & Maemonah, 2021; Rachman et al., 2024). In Early Childhood Education (ECE), literacy extends beyond reading and writing skills to include children's ability to construct meaning through oral language, symbols, images, stories, and everyday social interactions (Morrow, 2020; Yelland et al., 2021; Hidayah et al., 2023). Meaningful literacy development requires children to engage actively in contextual and enjoyable learning experiences such as play, storytelling, discussion, singing, drawing, and role-playing. These activities are consistent with the principles of developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood education. Previous studies have demonstrated that play-based literacy approaches effectively enhance children's engagement, oral language development, vocabulary acquisition, story comprehension, and emergent literacy skills (Amalia & Nurlina, 2024; Rizqi et al., 2024).

Despite its importance, literacy instruction in many ECE settings remains strongly influenced by traditional expectations emphasizing reading, writing, and arithmetic (*calistung*). Mechanical literacy skills are often viewed as the primary indicators of school readiness, leading teachers to focus on letter and word recognition at the expense of richer literacy experiences. This premature academic pressure yields detrimental concrete impacts on children's development, frequently resulting in early learning burnout, diminished intrinsic motivation to read, and poor reading comprehension, which ultimately hinder their long-term academic resilience. As a result, a gap frequently exists between holistic literacy concepts promoted in early childhood education and actual classroom practices. Teachers play a critical role in bridging this gap. As key agents of pedagogical translation, teachers bridge this divide by actively shifting their instructional focus from rote memorization to creating developmentally appropriate literacy environments. This requires a profound conceptual understanding of meaningful literacy, enabling them to design engaging learning experiences that withstand the societal pressures for mechanical reading and writing drills.

As facilitators of learning, they are responsible for designing meaningful and developmentally appropriate literacy experiences that support children's diverse developmental needs (Damayanti et al., 2022). Their pedagogical competence influences the quality of literacy instruction, including their ability to understand children's characteristics, organize learning activities, manage classroom environments, and assess children's development. Strong pedagogical competence contributes to the development of multiple domains, including language, cognitive, social-emotional, artistic, moral, and physical development (Roostin et al., 2022). While current literature acknowledges this pedagogical role, there remains a critical void in understanding how teachers cognitively and practically navigate the specific pedagogical challenges of transitioning from *calistung*-oriented practices to meaningful literacy amidst persistent sociocultural pressures.

Recent studies indicate that teachers' literacy practices are closely associated with the quality of professional development opportunities available to them. Teachers who participate in continuous professional development are more likely to implement diverse and child-centered instructional practices (Cadime et al., 2025; Chaitow et al., 2023). Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) argue that effective professional development should focus on instructional content, promote active participation and collaboration, provide coaching and mentoring, encourage reflection, and are sustained over time. Such characteristics are particularly transformative for ECE meaningful literacy practices, as they empower teachers to move beyond abstract theories. Specifically, sustained coaching and collaborative reflection enable teachers to practically design play-based literacy activities, critically evaluate their instructional media, and dynamically adapt to children's diverse meaning-making processes in the classroom. Professional development is therefore essential for strengthening teachers' conceptual understanding, instructional strategies, use of learning media, assessment practices, and reflective teaching skills. Collaborative and practice-based professional development has been found to improve classroom instruction significantly. In addition, technological advances require ECE teachers to develop digital literacy competencies to support creative and contextual learning. However, many teachers still face challenges in integrating digital media due to limited training opportunities, inadequate facilities, and insufficient institutional support.

Although studies on literacy instruction and teacher training have increased, research specifically examining ECE teachers' professional development needs for implementing meaningful literacy remains limited in Indonesia. Most previous studies have focused on program effectiveness rather than teachers' actual needs. Amalia & Nurlina (2024) demonstrated the effectiveness of play-based literacy on children's skills, and Damayanti et al. (2022) highlighted general pedagogical competencies, these studies have overlooked the grassroots-level needs required to empower teachers to adopt these approaches. Identifying these needs is crucial for designing professional development programs that are relevant to teachers' contexts and challenges. In Bandung Regency, diverse sociocultural characteristics and local resources provide strong potential for contextual literacy learning. However, empirical evidence regarding teachers' professional development needs in implementing meaningful literacy instruction is still lacking. The novelty of this research lies in its diagnostic approach, shifting the focus from evaluating student literacy outcomes to comprehensively mapping the foundational readiness and specific pedagogical needs of teachers in executing meaningful literacy within a distinct sociocultural context. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the specific professional development needs of ECE teachers to effectively implement meaningful literacy instruction in Bandung Regency.

2. METHODS

This study employed a descriptive survey approach combining quantitative and qualitative data to investigate the professional development needs of Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers in implementing meaningful literacy instruction in Bandung Regency. The quantitative component provided an overview of teachers' understanding of meaningful literacy, literacy teaching practices, professional development needs, and institutional support. The qualitative component was used to gain deeper insights into teachers' experiences, challenges, expectations, and contextual factors influencing the implementation of meaningful literacy in ECE settings (Creswell, 1377). This approach enabled the researchers to obtain both broad and in-depth information regarding teachers' professional development needs. The participants consisted of 89 ECE teachers from various early childhood education institutions in Bandung Regency, West Java, Indonesia. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) currently teaching in an ECE institution in Bandung Regency, (2) actively involved in literacy-related learning activities, and (3) willing to participate in the study. The participants represented diverse educational backgrounds, teaching experiences, and prior participation in literacy-related professional development programs, providing a comprehensive picture of teachers' perspectives and needs.

Data were collected using a questionnaire consisting of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The instrument was developed based on the literature on meaningful literacy, early childhood literacy instruction, and teacher professional development (Harrison, 1996; Wickens, 2025). The questionnaire was designed to explore four main dimensions: (1) teachers' understanding of meaningful literacy, (2) meaningful literacy teaching practices, (3) professional development needs, and (4) institutional support and implementation challenges. The closed-ended items were intended to obtain descriptive information regarding teachers' perceptions and practices, specifically to quantitatively measure the extent of their conceptual understanding of meaningful literacy, the frequency of specific instructional practices utilized in the classroom, and the scale of their professional development needs.

Meanwhile, the open-ended items allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences, challenges, expectations, and suggestions for professional development. Prior to data collection, the instrument was reviewed by experts in early childhood education and literacy to ensure the relevance, clarity, and appropriateness of the questionnaire items. A pilot test was conducted involving 34 ECE teachers who were not part of the main study sample to empirically establish the instrument's validity and reliability. The quantitative item analysis was performed using SPSS software. The construct validity was confirmed through Pearson product-moment correlation analysis, which revealed that all items were valid with r -count values ranging from 0.39 to 0.76, exceeding the r -table threshold of 0.34 (at a 5% significance level). Furthermore, the instrument demonstrated strong internal consistency, as evidenced by a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.85,

well above the acceptable threshold of 0.70. The indicators of the research instrument are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Indicators of Research Instrument

Category	Indicator	Item Type
Understanding of Meaningful Literacy	Understanding that early childhood literacy is not limited to reading and writing letters	Closed-ended
	Understanding the concept of meaningful literacy related to meaning, symbols, images, language, and children's experiences	Closed-ended
	Understanding that play can be used to develop early childhood literacy	Closed-ended
	Teachers' perceptions of early childhood literacy as reading, writing, and arithmetic (calistung)	Open-ended
Meaningful Literacy Teaching Practices	Use of stories, games, songs, and visual media in literacy instruction	Closed-ended
	Connecting literacy activities to children's real-life experiences	Closed-ended
	Providing opportunities for children to speak, ask questions, and engage in discussions	Closed-ended
	Involving children in play, drawing, role-playing, and picture-reading activities	Closed-ended
	Using child observation results to improve instruction	Closed-ended
	Types of literacy activities implemented in the classroom	Open-ended
	Use of concrete materials in literacy instruction	Open-ended
	Integration of the local context of Bandung Regency into literacy instruction	Open-ended
Professional Development Needs	Need for training on the implementation of meaningful literacy	Closed-ended
	Need for practical literacy teaching models	Closed-ended
	Need for training on the use of simple digital media	Closed-ended
	Difficulties encountered by teachers in implementing meaningful literacy instruction	Closed-ended
	Types of professional training needed by teachers	Open-ended
	Preferred training models for early childhood teachers in Bandung Regency	Open-ended
Institutional Support and Challenges	Institutional support for teachers' professional development training	Closed-ended
	School principals' support for teachers' professional development	Closed-ended
	The role of KKG, HIMPAUDI, and IGRA in supporting teacher competency development	Closed-ended
	Barriers related to time, cost, and access to training	Closed-ended
	Challenges in implementing meaningful literacy instruction	Open-ended
	Support needed from institutions, government, and professional organizations	Open-ended

Data were collected through questionnaire distribution to participating teachers. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents before completing the questionnaire. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that all responses would remain confidential and be used solely for research purposes. Quantitative data obtained from the closed-ended questionnaire items were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, to summarize teachers' responses across the four dimensions of the study.

Qualitative data derived from the open-ended questionnaire responses were analyzed using the thematic analysis procedure proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006). The analysis involved six stages: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generation of initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the final report. Through this process, four major themes were identified: teachers' understanding of meaningful literacy, meaningful literacy teaching practices, professional development needs, and institutional support and implementation challenges.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the qualitative findings, the coding and theme-development processes were conducted iteratively through repeated review of the data. The researchers continuously compared codes, themes, and original participant responses to ensure consistency and accurate representation of participants' perspectives. This iterative process helped

strengthen the credibility and dependability of the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006b, 2006a; Byrnes, 2008). Figure 1 presents the overall research procedure, which consisted of six stages: literature review, instrument development, data collection, quantitative and qualitative data analysis, identification of teachers' professional development needs, and formulation of recommendations for professional development programs.

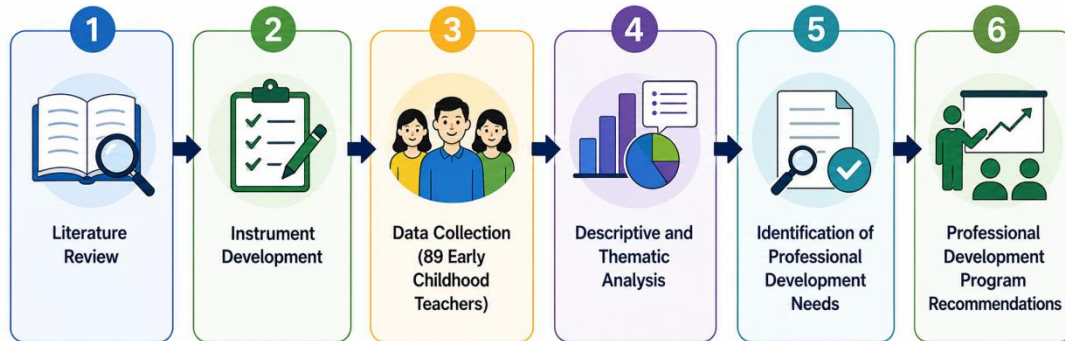


Figure 1. Research Procedure

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile

This study involved 89 Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers from various early childhood education institutions in Bandung Regency. The respondents' characteristics were analyzed based on their educational background, teaching experience, and participation in early childhood literacy training, as these factors may influence teachers' understanding and implementation of literacy instruction practices. Table 2 below shows report of teachers' characteristic respondents.

Table 2. Characteristics of early childhood Teacher Respondents in Bandung Regency

Respondent Characteristics	Category	Frequency (n=89)	Percentage (%)
Educational Background	Senior High School / Vocational High School	43	48.3
	Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education (ECE)	26	29.2
	Bachelor's Degree in Non-ECE Field	14	15.7
	Master's Degree	4	4.5
	Diploma (D1/D2)	2	2.3
Teaching Experience	Less than 1 Year	3	3.4
	1–5 Years	22	24.7
	6–10 Years	17	19.1
	More than 10 Years	47	52.8
Experience in Literacy Training	Have Participated in Literacy Training	45	50.6
	Have Never Participated in Literacy Training	44	49.4

The respondents were predominantly ECE teachers with educational backgrounds from Senior High Schools/Vocational High Schools (48.3%) and Bachelor's Degrees in Early Childhood Education (29.2%). While a substantial proportion held undergraduate qualifications, nearly half had only completed secondary education. This finding presents significant theoretical and practical implications for early literacy implementation. Theoretically, foundational pedagogical content knowledge which is crucial for understanding the complex cognitive and linguistic processes in early childhood literacy is typically acquired through formal higher education (Neuman et al., 2018; Piasta et al., 2020). Without this theoretical grounding, teachers often default to mechanical, rote-learning methods, such as calistung, rather than adopting developmentally appropriate meaning-making practices (Cabell & Hwang, 2020; Saracho, 2023). Practically, this low educational qualification

restricts teachers' capacity to design stimulating literacy environments, critically select instructional media, and adapt to diverse children's needs, underscoring an urgent demand for intensive, foundational professional development to bridge this competency gap (Ewo et al., 2023).

More than half of the respondents (52.8%) had over ten years of teaching experience. However, teaching experience alone does not guarantee professional growth, especially when initial educational qualifications are inadequate (Sheridan et al., 2022). Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that without targeted interventions, veteran teachers may inadvertently perpetuate outdated instructional habits rather than embracing contemporary, child-centered literacy approaches (Phillips et al., 2021; Asrifan et al., 2025). Continuous training and reflective practice remain essential for helping teachers adapt to evolving pedagogical approaches and technological developments (Widjayatri et al., 2025). Only 50.6% of the respondents had participated in literacy-related training, indicating unequal access to professional development opportunities. Previous research suggests that ongoing training and mentoring can significantly enhance teachers' ability to design developmentally appropriate learning experiences for young children (Aziz et al., 2022). Overall, the respondents' profiles demonstrate variations in educational qualifications, teaching experience, and literacy training participation, all of which may influence literacy teaching practices. These findings underscore the importance of identifying teachers' professional development needs to ensure that future programs are aligned with their characteristics, teaching contexts, and professional demands.

Teachers' Understanding of Meaningful Literacy

The results of the closed-ended questionnaire indicate that most teachers demonstrated a positive understanding of the concept of early childhood literacy. The majority of respondents agreed that literacy in Early Childhood Education (ECE) is not limited to the ability to read and write letters but also encompasses children's ability to understand language, symbols, images, stories, and everyday experiences. The complete results of the questionnaire are presented in Figure 2.

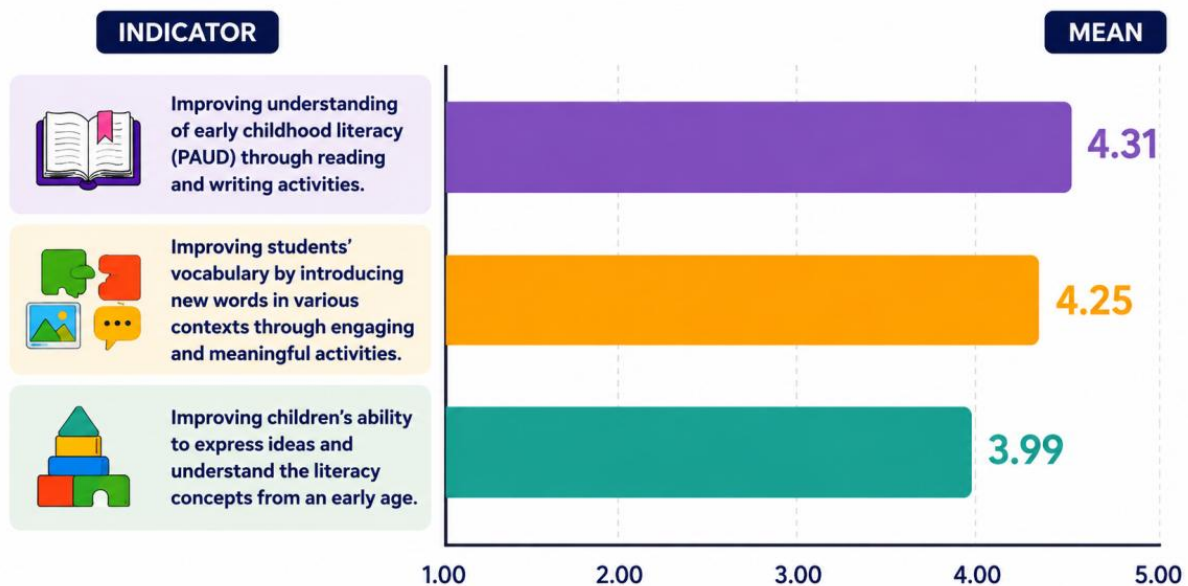


Figure 2. Result of teachers' Questionnaires on Understanding the Meaningful Literacy

The findings indicate that most teachers understand early childhood literacy as the ability to construct meaning through various forms of communication, including listening, speaking, storytelling, and interaction with the environment. This reflects a holistic and multimodal view of literacy that encompasses verbal and nonverbal communication, meaningful experiences, and self-expression. However, some teachers still associate literacy primarily with reading, writing, and numeracy, reflecting persistent societal and parental expectations that link literacy to school readiness. The coexistence of holistic and skills-based views of literacy may reflect the transitional

nature of early childhood education in Indonesia. While teachers have been exposed to contemporary literacy perspectives through teacher education programs, professional training, and curriculum reforms, parental expectations and school-readiness demands continue to emphasize early reading, writing, and numeracy skills. As a result, teachers often negotiate between developmentally appropriate literacy practices and external academic pressures, which may explain why some continue to prioritize technical literacy skills despite endorsing broader literacy concepts.

Previous studies suggest that early literacy develops naturally through social interaction, shared reading, and conversations at home (Kusumawardhani et al., 2025). Likewise, parental involvement in creating literacy-rich environments through shared reading and discussion plays a crucial role in literacy development (Inten et al., 2023). These findings reinforce the view that literacy should be understood as a process of meaning-making rather than the acquisition of isolated academic skills. The findings highlight the need for professional development that strengthens not only teachers' instructional skills but also their conceptual understanding of meaningful literacy. Teachers require a strong pedagogical foundation to balance academic expectations with holistic literacy practices. Furthermore, many ECE teachers continue to experience difficulties in selecting appropriate materials and engaging instructional strategies (Inten et al., 2025). Therefore, ongoing professional development is needed to support the design of interactive, story-based, and meaningful literacy experiences.

Meaningful Literacy Teaching Practices

The findings indicate that the majority of teachers have successfully implemented instructional practices aligned with the principles of meaningful literacy. Based on the questionnaire results, most respondents reported using storytelling as a tool to develop children's language skills, involving them in discussions after storytelling activities, and providing opportunities for questioning and answering during learning activities. The use of various media, such as games, songs, pictures, and concrete objects, was also reported as an effective method for literacy development. These teachers emphasized the importance of connecting literacy activities to children's real-life experiences, including aspects of daily life, the surrounding environment, local culture, and family contexts. These findings suggest that literacy instruction extends beyond the introduction of letters and words to the creation of meaningful and contextualized learning experiences for children. Figure 3 presents the results of the teacher questionnaire regarding meaningful literacy teaching practices.

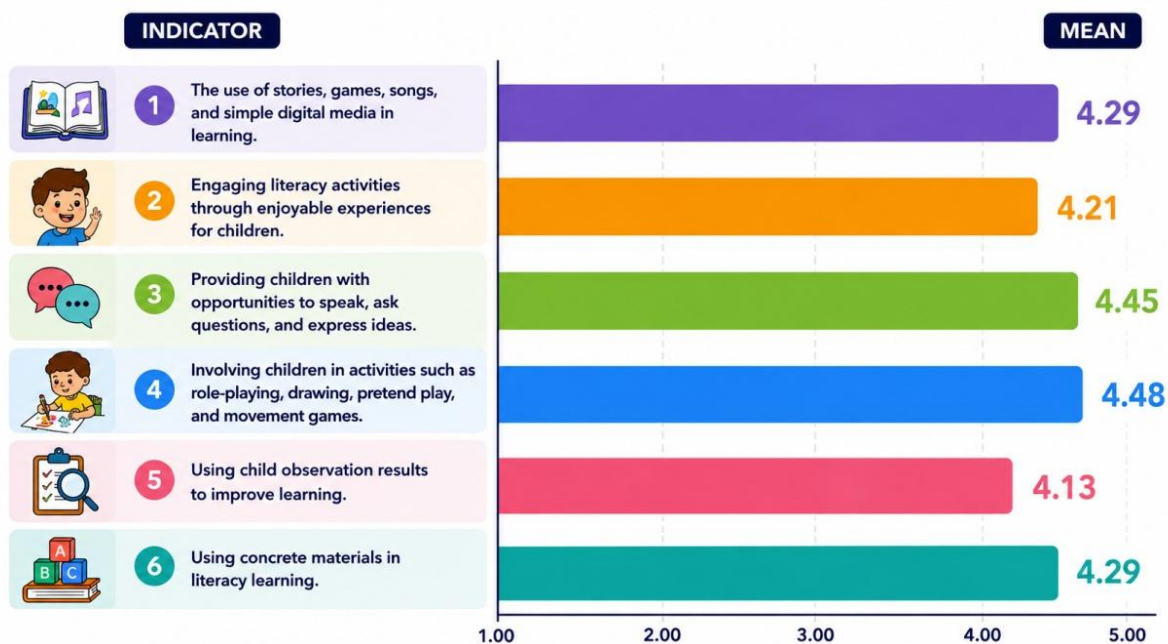


Figure 3. Data From the Questionnaire on Meaningful Literacy Learning Practices

The open-ended questionnaire findings revealed that teachers implemented a variety of literacy activities, including storytelling, singing, role-playing, picture reading, drawing, question-and-answer sessions, and educational games. Various instructional media, such as storybooks, pictures, puppets, letter cards, songs, and concrete objects, were also used to support learning. Storytelling and picture reading emerged as the most common literacy practices. Together with role-playing, singing, drawing, and educational games, these activities support oral language development, vocabulary growth, meaning-making, and emergent literacy skills. Overall, these practices reflect the principles of meaningful literacy, where learning is constructed through interaction, authentic experiences, and children's active participation rather than isolated instruction in letter or symbol recognition.

The prominence of storytelling and play-based activities may be explained by their alignment with the developmental characteristics of young children. Unlike formal literacy instruction, storytelling and play create natural opportunities for children to use language, express ideas, negotiate meaning, and engage in social interaction. These activities are also relatively accessible and easy to implement because they require fewer specialized resources than technology-based literacy programs. Consequently, teachers may view storytelling and play as practical approaches for integrating literacy learning with children's developmental needs. These findings are consistent with Inten et al. (2026), who reported that ECE teachers frequently employ play-based literacy practices, including interactive storytelling, discussion, role-playing, the use of concrete materials, and creative post-reading activities. Such practices help children comprehend stories, connect texts with everyday experiences, improve retelling abilities, and understand moral messages. The study further emphasized that play serves as a primary context for developing meaningful literacy understanding. Similarly, Rizqi et al. (2024) found that play-based approaches effectively support early literacy development by enabling children to use language naturally within meaningful contexts.

The active involvement of children in questioning, discussion, and experience-sharing also demonstrates teachers' efforts to implement child-centered learning and connect literacy activities with children's daily lives and local cultural contexts. However, many teachers still reported pressure to teach early reading, writing, and numeracy skills, which may limit opportunities for more holistic literacy experiences. This finding suggests that while teachers generally understand and implement meaningful literacy practices, external academic expectations continue to influence classroom instruction. Therefore, strengthening teachers' pedagogical competencies through sustained professional development remains essential for supporting the effective implementation of meaningful literacy instruction.

Teachers' Professional Development Needs

According to the results of the closed-ended questionnaire, the majority of respondents, namely teachers, expressed the need for professional training related to early childhood literacy, including practical guidelines, play-based learning models, and the use of instructional and simple digital media. Although teachers generally demonstrated an understanding of meaningful literacy concepts, support for classroom implementation remains necessary. In addition, they emphasized the importance of strengthening their ability to design enjoyable literacy activities, engage in reflective teaching practices, and utilize observations of children's development to improve future learning activities. These findings indicate that teachers' professional development should encompass not only content knowledge but also pedagogical and reflective competencies to support higher-quality instructional practices. The detailed results of the teacher questionnaire are presented in Figure 4.

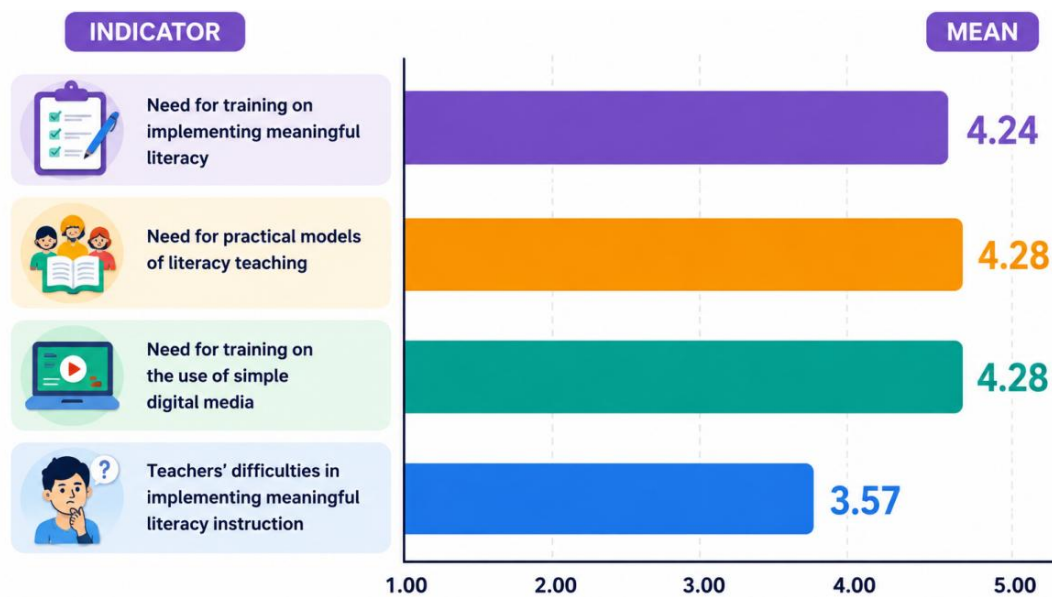


Figure 4. Data From the Professional Development Needs Questionnaire

The open-ended questionnaire findings revealed that teachers need professional development that is practical, applicable, and closely aligned with classroom realities. Six key areas of need were identified: (1) meaningful literacy concepts, (2) play-based learning strategies, (3) instructional media development, (4) digital media integration, (5) mentoring for teaching practice, and (6) professional learning communities. Although teachers generally understand literacy as a process of meaning-making, many still require concrete strategies to translate this understanding into classroom practice. Teachers' preference for practice-oriented professional development may reflect the limitations of conventional training programs, which often emphasize theoretical knowledge without providing sufficient opportunities for classroom application. Teachers appear to value learning experiences that directly address the challenges they encounter in daily teaching. This finding suggests that one of the major challenges in ECE professional development is bridging the gap between conceptual understanding and classroom implementation.

These findings are consistent with previous studies showing that professional development is most effective when it is relevant to teachers' needs and emphasizes demonstration, hands-on practice, reflection, and collaboration. Teachers' demand for play-based learning strategies reflects the need for pedagogical competencies that support the creation of developmentally appropriate and literacy-rich learning environments (Nurpatimah & Saputra, 2022). Likewise, the strong interest in instructional and digital media development indicates teachers' awareness of the importance of engaging learning resources and educational technology in enriching children's literacy experiences (Khotimah & Reza, 2022; Rina et al., 2025).

The findings also highlight the importance of mentoring and professional learning communities, suggesting that teacher learning is a continuous and collaborative process rather than a one-time event. Teachers often develop professional expertise through reflection, peer support, and the sharing of classroom experiences. Therefore, effective professional development should integrate training, classroom practice, mentoring, and collaborative learning to provide sustained support for implementing meaningful literacy instruction. Overall, the findings indicate that teachers prefer practical, contextualized, and sustainable professional development models that directly support classroom practice.

Institutional Support and Implementation Challenges

The results of the closed-ended questionnaire indicate that most teachers perceived that they received support from school principals and educational institutions in developing their professional competencies. Teachers also reported that professional organizations, such as KKG, HIMPAUDI, and IGRA, have contributed to their professional growth through training programs, seminars, and

experience-sharing forums. Nevertheless, the findings also revealed several challenges that teachers continue to face in implementing meaningful literacy instruction. Most respondents acknowledged limitations related to time, funding, and access to professional development opportunities. In addition, inadequate instructional media and supporting facilities were identified as common obstacles encountered in daily teaching practice. Figure 5 presents the questionnaire results concerning institutional support and the challenges experienced by teachers.

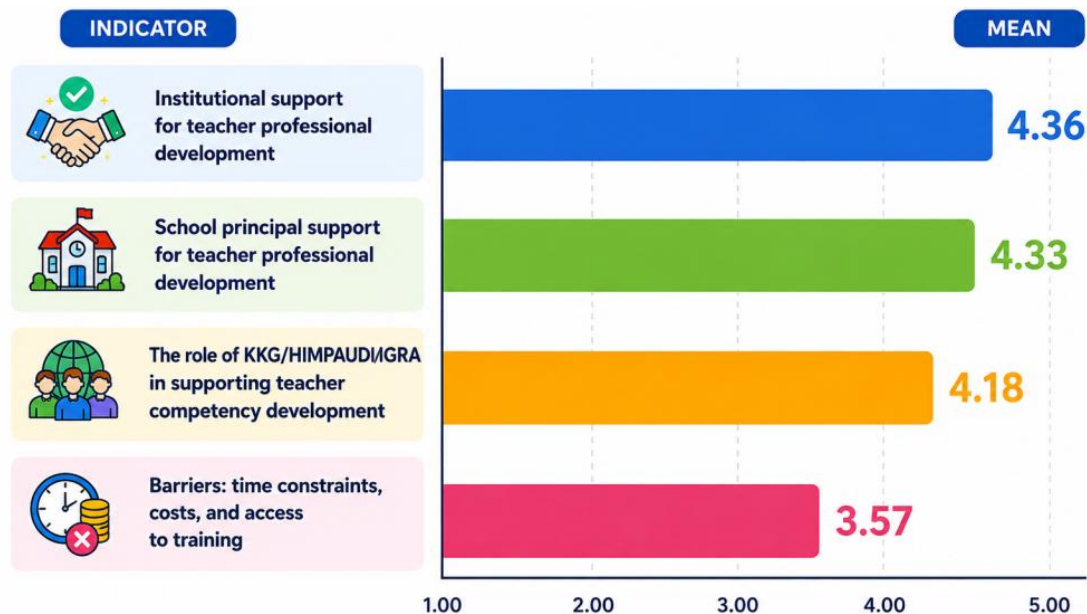


Figure 5. Questionnaire Data on Institutional Support and Implementation Challenges

The open-ended questionnaire findings identified several factors that support and hinder the implementation of meaningful literacy in early childhood education. Major challenges included limited instructional media, restricted access to professional training, inadequate funding, diverse student abilities, and parental expectations that children quickly acquire reading and writing skills. To address these challenges, teachers emphasized the need for regular training, improved learning resources, financial support, mentoring, and broader access to professional development opportunities.

These constraints may have a cumulative effect on teachers' ability to implement meaningful literacy practices. Limited resources reduce opportunities to create literacy-rich learning environments, while restricted access to professional development limits teachers' exposure to innovative instructional approaches. Consequently, even teachers who possess a strong understanding of meaningful literacy may struggle to translate their knowledge into classroom practice. This finding suggests that improving teacher competence alone is insufficient unless it is accompanied by adequate institutional support.

This finding is consistent with previous studies emphasizing that meaningful literacy implementation depends not only on teacher competence but also on supportive institutional conditions (Fabry, 2024). Support from school leaders, professional development opportunities, and professional organizations can enhance teachers' competencies and encourage more creative and child-centered instructional practices (Wang & Zhang, 2025). Conversely, inadequate learning resources may limit children's opportunities to engage with diverse literacy experiences, despite evidence that literacy development is strongly influenced by literacy-rich environments, social interaction, and supportive emotional climates (Inten, 2017).

Another significant challenge is the persistent societal and parental emphasis on early reading, writing, and numeracy skills. Although most teachers demonstrated an understanding of literacy as a holistic process of meaning-making, communication, and social interaction, they continue to face expectations that prioritize measurable academic outcomes. This pressure may stem from the widespread belief that children's readiness for primary school is best reflected in their ability to read,

write, and perform basic arithmetic before entering formal education. Consequently, literacy is often viewed as the mastery of technical skills rather than as a broader developmental process. As a result, teachers frequently experience tension between implementing developmentally appropriate, child-centered literacy practices and responding to parental demands for immediate academic achievement. This tension may influence teachers' instructional decisions, leading them to allocate more time to skill-based activities at the expense of richer literacy experiences such as storytelling, discussion, play, and meaning-making activities.

At the same time, the findings highlight the important role of parents as partners in literacy development. Home support, communication with teachers, and appropriate literacy stimulation contribute significantly to children's learning outcomes (Ambarwati et al., 2025). Likewise, parents' participation in storytelling, discussions, the provision of learning materials and ongoing collaboration with teachers can strengthen meaningful literacy teaching (Khambali et al., 2022). These findings suggest that parents can function both as a source of pressure and as valuable partners in literacy development, depending on their understanding of early childhood literacy. Therefore, strengthening parents' awareness of developmentally appropriate literacy practices is as important as improving teachers' competencies.

Overall, the successful implementation of meaningful literacy is shaped by the interaction among teacher competence, institutional support, parental involvement, and resource availability. Improving literacy instruction therefore requires a comprehensive approach that combines professional development, adequate learning resources, supportive educational policies, and greater public understanding of early childhood literacy. Such efforts can help bridge the gap between contemporary literacy perspectives and societal expectations, enabling teachers to implement meaningful literacy practices more consistently and effectively.

Implications for Early Childhood Teacher Professional Development in the Implementation of Meaningful Literacy

The findings suggest that professional development for early childhood education teachers should move beyond one-way training toward participatory, contextualized, and sustainable models. Although teachers generally understand the concept of meaningful literacy, many continue to face challenges in translating this understanding into classroom practice. Therefore, professional development should focus not only on strengthening teachers' knowledge but also on supporting the implementation of meaningful literacy in authentic teaching contexts.

An important implication of this study is that professional development should be conceived as a continuous process rather than a series of isolated training events. Sustainable improvement in instructional practice requires ongoing opportunities for mentoring, coaching, peer observation, reflective dialogue, and collaborative learning. Such approaches acknowledge that teacher learning is inherently social and develops through interaction, shared experiences, and professional reflection. Consequently, professional development programs should provide long-term support that enables teachers to experiment with, evaluate, and refine their literacy practices over time.

The findings also highlight the importance of integrating local contexts into literacy learning. Teachers identified Sundanese folktales, *kaulinan barudak* (traditional children's games), natural environments, traditional markets, agriculture, local foods, and community life as meaningful learning resources. This supports the view that literacy learning becomes more meaningful when it is connected to children's everyday experiences. Authentic contexts encourage communication, social interaction, and conceptual understanding (Mawson & Vann, 2015), while concept-based learning helps children connect new knowledge with lived experiences (Birbili & Vann, 2015).

Based on these findings, a professional development model for meaningful literacy should integrate conceptual understanding, classroom practice, collaborative professional learning, and the use of local contexts as literacy resources. This approach aligns with Harrison's (1996) perspective that literacy learning should promote language development, comprehension, meaningful experiences, and engagement with children's social environments. Consequently, professional development should not only enhance teacher competence but also support the sustained implementation of developmentally appropriate and meaningful literacy practices in early childhood education settings.

Conceptual Model of Professional Development for Early Childhood Teachers in Meaningful Literacy

Based on the findings of this study, the recommended professional development model consists of five interconnected components, as illustrated in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Components of the Professional Development Model

The model illustrates that professional development should begin with strengthening teachers' conceptual understanding, followed by practice-based training, classroom implementation, ongoing mentoring, and the establishment of professional learning communities as mechanisms for continuous reflection and competency development. These interconnected components create a sustainable professional learning cycle that supports teachers in effectively implementing meaningful literacy practices in early childhood education settings.

Limitations of the Study

This study acknowledges several limitations. The research data relied completely on self-administered questionnaires filled out by teachers, meaning the analyzed information stems entirely from self-reported accounts. Furthermore, no direct classroom observations were conducted. This condition prevented the researchers from witnessing the actual teaching processes taking place in the classroom. Lastly, the geographical scope was restricted solely to Bandung Regency, which means the observed characteristics and findings are highly specific to this particular regional context.

Recommendations

Local governments need to allocate funding for inclusive, practice-based training programs, particularly for ECE teachers without a bachelor's degree. ECE centers and principals must prioritize routine internal mentoring and optimize learning communities to foster sustainable peer-to-peer learning. Future researchers are advised to employ classroom observation methods and longitudinal research designs to measure the long-term impact of training interventions on teaching practices and children's literacy outcomes.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined the professional development needs of early childhood education (ECE) teachers in implementing meaningful literacy instruction in Bandung Regency. The findings indicate that most teachers demonstrate a sound understanding of meaningful literacy as a holistic process involving communication, meaning-making, and children's everyday experiences. This understanding has been reflected in various child-centered literacy practices, including storytelling, singing, role-playing, picture reading, discussions, and the use of authentic learning experiences. Despite these

positive practices, teachers continue to face several challenges in implementing meaningful literacy instruction. These challenges include limited instructional resources, unequal access to professional development opportunities, inadequate funding, and persistent parental and societal expectations that prioritize early reading, writing, and numeracy skills as indicators of school readiness. Such conditions create tension between developmentally appropriate literacy practices and external academic demands. The study further reveals that teachers require professional development that is practical, contextualized, and sustainable. Priority areas include strengthening conceptual understanding of meaningful literacy, enhancing play-based instructional strategies, developing instructional and digital media, and receiving ongoing professional support through mentoring and collaborative learning opportunities. The findings also highlight the importance of institutional support and family involvement in creating conditions that enable meaningful literacy practices to be implemented effectively. Based on these findings, professional development programs should extend beyond conventional training and incorporate practice-based learning, mentoring, professional learning communities, and the use of local contexts as literacy resources. Such approaches can better support teachers in translating meaningful literacy concepts into classroom practice and sustaining developmentally appropriate literacy instruction in early childhood education settings. Future research should empirically evaluate the long-term impacts of these localized, practice-based mentoring models on teachers' instructional quality and children's emergent literacy outcomes across broader geographic and socioeconomic contexts.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to express sincere gratitude and highest appreciation to all Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers in Bandung Regency who participated in this study. Through the experiences, perspectives, and reflections they shared, these teachers made a valuable contribution to identifying teachers' professional development needs in the implementation of meaningful literacy instruction in early childhood education settings. The author also deeply appreciates the dedication of ECE teachers who continuously strive to provide meaningful learning experiences for young children. As the frontline practitioners of education, their role is fundamental in fostering children's literacy development, character formation, and learning readiness as future generations of the nation. It is hoped that the findings of this study will contribute to the enhancement of teachers' professional competencies and support the improvement of literacy instruction in early childhood education institutions.

6. REFERENCES

- Amalia, W. O. S., & Nurlina, N. (2024). Strategi Guru untuk Meningkatkan Perkembangan Bahasa Anak Usia Dini melalui Aktivitas Bermain. *ULIL ALBAB: Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin*, 3(10), 244–251. <https://doi.org/10.56799/jim.v3i10.5278>
- Ambarwati, R., Sri Wulan, & Elindra Yetti. (2025). Parental Involvement in Qur'anic Education for Early Childhood. *PAUDIA: Jurnal Penelitian Dalam Bidang Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 14(1), 116–128. <https://doi.org/10.26877/paudia.v14i1.1203>
- Asrifan, A., Tayibu, K. N., Muhayyag, M., Ingilan, S. S., & Mahfud, A. (2025). Traditional Learners vs. Non-Traditional Learners. In *Mitigating Learner Disadvantages in Teaching and Learning* (pp. 59–90). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-8623-1.ch003>
- Aziz, H., Inten, D. N., Mulyani, D., & Permatasari, A. N. (2022). Pendampingan Penyusunan Perencanaan Pembelajaran Berbasis Mitigasi Bencana di Lembaga PAUD Kabupaten Bandung. *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai*, 6(1), 7955–7960. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31004/jptam.v6i1.3653>
- Birbili, M., & Vann, K. (2015). The Shift from Factual Teaching to Conceptual Understanding in Early Childhood Education: Challenges in Lesson Planning. In *Early Childhood Education: Teachers' Perspectives, Effective Programs and Impacts on Cognitive Development* (pp. 67–91). Nova Science Publishers.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006a). Qualitative Research in Psychology Using thematic analysis in psychology Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006b). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>
- Byrnes, H. (2008). Sociocultural Theory and the Genesis of Second Language Development. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 30(3), 394–396. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0272263108080546>

- Cabell, S. Q., & Hwang, H. (2020). Building Content Knowledge to Boost Comprehension in the Primary Grades. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 55(S1), S99–S107. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.338>
- Cadime, I., Alves, D., Mendes, S., Pinto, P., & Cruz, J. (2025). Teachers' Beliefs and Practices to Support Emergent Literacy Development in Preschool Education: The Moderating Role of Continuous Training. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 57(1). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-024-00393-2>
- Chaitow, L., McCabe, P., Munro, N., & Purcell, A. (2023). Language and early literacy professional development: A complex intervention for early childhood educators and speech-language pathologists. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 25(5). <https://doi.org/10.1080/17549507.2022.2115136>
- Creswell, J. W. (1977). Educational Research Planning, Conducting And Evaluating Quantitative And Qualitative Research. In *University of Nebraska-Lincoln*.
- Damayanti, R. R., Sumantri, M. S., Dhieni, N., & Karnadi. (2022). Guru sebagai agent of change dalam pendidikan anak. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 6(2), 960–976. <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v6i2.1602>
- Ewo, M. A., Formen, A., & Aeni, K. (2023). Kompetensi Pedagogik Pendidik PAUD Ditinjau dari Kualifikasi Akademik dalam Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran. *Jurnal Obsesi : Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 7(2), 2413–2427. <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v7i2.4266>
- Fabry, A. (2024). Leading the early years of school: A relational and responsive model of early childhood pedagogical leadership. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 49(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/18369391241274803>
- Harrison, C. (1996). *The Teaching of Reading: What Teachers Need to Know*. United Kingdom Reading Association.
- Hidayah, H., Sutarto, J., & Aeni, K. (2023). Pembelajaran Literasi Numerasi Anak Usia Dini Berbasis Kemitraan Keluarga di PAUD. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 7(4), 4431–4440. <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v7i4.4692>
- Inten, D. N. (2017). Peran Keluarga dalam Menanamkan Literasi Dini pada Anak. *Golden Age: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.29313/ga.v1i1.2689>
- Inten, D. N., Aziz, H., & Mulyani, D. (2025). Pendampingan guru PAUD mengajarkan literasi melalui model Candaria di Kecamatan Pangalengan, Kabupaten Bandung. *KOMUNITA: Jurnal Pengabdian Dan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat*, 4(2), 253–265. <https://doi.org/10.60004/komunita.v4i2.161>
- Inten, D. N., Mulyani, D., & Aziz, H. (2023). Strategi Ibu dalam Menumbuhkan Literasi pada Anak Usia 5-6 Tahun. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 7(3), 2999–3012. <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v7i3.4498>
- Inten, D. N., Nurani, Y., & Wulan, S. (2026). Persepsi Guru PAUD tentang Bermain Berbasis Deep Learning dalam Pembelajaran Literasi Dini. 7(1), 507–520. <https://doi.org/10.37985/murhum.v7i1.1906>
- Khambali, K., Inten, D. N., Mulyani, D., Lichandra, F., & Tiwi, D. (2022). Peran Orang Tua terhadap Pembelajaran Mitigasi Bencana Bagi Anak Usia Dini di Masa Covid-19. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 6(3), 1881–1896. <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v6i3.1881>
- Khotimah, N., & Reza, M. (2022). Digital Literacy to Improve Pedagogical and Professional Competence of Early Childhood Teacher. *JINOTEP (Jurnal Inovasi Dan Teknologi Pembelajaran): Kajian Dan Riset Dalam Teknologi Pembelajaran*, 9(2), 117. <https://doi.org/10.17977/um031v9i22022p117>
- Kusumawardhani, T., Dhieni, N., & Yetti, E. (2025). Pengaruh Literasi Rumah terhadap Kemampuan Membaca Permulaan Anak Prasekolah. *PAUDIA: Jurnal Penelitian Dalam Bidang Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 14(1), 13–23. <https://journal2.upgris.ac.id/index.php/paudia/article/download/1119/490>
- Mawson, B., & Vann, K. (2015). Teaching and Learning in Natural Environments. In *Early Childhood Education: Teachers' Perspectives, Effective Programs and Impacts on Cognitive Development* (pp. 37–66). Nova Science Publishers.
- Morrow, L. M. (2020). *Literacy development in the early years: Helping children read and write* (9th ed.). Pearson Education, Inc. <https://studentebookhub.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/preview/9780134898230.pdf>
- Nafiah, Q. N., & Maemonah, M. (2021). Analisis Pembiasaan Berbahasa Terhadap Perkembangan Bahasa Anak Usia Dini. *PAUDIA: Jurnal Penelitian Dalam Bidang Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 10(2), 278–288. <https://doi.org/10.26877/paudia.v10i2.9000>
- Neuman, S. B., Kaefer, T., & Pinkham, A. M. (2018). A double dose of disadvantage: Language experiences for low-income children in home and school. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 110(1), 102–118. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000201>
- Nurpatimah, A., & Saputra, A. (2022). Pengembangan Profesi Guru Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini (Paud). *Jurnal PAUD Emas Volume*, 1(2), 8–12. <https://online-journal.unja.ac.id/jpe/article/view/18874/13528>
- Phillips, B. M., Kim, Y.-S. G., Lonigan, C. J., Connor, C. M., Clancy, J., & Al Otaiba, S. (2021). Supporting language and literacy development with intensive small-group interventions: An early childhood efficacy study. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 57, 75–88. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2021.05.004>
- Piasta, S. B., Park, S., Farley, K. S., Justice, L. M., & O'Connell, A. A. (2020). Early childhood educators' knowledge

- about language and literacy: Associations with practice and children's learning. *Dyslexia*, 26(2), 137–152. <https://doi.org/10.1002/dys.1612>
- Rachman, A. U., Amilia, F., & Endang Jatmikowati, T. (2024). Peran Guru dan Orang Tua dalam Perkembangan Bahasa Anak Usia Dini. *Early Childhood: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 8(2), 18–40. <https://doi.org/10.35568/earlychildhood.v8i2.5571>
- Rina, N., Nugroho, C., Wulandari, A., Sugandi, M. S., & Anggraini, C. N. (2025). Integrating Digital Media in Early Childhood Literacy: An Educational Communication Approach from Bandung, Indonesia. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*, 7(7), 670–685. <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i7.9851>
- Rizqi, B., Enenti, D. K. V., Munawaroh, H., & Azharin, B. P. (2024). Stimulasi Perkembangan Bahasa Pada Anak Usia Dini Melalui Tebak Kata. *Journal Fascho : Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.63353/journalfascho.v5i1.225>
- Roostin, E., Syarif Sumantri, M., & Dhieni, N. (2022). Analisis Kompetensi Pedagogik Pendidik PAUD dalam Pengembangan Pembelajaran. *Eduprof: Islamic Education Journal*, 4(2), 159–186. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.47453/eduprof.v4i2.163>
- Saracho, O. N. (2023). Theories of Child Development and Their Impact on Early Childhood Education and Care. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 51(1), 15–30. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-021-01271-5>
- Wang, M., & Zhang, L. (2025). Teacher leadership in professional learning communities in early childhood education: A Chinese perspective. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, 53(5). <https://doi.org/10.1177/17411432241240604>
- Wickens, A. (2025). Effective Teacher Professional Development Program Design. In *Bringing Teachers to the History Museum* (pp. 79–92). Learning Policy Institute. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9798216409120.ch-7>
- Widjayatri, R. D., Sumantri, M. S., Dhieni, N., & Wulan, S. (2025). Pengembangan Digitalisasi Augmented Reality (AR) Guru PAUD di Indonesia: Narrative Literature Review. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 9(5), 2016–2029.
- Yelland, N., Peters, L., Fairchild, N., Tesar, M., & Pérez, M. (2021). *The SAGE Handbook of Global Childhoods*. SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529757194>