



The Ice Breaking Model in Early Childhood Education: Training Kindergarten Teachers in Indonesia

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Abstrak:

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengimplementasikan dan mengembangkan model ice breaking pada guru pendidikan anak usia dini di Indonesia melalui pendekatan Participatory Action Research (PAR). Pelatihan dilaksanakan di tujuh provinsi yang dilaksanakan di 18 Kabupaten atau Kota pada periode Mei hingga Juni 2025. Dalam melaksanakan penelitian ini, peneliti memberikan instruksi kepada guru dalam merancang dan mempraktikkan ice breaking seperti, lagu anak, permainan, dan aktivitas pembelajaran menyenangkan yang dapat diterapkan di kelas. Pelatihan dilaksanakan dengan pendekatan Gurame (Guru Asyik, dan Menyenangkan) dan dilengkapi dengan panduan buku dan praktik langsung oleh guru. Hasilnya menunjukkan guru sangat antusias, merasa lebih percaya diri, dan mampu menyesuaikan ice breaking dengan karakteristik anak usia dini. Peneliti juga menerapkan konsep 4F (Fun, Friendly, Focus, Fresh) dan konsep guru betulan dan kebetulan sebagai refleksi peran profesional guru pendidikan anak usia dini.

Kata Kunci: Ice Breaking, Anak Usia Dini, Pelatihan Guru, Model Gurame

Abstract:

This article aims to implement and develop an ice breaking model for early childhood education teachers in Indonesia through the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. The training was conducted in seven provinces across 18 regencies or cities during the period of May to June 2025. In this study, the researcher provided instructions to teachers on designing and practicing ice breaking activities such as children's songs, games, and enjoyable learning activities that can be applied in the classroom. The training was carried out using the Gurame approach (which stands for *Guru Asyik dan Menyenangkan* or Fun and Enjoyable Teachers) and was supported by a training manual and direct practice sessions by the teachers. The results showed that teachers were highly enthusiastic, felt more confident, and were able to adapt ice breaking activities to the characteristics of young children. The researcher also applied the 4F concept (Fun, Friendly, Focus, and Fresh) and introduced the concept of *guru betulan* (genuine teacher, a teacher who teaches with full responsibility, dedication, and continuous self-development) and *guru kebetulan* (accidental teacher, a teacher who teaches merely as a routine without true commitment or creativity) as a reflection of the professional role of early childhood education teachers.

Keywords: Ice Breaking, Early Childhood, Teacher Training, Gurame Model



Introduction

Kindergarten teachers for children aged 4-6 years need to have different competencies compared to teachers in elementary and secondary schools. To become a kindergarten teacher, one must be education-oriented, possess competencies and qualifications to prepare children for learning. Kindergarten teachers must have play competencies and social competencies (Dewi et al., 2020). Kindergarten teachers are required to have a commitment to guide early childhood according to their individual characteristics, including the potential, interests, talents, and abilities possessed by each child. Early childhood is a strategic period to instill the fundamentals of various aspects of child development, including physical, language, social, moral, emotional, spiritual-religious, ethics, and independence. Education at this level serves as the initial foundation in supporting the goals of national education, which are to enhance the nation's life and to shape a complete and characterful Indonesian human (Poernamawijaya et al., 2018).

The competence of kindergarten teachers can be measured by the quality of performance demonstrated in the classroom learning process. The performance achievement of a kindergarten teacher can be interpreted as the level of success in fulfilling their professional roles and responsibilities according to the established performance standards. This performance includes success in creating a safe, enjoyable, and stimulating learning environment, as well as the ability to support the optimal growth and development of children (Irbah et al., 2022). Efforts to improve teachers' competence in kindergarten are very important as part of a strategy for professional development. Through competence development, teachers are expected to be able to fulfill their roles optimally and be oriented towards the developmental needs of early childhood (Isriyati et al., 2024).

The responsibility for developing potential and optimizing the learning activities of early childhood in kindergartens lies in the strategic role of teachers. Therefore, Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers are required to have adequate skills, capacity, and professional quality to ensure that the developmental process of young children occurs in accordance with developmental stages. Moreover, each child has unique individual characteristics, including various intelligences, interests, and emotional responses, so they require a learning approach that is adaptive and sensitive to their needs (Wulandari & Kustiawan, 2018). Furthermore, the quality of teachers varies, depending on their educational background and training. In some areas of Indonesia, there is still a shortage of teachers who have adequate qualifications to teach at the early childhood education level (Sukamto et al., 2024).

Based on this social phenomenon, training for early childhood education is needed to support competence in classroom learning practices. So far, training for ECE teachers has been minimal in Indonesia. Therefore, there is a need for interventions that focus on enhancing teachers' motivation in teaching and building the quality of social relationships among teachers through training using enjoyable learning approaches such as Ice Breaking. The Ice Breaking model that the researcher applied through training for teachers uses the GURAME (*Guru Asyik dan Menyenangkan* or Fun and Enjoyable Teacher), Ice Breaking model designed to create interactive learning and build emotional engagement between teachers and children in kindergarten.



Method

The type of research used in this study is Participatory Action Research (PAR), which is a participatory research approach that emphasizes the development of practical knowledge through collaboration between researchers and early childhood education teachers (Amini & Ginting, 2024). In this research, PAR is used to actively involve early childhood education teachers in the training process and development of an ice breaking model, as an effort to improve the quality of interaction and learning experiences for young children in the classroom. Through the PAR approach, researchers and teachers act as partners in designing, implementing, and reflecting on the training process. The training conducted for teachers will take place in several regions in Indonesia between May and June 2025. The training locations specified by the researchers are Medan (North Sumatra), Deli Serdang (North Sumatra), Tebing Tinggi (North Sumatra), East Lampung (Lampung), Karawang (West Java), Depok (West Java), Garut (West Java), Bekasi (West Java), West Bandung (West Java), Purworejo (Central Java), Banyumas (Central Java), Kediri (East Java), Madiun (East Java), Bojonegoro (East Java), East Lombok (West Nusa Tenggara), Tangerang (Banten), East Ciputat (Banten), and East Lampung (Lampung).

The training conducted is based on the needs of teachers and early childhood education so that the designed ice breaking can be applied in classrooms for early childhood. The implementation of Participatory Action Research (PAR) applies a sustainability process where teachers can communicate with researchers via a WhatsApp group by responding to teachers' questions related to ice breaking. With this post-training sustainability process, it will contribute to strengthening the relevance of the ice breaking model to the needs of early childhood.

Results and Discussion

The “GURAME” Ice Breaking Model: A Strategy to Foster an Enjoyable Learning Environment in Early Childhood Education

In implementing ice breaking activities for teachers and early childhood, the researcher applied the GURAME concept (*Guru Ayyik dan Menyenangkan* or Fun and Enjoyable Teacher), which represents a model of teachers who are fun and engaging for early childhood learners. This concept emphasizes how teachers should be seen as pleasant and approachable figures for early childhood. As part of the ice breaking implementation, the researcher also developed a book on ice breaking activities that can be applied in early childhood education. The following is the book designed for implementing ice breaking activities for early childhood:



Figure 1. Gurame Book



The book contains several discussions such as the basic concepts of ice breaking in early childhood, the principles of designing ice breaking models, examples of ice breaking activities suitable for the development stages of early childhood, as well as implementation strategies in the classroom to create a pleasant learning atmosphere for early childhood. The book includes at least 78 ice breaking activities in the form of games that can be implemented for early childhood both in indoor and outdoor settings. One example of an ice breaking activity in the book is “*Tepuk Konsentrasi*” (Concentration Clap), which is designed to encourage children to move actively in an enjoyable way. This activity helps develop both motor and cognitive skills, enhances children’s concentration, and fosters two-way communication between the teacher and the children. The way to play this activity is as follows: the teacher stands in front of the children with a smile and says, “*Tepuk Konsentrasi*” (Concentration Clap). The children then follow the teacher by clapping their hands, copying the teacher’s movements, and repeating the words.

Another form of ice breaking activity is themed “*Aku Teman Baikmu*” (I Am Your Good Friend). This ice breaking activity offers several benefits, such as developing children’s creativity, enhancing motor skills, encouraging communication between children, teachers, and parents, and fostering emotional connections among children, teachers, and parents. The procedure for this activity is as follows: the child pairs up with a friend or can also pair with a parent. First, they shake hands with their right hands and swing their arms while singing, “*Aku ingin jadi teman baikmu*” (I want to be your good friend). Then, they shake hands with their left hands while swinging both hands together (without releasing the right hand) and continue singing, “*Aku ingin jadi teman baikmu*”. Finally, they swing both hands (right and left) while singing together, “*Aku ingin jadi teman baikmu*”.

Ice Breaking is a term for changing the state of mind of participants. Ice Breaking becomes a suitable medium to facilitate the success of a learning process. Ice breaking is used by teachers to create a dynamic, enthusiastic, and spirited learning atmosphere (Algivari & Mustika, 2022). Ice breaking can be given at the beginning of learning to foster students’ interest in studying, in the middle of activities to reduce boredom and restore concentration, or at the end of learning to conclude the session in a fun atmosphere. Ice breaking is a form of activity to transform a boring environment into one that is spirited, enjoyable, and capable of attracting students’ attention to focus on the teacher. Ice breaking is usually done through various forms of games, humor, clapping variations, singing, or other playful activities. The ice breaking model is a strategy designed to thaw an unfavorable classroom atmosphere, allowing students’ attention and concentration to refocus on learning. (Marzatifa et al., 2021).

The ice breaking method can change a rigid and boring learning atmosphere into a more enjoyable one, thus fostering children’s enthusiasm for learning. Children will become more focused in following the lessons. Teachers are expected to be creative and able to present interesting learning innovations, for example through well-designed ice breaking activities, so that children can concentrate on receiving material from the teacher. Through the integration of ice breaking in the learning process, kindergarten teachers can create a fun learning environment and boost children’s enthusiasm (Wira Maqrisa et al., 2024).



Ice Breaking as a Teaching Strategy: Implementation for Early Childhood Education Teachers in Indonesia

In the implementation of Ice Breaking conducted by the researcher on early childhood education teachers in Indonesia, it aims to strengthen and provide understanding of the importance of Ice Breaking for young children. Thus, Ice Breaking serves as a method to create a fun and exciting learning atmosphere. The researcher provides guidelines with directions in designing and practicing various ice breaking activities for teachers, such as children's songs, games, and enjoyable activities that can be implemented with young children. In this regard, the researcher also provides guidance and steps through training sessions for teachers to understand the concepts, objectives, and practices of ice breaking. The training results show that teachers are very enthusiastic in participating in the training, so the ice breaking activities were able to enhance the concentration, spirit, and enthusiasm of the participants in the ice-breaking training for early childhood. The following are several of the activities conducted by the researcher for early childhood education teachers:



Figure 2: Ice Breaking training for early childhood songs

In providing training, the researcher instructs the teachers directly using an engaging and enjoyable approach. The researcher explains the steps for conducting ice breaking systematically, the objectives of ice breaking, and techniques for building children's enthusiasm. The instructions given by the researcher are step-by-step and include providing examples to the teachers or practicing ice breaking in front of the teachers directly.



Figure 3. Ice Breaking Training

The researcher also invites teachers to try practicing ice breaking alternately, so that teachers can directly experience the implementation of ice breaking activities. During the training process, the researcher provides feedback, improves the teachers' ice breaking techniques, and encourages teachers to adjust ice breaking to the characteristics of the children in their respective classes. This training is conducted in a fun and enjoyable



atmosphere so that teachers feel more confident in applying ice breaking in training activities and to the children in the classroom.

The GURAME concept (*Guru Asyik dan Menyenangkan* or Fun and Enjoyable Teacher) applied by the researcher integrates the 4F approach (Fun, Friendly, Focus, and Fresh) along with the concepts of “*guru betulan*” (genuine teacher) and “*guru kebetulan*” (accidental teacher) as a reflection of the professional role of early childhood educators. A *guru betulan* refers to a teacher who is present in the classroom with full awareness of their responsibility to educate, guide, and inspire children, and who continuously strives for self-development in order to create meaningful learning experiences. In contrast, a *guru kebetulan* refers to a teacher who is present merely to perform routine tasks without genuine commitment or creativity in managing the learning process.

The 4F concept provided by the researcher to teachers aims to create fun and enjoyable learning experiences. This concept includes: (1) Fun, teachers are required to conduct and open lessons in a cheerful and enjoyable manner so that children feel happy; (2) Friendly, teachers are expected to be friendly toward children by recognizing and appreciating each child’s uniqueness; (3) Focus, teachers should pay close attention to the needs of the children; and (4) Fresh, teachers are encouraged to continuously develop their knowledge to create a safe and comfortable classroom environment for children. In addition, teachers are guided to analyze common problems that arise in the classroom, particularly in creating new learning innovations that can enhance children’s motivation. The implementation of the 4F concept is expected not only to create a fun and enjoyable learning atmosphere, but also to foster a collaborative learning environment among early childhood education teachers. The researcher also provided support to teachers in applying the 4F concept through learning materials and direct training sessions for early childhood education teachers.

Research Implications in the Context of Early Childhood Education

This study provides several important implications for the development of early childhood education practices, particularly in creating a fun and enjoyable learning environment. The researcher introduced the concept of GURAME (*Guru Asyik dan Menyenangkan* or Fun and Enjoyable Teacher), which in its implementation must be based on the 4F approach (Fun, Friendly, Focus, and Fresh). Through the 4F concept, teachers are supported in building a more inclusive classroom for children and in stimulating various aspects of early childhood development. Teachers are expected to initiate and manage learning in a fun way, to be friendly by recognizing the uniqueness of each child, to maintain focus on the needs of the children, and to present fresh and engaging activities so that children feel safe and comfortable in the classroom.

In addition, the concepts of “*guru betulan*” (genuine teacher) and “*guru kebetulan*” (accidental teacher) serve as critical reflections that can encourage teachers to strengthen their professional awareness as early childhood educators. Teachers are expected not only to be present as instructors, but also as educators who are capable of inspiring, motivating, and continuously innovating in their teaching practices. Another implication of this study is the importance of continuous training that is participatory and reflective in nature, where teachers do not merely receive learning materials but are also invited to analyze real problems in the classroom and work collaboratively to find creative solutions, including the development of ice breaking activities and other innovative practices (Deden, 2020). Thus, this study provides a foundation for efforts to improve the quality of early childhood



teachers in designing learning experiences that are oriented toward the needs, interests, and developmental stages of early childhood. The researcher also highlights the potential for incorporating traditional games into ice breaking activities so that ice breaking practices remain relevant to the social and cultural contexts of early childhood learners (Nuria & Abidin, 2024; Pamungkas et al., 2019; Rizqina et al., 2024; St. Maria Ulfah et al., 2024; Suratman, 2018).

Ice breaking for early childhood will create a new habitus in enjoyable and fun learning in early childhood education institutions (Deska Luma & Wirman, 2022; Hamzah et al., 2023; Mustakim, 2019; Qadafi et al., 2024). In addition, teachers must also be able to adapt to the use of technology to support the learning process, whether it is ice breaking, games, or learning that can be implemented for early childhood (Deden et al., 2022; Suratman & Rahnang, 2021;). The use of technology is very important in learning methods and expands teachers' creativity in creating learning experiences for early childhood (Hamzah & Suratman, 2023; Hasanah, 2023; Kurniawan et al., 2024; Muthmainah et al., 2022; Ramadani et al., 2025; Sapendi & Suratman, 2024; Yafie et al., 2024). Through the integration of creative ice breaking and the utilization of technology in learning, a new habitus in early childhood education will be formed, namely a habitus of learning that is fun and enjoyable through 4F (Fun, Friendly, Focus, and Fresh).

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of ice breaking activities conducted by the researcher for early childhood education teachers in Indonesia aimed to strengthen teachers' understanding of the importance of creating a fun and enjoyable learning atmosphere. Ice breaking was used as an effective method to enhance children's concentration and foster their enthusiasm in participating in learning activities. During the training sessions, the researcher provided direct guidance and instruction through an engaging and enjoyable approach. Teachers received materials to help them understand the purpose of ice breaking, the steps for its implementation, and techniques for creating effective ice breaking activities.

In addition, the researcher applied the 4F concept (Fun, Friendly, Focus, and Fresh) as a guide for teachers in creating fun and enjoyable learning experiences. Teachers are encouraged to create a fun classroom atmosphere, adopt a friendly attitude by recognizing the uniqueness of each child, maintain focus on children's needs, and present fresh activities to make the classroom feel safe and comfortable. The researcher also instilled the value of self-reflection through the concepts of "*guru betulan*" (genuine teacher) and "*guru kebetulan*" (accidental teacher) to build teachers' professional awareness. A *guru betulan* is a teacher who is present with full responsibility and a spirit of self-development, while a *guru kebetulan* tends to work routinely without creativity. This training was proven to increase teachers' enthusiasm, motivate them to innovate, and build a culture of collaboration among early childhood teachers. Thus, the implementation of ice breaking activities and the 4F concept contributed positively to supporting the quality of early childhood education in Indonesia.



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