

Narrative Method as a Pedagogical Tool for Developing Storytelling Skills: A Qualitative Study of Fable Writing in Early Childhood Teacher Education Students

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This article examines the effectiveness of the narrative method in developing storytelling skills among students of the Early Childhood Teacher Education (PG PAUD) Study Program at Muhammadiyah University of Sidoarjo. **Method:** This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design, focusing on students' experiences in writing fables. The stages include theme selection, story exploration, reflection, and writing. **Results:** Significant improvements were observed in story structure, plot, characters, and moral messages, as well as in students' confidence and imagination in storytelling. **Novelty:** The study highlights the importance of integrating the narrative method into the education curriculum, equipping future educators with communication skills to face challenges in dynamic educational environments.

INTRODUCTION

Storytelling skills play a vital role in the context of Early Childhood Education (PAUD). Storytelling activities serve not only as a means of entertainment for children but also as a practical learning tool to stimulate their imagination and creativity. Through storytelling, children have the opportunity to delve deeper into story structure while developing their language skills, both spoken and written. This activity also contributes to the development of social skills, where children learn the concepts of sharing, cooperation, and understanding others' perspectives [1], [2]. This principle is also documented in various literature that emphasizes the importance of learning experiences that are not only enjoyable but also engaging for children [1], [3].

Success in developing storytelling skills depends on the educator's skill and creativity as a storyteller. As an early childhood education teacher, this role is highly strategic. Teachers are not merely conveyors of information but also drivers of the learning process, encouraging children to participate actively. Therefore, teachers must create a supportive learning environment where stories can be delivered engagingly [1], [4]. Research shows that teachers skilled in storytelling can increase the appeal of learning, which in turn encourages children to be more motivated to explore various topics [2], [5].

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) Teacher Education students at Muhammadiyah University of Sidoarjo often face challenges in developing pedagogical storytelling skills. Learning contexts that tend to focus on academic techniques and

educational administration often neglect the development of creative and imaginative aspects of storytelling. Numerous studies have noted that PAUD PG students struggle to integrate narrative and reflective elements into the stories they create, which impacts their readiness when entering the world of education [6], [7], [8]. This limitation is a concern, especially when storytelling skills are needed to enhance children's learning experiences [5].

An educational approach that emphasizes narrative methods in the Storytelling Skills course is essential to preparing PG PAUD students to become effective and innovative educators. Through narrative methods, students are invited to explore learning themes in PAUD, then turn them into stories that are close to children's daily lives. This approach is interactive and reflective, creating a more meaningful learning experience, where students not only understand the story structure but also are able to build emotional connections with the audience, in this case, the children [9], [10].

The application of narrative methods in teacher education has proven relevant in fostering the development of storytelling skills. Students not only learn storytelling but are also trained to link literacy to a deeper understanding of concepts and appreciate the diversity of existing narratives [11], [12]. Therefore, structured storytelling activities, approaching themes relevant to children's daily lives, can increase their interest and understanding [13], [14].

In the context of storytelling, fables have long been an ideal choice for engaging children. Fables, which often involve animal characters, provide a meaningful yet straightforward context, enabling children to grasp the moral message without feeling overwhelmed [15], [16]. With relatable characters, fables are not only entertaining but also enable children to internalize important life values, such as honesty and cooperation.

This study will examine two key questions: 1) How is the implementation of the narrative method in teaching fable writing to PG PAUD students? Moreover, 2) How does the narrative method contribute to the development of students' storytelling skills? This study aims to explain the process, experience, and meaning of narrative learning that can improve students' storytelling skills, as well as provide insight into how good storytelling techniques can convey lessons and values to children [17], [18]. By focusing on creating meaning in learning, it is hoped that the results of this study can contribute to the development of teaching methods that are more innovative and relevant to the needs of early childhood education.

RESEARCH METHOD

Literature Review

The ability to tell stories, often referred to as storytelling competence, plays a crucial role in early childhood education (PAUD). This skill not only helps children express themselves but also helps them understand the social and emotional values around them. The concept of storytelling competence encompasses various aspects, including language proficiency and communication skills, as well as the ability to create

engaging and easily understood narratives for young audiences [2], [19]. In the context of PAUD, storytelling not only provides opportunities for children to practice speaking and listening skills but also stimulates their imagination and creativity. By teaching children to retell experiences or stories they hear, we help build their self-confidence and provide a foundation for basic literacy, which is crucial for their development [1], [3], [4].

From a pedagogical perspective, storytelling skills are becoming increasingly crucial for early childhood education (PAUD) teachers. This is because teachers are not only tasked with conveying information but also act as facilitators, creating a safe and engaging learning environment. By developing storytelling skills, teachers can deliver learning materials more engagingly and enjoyably. Various storytelling techniques can be utilized, such as the use of aids, visual media, and interactive elements like puppets or dolls. Thus, teachers who are skilled at storytelling will be able to spark students' interest and create a strong emotional bond between the stories they tell and the children's experiences, thus making the learning values more straightforward to understand [1], [5].

Research shows that the use of innovative storytelling media, such as fables and puppets, can improve storytelling skills, not only among teachers but also among students. Fables, as an effective educational tool, serve not only to convey moral messages but also to train children's listening and storytelling skills. With a simple yet meaningful narrative form, fables allow children to actively engage in the story and reflect on the values raised [6], [7], [8]. In this context, storytelling skills are not only learned as theory, but also internalized and practiced in situations relevant to their lives.

Developing storytelling skills among early childhood education (PAUD) teachers is a strategic step in preparing them as effective educators. Various studies have shown that systematic storytelling training can improve teachers' pedagogical competence, making them better able to inspire children to love literature and share stories [2], [5], [20]. By integrating storytelling skills into the PAUD curriculum, we invest in holistic, creative, and enjoyable learning experiences for children, while building important social and emotional skills for their future lives [1], [9].

Narrative methods in education can be seen as an approach that harnesses the power of stories to educate, stimulate critical thinking, and create immersive learning experiences [10], [21]. This method involves using plot, characters, and concepts in stories to convey information or lessons engagingly and understandably. In teacher education and arts education, narrative methods have great potential to increase student engagement in the learning process. By using stories as a tool, students can connect theory to practice through firsthand experiences relevant to their lives.

In art education, the use of narrative methods can facilitate students' exploration and expression of their ideas more deeply and imaginatively [13], [22]. Narratives provide opportunities for students to reflect on their experiences, making learning more reflective and documenting the development of acquired skills. For example, a student can use narrative methods to recount the journey of creating an artwork, from the

ideation process to its execution. This approach not only strengthens the understanding of art theory concepts but also provides an opportunity for students to develop their identities as reflective artists.

By using storytelling, students not only learn to understand personal experiences but also to recognize, interpret, and discuss those experiences more deeply [14], [15], [16]. Through narrative methods, students are invited to actively participate in building their understanding of the world around them. Research shows that the appropriate application of narrative methods can increase student motivation and interest in learning, bring about transformations in how children understand and absorb lessons, and positively impact their language development, social skills, and imagination [17].

Fables, as a distinctive narrative form, feature animal characters as the main characters, portrayed to convey moral messages and life lessons. Their easy-to-understand and straightforward characteristics make them highly suitable for early childhood education (ECE) contexts. Fables help children more easily understand values such as honesty, cooperation, and responsibility, which are crucial for character development [18].

Fables not only serve as a tool for teaching morals and ethics, but also as an important medium for developing children's language and emotions. Through interaction with fables, children can expand their vocabulary and practice their listening, speaking, and comprehension skills. This improvement in language skills is a result of the way fables are presented, which stimulates the imagination, encouraging children to participate and be actively involved in the learning process. In teaching, teachers can use fables as an introduction to discussions about real-life values, so that children not only listen but also think and discuss the moral messages contained in the stories. Therefore, integrating fables into the early childhood education curriculum is highly recommended, not only to support language learning but also to build character and positive values. With a comprehensive and reflective approach, fables have the potential to have a significant impact on children's social, emotional, and language development, making them a practical and meaningful learning tool.

The conceptual framework of this research focuses on the relationship between narrative methods, the learning process, and the development of storytelling skills in Early Childhood Education (ECE) Teacher Education students. Through narrative techniques, students have the opportunity to become not only listeners but also active participants in the learning process. In this way, students are encouraged to understand the depth of the story being told, facilitating the internalization of the moral and social values contained within the narrative [23]. Students' active involvement in designing and composing their own stories will improve their storytelling competence and provide a more comprehensive understanding of narrative structure, characters, and themes.

The systematic implementation of narrative methods in teaching at PG PAUD is expected to produce a productive learning cycle, where students not only learn theory but also practice and evaluate their storytelling experiences. Previous research has shown

that narrative approaches that encourage students' active engagement have a positive impact on their storytelling skills and pedagogical literacy. Therefore, a conceptual framework that connects narrative methods to the learning process will be an important foundation for developing more effective and enjoyable education for prospective early childhood educators.

Research Methods

This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study or narrative inquiry design. This approach aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the learning process faced by seventh-semester Early Childhood Education (ECE) Teacher Education students. Within this framework, students not only act as subjects of learning but also as creators of narratives. This research focused on the Storytelling Skills course, exploring how students apply narrative methods to explore and convey stories, and evaluating their impact on the development of their storytelling skills [1], [2], [19].

The research subjects consisted of final-year students taking the Storytelling Skills course in the Early Childhood Education (PG PAUD) Study Program. Data were collected using observation techniques of the narrative-based learning process, document analysis (fable scripts written by students), and in-depth interviews, which served to reflect on their experiences during the learning process [3], [4]. Observations focused on how students applied narrative methods in storytelling activities, while document analysis was expected to provide an overview of the quality of the stories produced by the students. Through in-depth interviews, this study will explore students' feelings and experiences related to the learning process they underwent.

Data analysis will be conducted using narrative thematic analysis, an appropriate approach for capturing the meaning of students' experiences in a learning context. This analysis process includes several stages: data reduction, theme categorization, and interpretation of meaning [5], [6]. This technique allows for the extraction of relevant information to address the research questions. This analysis is expected to provide valuable insights into the influence of narrative learning on students' storytelling abilities.

To ensure data validity, this study will utilize data and source triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail. Data triangulation is conducted by comparing various information sources and data collection techniques to ensure that the research results accurately reflect reality [7], [8]. Member checking will be conducted by soliciting feedback from students after the initial analysis to ensure the researcher's interpretations align with their experiences. The audit trail will provide a complete record of the research process, making it easier for other researchers to verify the findings and methods used in this study [9], [20].

Through the approaches and techniques described, this research is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of teaching practices in early childhood education, particularly through the application of a narrative approach.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Result

In this study, we explored the implementation of the narrative method in fable writing among students in the Early Childhood Education Teacher Education Program at Muhammadiyah University of Sidoarjo. This learning process consists of a series of stages, including theme selection, story exploration, reflection, and script writing.

In the first stage, theme selection, students are allowed to choose a story theme they wish to write in a fable script. There are eight theme options relevant to early childhood education: Myself, My Family, My Environment, Animals, Plants, Vehicles, the Universe, and My Country. After students choose a theme, they can begin formulating story ideas based on that theme. Once students have a story idea, they can then determine the most appropriate theme to support their chosen idea.

The next stage, story exploration, is where students explore the characteristics of fables. This is done to help them understand the important components of story structure, such as plot, characters, and moral message. In this phase, students begin writing details about the characters; the location, time, and atmosphere of the story; the narrative flow; and the moral message they intend to convey. Students need to ensure that the characters and storyline they write are appropriate for young children, using vocabulary children can understand and avoiding violence or inappropriate content.

After the exploration, students conduct an in-depth reflection to understand the meaning of the story so that it can be adapted for children. They are asked to read aloud the characters, location, and time, storyline, theme, and moral message they intend to convey. At this stage, the lecturer provides feedback to ensure that the exploration results are ready to be written.

The writing phase is where students have the opportunity to express their ideas in the form of a child-friendly fable script that also contains educational values according to the established theme. The lecturer's role as facilitator is crucial here, as they guide students through each stage, evaluate each section of the story, and create a supportive learning environment.

After the writing process, students engage in storytelling practice. They practice their verbal and non-verbal skills while presenting their script. In this phase, students are encouraged to explore each character in depth, including creating voices, expressions, and facial expressions that differentiate one character from another. Students practice in class, taking turns using prepared media, with their classmates serving as the audience. Through this activity, students learn to interact actively, involve the audience in the story, receive feedback, and provide a review and moral message at the end of the story.



Figure 1. Documentation of students practicing storytelling



Figure 2. Documentation of students practicing storytelling

The results of the study showed significant changes in the story structure, plot, characters, educational value, and moral messages written by 18 students after they implemented the narrative method. Furthermore, there was a clear improvement in the students' expression, imagination, and confidence in their storytelling. They were able to provide precise details in their narratives and demonstrated increased confidence in telling their stories, reflecting progress in their storytelling skills.

Students' experiences with the narrative method were overwhelmingly positive. Many reported that learning through narrative provided deeper meaning and enriched the learning experience. They felt more emotionally engaged in the learning process, recognizing that this method not only provided them with knowledge on how to write fables but also developed character and a deeper understanding of the moral values that can be conveyed through stories. This narrative experience allowed them to reflect on their own thoughts and feelings, as well as to understand the perspectives of others, which is an important part of character education.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that the narrative method can serve as a highly effective tool in developing students' storytelling skills. Through immersive experiences and active interaction with stories, they not only learn to become good storytellers but also acquire broader communication skills, which are essential for them as future educators in the field of early childhood education (ECE). The implementation of this method is expected to benefit not only the students but also positively impact the children who will be their future students.

Discussion

The narrative method has proven to be a highly effective pedagogical tool in developing storytelling skills among early childhood education (PG PAUD) students. Findings indicate that storytelling experiences are not merely information-absorbing activities but also creative processes that connect theory with practical application. Students are introduced to a series of stages in narrative learning, including experience priming, story exploration, reflection, and fable writing. Involvement in this process has a direct impact on their storytelling abilities [1], [2].

In the theme selection stage, students are encouraged to choose an appropriate theme for the fable they will write. With eight varied learning themes – such as "Myself," "My Family," and "My Environment" – students are given the freedom to express their ideas. This not only stimulates creativity but also hones their ability to determine consistency between themes and story ideas.

Next, in the story exploration stage, students explore the characteristics of fables. This process helps them understand important elements of story structure, such as plot, characters, and moral message. They are taught to describe character traits, create a time and place setting, and design an engaging and educational plot. During this phase, it is crucial to ensure that the content they create is appropriate for young children, without using complex vocabulary or conveying inappropriate messages.

The reflection stage provides an opportunity for students to reflect on the meaning of the story they have written. In this session, students read aloud the character traits, the location and time of the story, the plot, the theme, and the moral message they wish to convey. Through feedback from their lecturers, students can refine their concepts before moving on to the writing stage.

The scriptwriting stage is a golden opportunity for students to express their ideas in the form of a child-friendly fable. In this process, the lecturer's role as facilitator is crucial. The lecturer not only guides students through each step but also acts as an encouragement, providing evaluation and constructive feedback on every aspect of the story they produce.

During the storytelling practice stage, students practice their verbal and non-verbal skills when presenting their fable script. By deepening their understanding of each character, they learn to use voice, facial expressions, and gestures to create differences between the characters in the story. This process encourages them to practice in class, taking turns, using prepared media, and involving their classmates as an audience. This is a crucial exercise for fostering interaction, as they not only listen but also provide feedback and discuss the moral values contained in the story.

The research results showed significant changes in the story structure, characters, and moral messages written by eighteen students after implementing the narrative method. This development was evident in their ability to express themselves, use their imagination, and feel confident when telling stories. They not only became more effective in telling their stories but also successfully integrated moral values into them [1], [3].

From the students' perspective, the experience of storytelling through fables provided more profound meaning to the learning process. They were not only able to reflect on emotional experiences but also connect the knowledge gained to their own life contexts. This connection prepares them to serve as effective educators and storytellers in the future. This is crucial given the challenges of teaching in an increasingly dynamic and diverse environment.

Implications for early childhood teacher education include strengthening students' identities as educators and storytellers. The narrative method integrated into the Early Childhood Education (PAUD) curriculum not only encourages the development of storytelling skills but also strengthens the emotional and socio-cultural aspects of learning. This is crucial for children's future growth and development. This research demonstrates the need for continued innovation in teaching methods, focusing not only on how to teach but also on new ways to educate students to become better listeners and storytellers in the future.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : The narrative method significantly enhances storytelling skills among Early Childhood Teacher Education (PG PAUD) students. The study shows improvements in story structure, plot, characters, and moral messages. Students also demonstrated increased confidence and imagination when telling stories, highlighting the effectiveness of the narrative method as a pedagogical tool. **Implication :** Integrating the narrative method into the PAUD curriculum is essential for developing communication and storytelling skills in future educators. This approach not only enhances students' ability to create compelling stories but also helps them internalize moral values that can be taught to children, thereby contributing positively to children's learning and development. **Limitation :** The study focuses only on a small sample of 18 students, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. Additionally, the research is confined to the use of fables in storytelling, which may not represent the full scope of narrative methods applicable in early childhood education. **Future Research :** Future studies could explore the impact of the narrative method on a larger and more diverse group of students, including those from different educational institutions. Additionally, it would be valuable to investigate the use of other narrative forms, such as folk tales or modern stories, in fostering storytelling skills among teacher education students.

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