

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FINGER PAINTING TECHNIQUE FOR A CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (SLOW LEARNER) IN CULTURAL ARTS LEARNING IN GRADE III OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

Slow learners have below-average learning ability and commonly experience difficulties in fine motor skills and creativity, requiring learning approaches that are concrete, gradual, and multisensory. This study aims to describe the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the finger painting technique in improving the creativity and fine motor skills of a special-needs student categorized as a slow learner in Cultural Arts learning in Grade III of SDN 002 Sangkulirang. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, with a slow-learner student (initials ADM) as the research subject, supported by the classroom teacher and the student's parent as informants. Data were collected through moderate participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, validated through source and technique triangulation, and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The results show that the planning was designed simply and adaptively using concrete media; implementation proceeded gradually across three sessions, from teacher modeling to instruction without examples and finally free creative expression; and evaluation emphasized the individual learning process. The implementation of finger painting was shown to improve confidence, hand-finger coordination, and creativity, indicating its potential as an alternative instructional strategy for Cultural Arts in inclusive elementary schools.

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INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education in Indonesia affirms that every child is entitled to educational services appropriate to their individual abilities and needs. The guidelines for implementing inclusive education issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (2022) affirm that schools must provide flexible and adaptive learning, including for children with special needs. One group of children with special needs frequently found in regular elementary schools is children with slow learning barriers, or slow learners, namely children whose learning ability is below that of their peers and who require learning strategies that are concrete, gradual, and based on direct experience (Suhartono, 2020).

Slow learners require multisensory learning that directly involves various senses, because learning that is purely verbal tends to be difficult for them to understand (Nurfadhillah, 2024). Art activities, particularly painting and finger painting, are a form of multisensory learning that can provide concrete learning experiences. Munandar (2019) explains that creativity is the ability to produce new ideas or works, which can develop when children are allowed to explore and

express themselves freely. In addition, fine motor skills—the ability to coordinate the small muscles of the fingers and hands can be improved through practice that is repeated and sustained (Sumantri, 2020). Finger painting is a relevant activity for training both aspects, as it involves pressing, scratching, and directly controlling the direction of finger movements (Rahmawati, 2019).

A preliminary study at SDN 002 Sangkulirang identified a Grade III slow-learner student with the initials ADM, who had experienced difficulties in writing and drawing activities since Grade I and II. Nevertheless, a painting experience during a night-market activity around the school showed early signs of development in the form of interest and courage to use his hands to create work, although the results were still simple. This condition indicates that concrete art experiences can stimulate the development of slow-learner children, so the finger painting technique is considered to have the potential to be developed systematically in Cultural Arts learning in the classroom.

Several studies have shown the relevance of finger painting for children with special needs. Amelia and Kurniawan (2020) found that finger painting activities increased the creativity of slow-learner children in inclusive elementary schools, while Herlina (2021) reported the positive impact of finger-painting-based art activities on the creativity development of children with special needs. However, studies that specifically describe the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the integrated application of the finger painting technique in Cultural Arts learning in inclusive classrooms remain limited, particularly at the elementary school level in areas with limited facilities and support staff. Therefore, this study aims to describe the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the application of the finger painting technique in improving the creativity and fine motor skills of a special-needs child categorized as a slow learner in Cultural Arts learning in Grade III of SDN 002 Sangkulirang.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive qualitative research type, aiming to describe the finger painting learning process in detail and systematically without manipulating the research variables (Moleong, 2019). The research was conducted at SDN 002 Sangkulirang, East Kutai Regency, East Kalimantan, a school that implements inclusive education, for approximately two months, from the pre-research stage to the writing of the report. The research subject was a special-needs student in the slow-learner category from Grade III, with the initials ADM. Other data sources were obtained from the Grade III classroom teacher, who served as an informant regarding the planning and implementation of learning; ADM's parent, who served as an informant regarding the child's development outside of school; and documents in the form of the Lesson Plan (RPP), the child's work, and photographic documentation of the activities.

Data collection techniques included moderate participant observation, semi-structured interviews with the classroom teacher and the parent, and documentation study. Data validity was examined through source triangulation comparing data from the teacher, the parent, and observation results and technique triangulation comparing data obtained from observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification, carried out continuously from before the researcher entered the field until the report was completed.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Planning for the Application of the Finger Painting Technique

The planning for the finger painting learning was prepared by the teacher by considering ADM's characteristics and needs as a slow learner. The lesson was designed simply and flexibly, emphasizing the process rather than the final product, by preparing a teaching module, learning objectives, and concrete media, tools, and materials such as colored paint, drawing paper, and simple sample pictures. The teacher also assigned different tasks to ADM and the regular students, providing simple sample pictures for ADM while giving regular students the freedom to create more complex works.

This finding aligns with Tomlinson's (2017) concept of differentiated instruction, which emphasizes adjusting the content, process, and product of learning based on students' readiness, interests, and profiles. The use of concrete media is also relevant to the concrete operational stage in Piaget's theory of cognitive development, which explains that elementary school-age children more easily understand information through real objects and direct experience than through abstract concepts. Planning that takes individual characteristics into account is also consistent with the principle of special education services put forward by Sunardi (2018), namely that learning for children with special needs must be

adjusted to each child's abilities and needs rather than delivered uniformly. Parental support also played a role in this planning stage, in line with Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological theory of development, which asserts that child development is influenced by interactions across various immediate environments, particularly the family and the school.

Implementation of the Finger Painting Technique

The learning was implemented gradually across three meetings. In the first meeting, the teacher introduced the tools and materials and demonstrated the use of fingers to create simple pictures as a form of scaffolding; at this stage, ADM was still hesitant and highly dependent on the teacher's guidance. In the second meeting, the teacher no longer provided sample pictures and gave only general instructions; ADM began to show the courage to choose his own colors and demonstrated better hand coordination, although he still occasionally required assistance. In the third meeting, ADM was given full freedom to create according to his own imagination and was able to complete a picture more independently, although the results were still simple.

This pattern of gradual development is consistent with Suhartono's (2020) view that slow-learner children more easily understand learning that is concrete and based on direct experience compared to verbal explanation alone, and that they require a gradual reduction in assistance for learning independence to form. Implementation that emphasizes process over final outcome is also in line with Sunardi's (2018) view that the success of learning for children with special needs is not measured solely by academic achievement, but by the child's participation and involvement during the learning process. In addition, the teacher consistently provided variations in finger movement techniques—straight lines, blocking, wavy lines, spirals, and finger rotation arranged from the simplest to the more complex, thereby providing gradual stimulation to the coordination of the small muscles of the hand, as explained by Sumantri (2020).

Evaluation of the Finger Painting Technique Implementation

Evaluation was conducted by the teacher through direct observation of the learning process and its results, paying attention to involvement, courage to try, the ability to follow instructions, and fine motor development, rather than the final product alone. This evaluation approach is consistent with Arikunto's (2021) view that evaluation is a systematic process for determining the success of learning, which for children with special needs needs to take into account the developmental process according to individual ability, as emphasized by Sunardi (2018).

The evaluation results showed an increase in courage, self-confidence, hand-finger movement coordination, and ADM's ability to express ideas through color and shape, consistent with Munandar's (2019) view that creativity develops when a child is given the opportunity to explore and receive appreciation for their efforts. Praise and motivation provided by the teacher during the learning process also served as positive reinforcement, encouraging similar behavior in the future, as explained in Skinner's reinforcement theory. Nevertheless, the evaluation also identified obstacles in the form of ADM's easily declining concentration and the need for more intensive assistance, leading the teacher to see the need for the support of a Special Assistant Teacher (Guru Pendamping Khusus/GPK) so that learning services for slow-learner children can run more optimally.

Research Findings

Overall, this study produced several key findings. First, adaptive planning adjusting objectives, media, and task forms to the child's characteristics—forms an important foundation for learning success. Second, the gradual implementation of finger painting helped the slow-learner child become more independent, moving from being highly dependent on examples and assistance to being able to create based on his own imagination. Third, finger painting develops not only fine motor skills but also the child's creativity and self-confidence. Fourth, the quality of the teacher's guidance through simple instructions, repetition, and positive reinforcement is a determining factor in learning success. Fifth, variations in finger movement techniques arranged from simple to complex provide more systematic motor and creativity stimulation. These findings indicate that finger painting has the potential to become an alternative Cultural Arts learning strategy that is relevant for application in inclusive elementary school classrooms, although the limited availability of support staff and learning facilities still needs attention in its wider application.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that: (1) the planning for the application of the finger painting technique was prepared simply, flexibly, and adaptively, taking into account the characteristics and needs of the slow-learner child; (2) implementation was carried out gradually across three meetings, successfully increasing the child's involvement, courage, and self-confidence in Cultural Arts learning; and (3) process-oriented evaluation showed positive development in the child's creativity and fine motor skills, although this development still occurred gradually and required

ongoing assistance. Teachers are advised to apply the finger painting technique, or a similar multisensory approach, consistently, while schools need to consider providing Special Assistant Teachers and more adequate learning facilities. Future research is recommended to involve more subjects and a longer duration to strengthen the generalizability of the findings.

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