

## **Rethinking Fine Arts Learning Management: Toward Imagination-Oriented Practices in Early Childhood Education**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to describe and analyze fine arts learning management in enhancing early childhood imagination at Aisyiyah 1 Kendari Kindergarten. This study uses a qualitative approach. The research subjects consisted of the principal and three purposively selected classroom teachers. Data collection techniques were conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. This study is significant because, although fine arts learning is widely implemented in early childhood education, its management often remains teacher-centered and limited to product-oriented outcomes, which restricts opportunities for children's imaginative exploration and creative expression. The findings show that fine arts learning management is implemented through planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating stages. Learning activities include drawing, coloring using watercolors, collage, and mosaic making using natural and recycled materials. Although various media are used, the learning process still tends to be teacher-centered, leading children to imitate teacher examples. Evaluation also emphasizes the final product rather than the creative process. The study highlights the need to rethink fine arts learning management toward imagination-oriented practices in early childhood education by providing broader space for children's imagination development through more flexible, child-centered, and process-oriented learning approaches.

**Keywords:** Fine Arts Learning Management, Imagination, Early Childhood Education, Creativity

### **INTRODUCTION**

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a crucial phase in child development that lays the foundation for cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities (Sriarun et al., 2025; Martian, 2025). At this stage, children are in a golden period of development that is highly sensitive to environmental stimuli and requires appropriate learning strategies to support optimal development (Sania & Sirozi, 2025; Nurlina et al., 2025).

ECE context places fine arts activities as an important medium for children to express ideas, feelings, and experiences freely (Nurlina & Bahera, 2024; Rukiyah et al., 2022). Activities such as drawing, coloring, collage, and modeling help children develop fine motor skills as well as imagination and creativity (Telaumbanua & Bu'ulolo, 2024; Wibowo & Nugraheni, 2021). Therefore, fine arts learning should be designed in a meaningful and child-centered way (Almaidah et al., 2025).

However, in practice, fine arts learning in ECE is still often implemented in a conventional and teacher-centered manner. Children are mostly directed to imitate teacher examples rather than explore their own ideas (Suci, 2026). This indicates a gap between ideal child-centered learning and actual classroom practices.

A further problem is found in learning management practices, including planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating. These processes have not yet fully supported the development of children's imagination. In addition, evaluation tends to focus on the final product rather than the creative process experienced by children (Salma & Nurlina, 2024). This condition shows that fine arts learning management still needs improvement to better support imaginative development in early childhood.

At Aisyiyah 1 Kendari Kindergarten, fine arts learning is generally structured and teachers directed. Children tend to follow teacher examples, resulting in similar products and limited opportunities for imagination development. Teachers also tend to emphasize the final product of children's work rather than the creative process during learning activities. This situation highlights the need to examine how fine arts learning management is implemented in supporting children's imagination.

Previous studies have shown that collage media and free drawing activities can improve children's creative expression (Anggraini & Yuwono, 2022). Play-based learning approaches in fine arts activities also create more active and enjoyable learning environments (Savva & Erakleous, 2018; Setiawan et al., 2022). In addition, well-managed learning processes can increase children's engagement and creativity (Almaidah et al., 2025; Idhayani et al., 2023). However, these studies generally focus on art activities in general and have not specifically examined innovation in fine arts learning management for developing early childhood imagination.

The urgency of this study lies in the need to strengthen fine arts learning management in early childhood education to provide more space for imagination development. In the context of 21st-century learning, children are expected not only to develop basic abilities but also to build creativity and imagination from an early age (Hardiyanti, 2020; Agusniatih & R., 2022). However, limited innovation in learning management remains a challenge in optimizing children's imaginative potential (Salma & Nurlina, 2024).

Therefore, the main problem of this study is that fine arts learning management is still teacher-centered and product-oriented, which limits children's opportunities to develop imagination through creative processes. This study aims to describe and analyze fine arts learning management in early childhood education, focusing on planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating processes in relation to children's imagination development. The contribution of this study is to provide empirical insight into the gap between structured learning management practices and the need for imagination-oriented, child-centered, and process-based fine arts learning in early childhood education.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of fine arts learning management in relation to the development of early childhood imagination at Aisyiyah 1 Kendari Kindergarten. This approach is used to describe naturally occurring learning processes in their real context without manipulating variables. The research subjects consisted of the principal and three classroom teachers selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of fine arts learning activities. The selection criteria included their roles in managing or implementing fine arts learning, their active participation in classroom learning activities, and their experience in early childhood education practices at the institution.

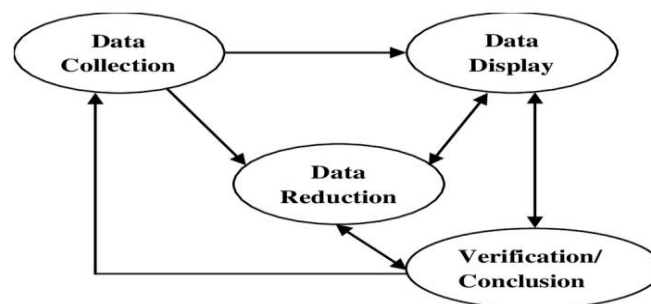
The principal was included as a key informant due to their responsibility in formulating and overseeing learning policies and institutional management. The teachers

were selected as primary informants because they directly implement fine arts learning activities in the classroom. The number of four participants was considered sufficient for this qualitative study because the focus was on obtaining rich, in-depth information from key informants who are directly involved in the phenomenon under investigation, rather than generalizing findings. Data adequacy was ensured through the depth and saturation of information obtained from each participant.

Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted as non-participant observation to observe the fine arts learning process in the classroom, particularly related to the implementation of learning management. The observation was carried out in several learning sessions during the teaching and learning process to obtain a comprehensive picture of classroom practices. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured form with the school principal and classroom teachers. The interviews focused on gathering information related to planning, organization, implementation, and evaluation of fine arts learning. Each interview session lasted approximately 30–60 minutes and was conducted to obtain in-depth and flexible responses based on participants' experiences.

Documentation was used to support the research data, including lesson plans, learning tools, students' artwork, and photographs of classroom learning activities. The documentation data were analyzed by examining and categorizing relevant materials that support findings from observations and interviews and were used for triangulation to ensure the validity of the data. The main instrument in this study is the researcher as a human instrument, assisted by observation guidelines, interview guidelines, and documentation formats. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

Data analysis began with transcribing interview results and organizing field notes from observations and documentation. The data were then coded through an initial open coding process, in which meaningful statements related to fine arts learning management and children's imagination were identified and labeled. After open coding, similar codes were grouped into categories, which were then organized into broader themes such as planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating fine arts learning. Data reduction was carried out by selecting and focusing on relevant data based on research objectives. Data display was done by presenting the categorized data in narrative form. Finally, conclusions were drawn by interpreting the patterns and relationships among the themes. The validity of the data was ensured through triangulation of sources and techniques to increase the credibility of the findings. The data analysis process is illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Miles and Huberman's Qualitative Research Flow (Sugiyono, 2018)

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

The planning stage is a fundamental component of learning management that shapes the direction of teaching and learning implementation in the classroom. In early childhood fine arts education, planning plays a crucial role in designing learning experiences that support children's imagination and creativity (Lathifah & Pamungkas, 2022). Therefore, effective planning should not be limited to routine instructional activities but should also accommodate flexible and imagination-oriented learning designs that respond to the developmental characteristics of early childhood learners (Safitri et al., 2020). This highlights the importance of planning as not only an administrative requirement, but also a pedagogical foundation for fostering meaningful and imaginative learning experiences.

At the planning stage of fine arts learning at Aisyiyah 1 Kendari Kindergarten, teachers prepare a Daily Learning Implementation Plan (RPPH) that includes activities such as drawing, coloring, and collage using various media and learning tools. The planning process is generally developed based on the early childhood education curriculum and predetermined learning themes.

Findings from the study show that teachers consistently prepare learning materials and tools such as paper, crayons, colored pencils, and simple collage materials in advance to support classroom activities. This indicates that planning is implemented in a structured and procedural manner, with a strong focus on ensuring the availability of learning resources rather than designing varied or imagination-oriented learning experiences for children.

However, the findings from observations and interviews with teachers at Aisyiyah 1 Kendari Kindergarten indicate that the planning of fine arts learning has not been fully directed toward fostering children's imagination. Teachers stated that in preparing the RPPH, fine arts activities are generally adjusted to predetermined themes and tend to repeat previously used activities such as drawing and coloring based on teacher-provided examples.

This practice suggests that planning is largely influenced by routine instructional patterns, which limits opportunities for variation and creative exploration in learning design. As a result, the range of activities that could support children's freedom of expression and imagination development remains limited. In addition, teachers acknowledged that the development of more flexible and imagination-oriented learning plans is not yet a primary focus, as emphasis is placed more on implementing activities according to existing lesson plans. This reflects a tendency toward compliance with established plans rather than the development of adaptive and imaginative learning designs.

The organizing stage of fine arts learning management at Aisyiyah 1 Kendari Kindergarten is implemented through a center-based learning arrangement. In this system, learning materials and art tools are grouped according to the needs of activities in the art center, allowing children to access teacher-prepared materials in a structured and organized manner. This arrangement supports the smooth implementation of learning activities; however, it primarily emphasizes classroom organization rather than creating opportunities for exploratory and imagination-oriented learning experiences.

Findings indicate that this organizing pattern is primarily designed to ensure classroom orderliness and smooth learning implementation. The grouping of materials and regulated access to learning tools reflects an emphasis on efficiency and classroom management rather than on promoting children's autonomy in exploring various art

materials independently. Consequently, opportunities for children to make their own choices and engage in imaginative exploration may be limited. As a result, while the organizing stage supports the technical implementation of learning activities such as drawing, coloring, and collage, it tends to prioritize structured access to materials over exploratory learning opportunities. This condition may limit children's opportunities to experiment with different materials and express their ideas imaginatively.

Based on interviews with teachers, the organization of fine arts learning in the classroom is carried out by preparing learning tools and materials in accordance with activities planned in the RPPH. Teachers stated that all learning media at the art center are prepared before classroom activities begin, allowing children to directly use the available materials during learning sessions. This finding indicates that classroom organization is carefully structured to support the smooth implementation of planned activities. However, the emphasis remains on readiness and efficiency of learning resources rather than on providing flexible opportunities for children to explore materials according to their own interests and imagination.

In addition, classroom management practices also include arranging students' seating positions and distributing children in an orderly manner to ensure that learning activities run smoothly and in a controlled environment. This reflects a strong emphasis on classroom order and procedural efficiency in managing fine arts activities. While such arrangements support effective classroom management, they may also reduce opportunities for spontaneous interaction, independent decision-making, and imaginative exploration during learning activities.

However, the findings indicate that the organizing process is primarily oriented toward ensuring smooth implementation of learning activities rather than facilitating exploratory and imaginative learning experiences. As a result, the organizational structure tends to support teacher control over learning activities rather than encouraging children's independent exploration of art materials.

At the implementation stage of fine arts learning at Aisyiyah 1 Kendari Kindergarten, learning activities are conducted in accordance with the plans prepared in the RPPH. The activities include drawing, coloring using watercolors or dyes, collage, and mosaic work using natural and recycled materials. These activities provide children with opportunities to engage in various forms of artistic expression using different media and materials.

Findings from classroom observations indicate that the implementation process is highly guided by teacher instructions, where learning activities are initiated through brief explanations followed by the provision of example works as references for children. This demonstrates that instructional modeling plays a dominant role in shaping children's activities during fine arts learning. While such guidance helps children understand task expectations, it may also limit opportunities for independent idea generation and imaginative exploration. As a result, children's engagement in art activities tends to follow teacher-provided examples rather than encouraging the development of original ideas. Although various media are available to support learning, the implementation remains largely structured and teacher guided. Consequently, opportunities for spontaneous creativity, independent decision-making, and imagination-oriented artistic exploration are still limited.

In the implementation process, children carry out fine arts activities at the art center using tools and materials that have been prepared by teachers. Research documentation shows that children are engaged in various activities such as free drawing, coloring, collage making using natural materials, and mosaic work using simple waste materials.

The variety of activities and materials indicates an effort to provide diverse artistic experiences for children. However, the use of teacher-prepared materials and predetermined activity structures suggests that opportunities for children to independently determine learning directions remain limited.

Findings indicate that although a variety of materials are available, children's activities remain largely influenced by teacher-provided examples. Most children tend to replicate the given models, while only a few demonstrate variations in their artistic work. This finding suggests that opportunities for independent exploration exist; however, they have not yet been fully realized in classroom practice. Consequently, children's imagination is expressed within relatively structured boundaries rather than through open-ended artistic exploration.

In addition, although teachers reported that various fine arts activities are routinely conducted to support children's creativity, the implementation pattern continues to rely heavily on teacher direction and predetermined activity procedures. This finding suggests that children are provided with opportunities to participate in artistic activities; however, their engagement is often guided by external instructions rather than self-initiated exploration. Consequently, the potential of fine arts learning to foster imagination and original idea development has not yet been fully optimized.



**Figure 2.** Children do fine arts activities

Based on interviews with teachers, the implementation of fine arts learning at Aisyiyah 1 Kendari Kindergarten is initiated by providing instructions to children before activities begin. Teachers explained that learning activities such as drawing, coloring, collage, and mosaic work are adapted to ongoing learning themes, and example works are provided as references for children. This finding indicates that the implementation process is systematically organized and aligned with planned learning objectives. However, the reliance on teacher explanations and model examples suggests that learning activities are still predominantly guided by teachers, leaving limited opportunities for children to independently generate and develop their own artistic ideas.

Findings suggest that although teachers attempt to support learning using varied materials such as watercolors, natural materials, and simple waste materials, the instructional approach remains largely model based. Children are encouraged to develop their work based on given examples, indicating that teacher modeling continues to play a central role in shaping artistic outcomes. While this approach may help children

understand task expectations, it may also limit opportunities for independent idea generation, imaginative thinking, and creative experimentation.

This pattern suggests that the availability of diverse learning media does not automatically promote imaginative exploration. Despite the use of various materials, children's creative processes remain largely influenced by teacher-provided models, resulting in artistic outcomes that are more reflective of imitation than independent idea development. The evaluation stage in the management of fine arts learning at Aisyiyah 1 Kendari Kindergarten is conducted by teachers after learning activities are completed. Evaluation is carried out through observation of children's works, including drawings, coloring, collage, and mosaic products produced during activities at the art center. This indicates that evaluation practices are primarily focused on assessing the visible outcomes of learning activities as evidence of children's participation and achievement in fine arts learning.

Findings indicate that the evaluation process primarily focuses on assessing the final products of children's work, with attention given to aspects such as neatness, color use, and conformity to teacher-provided examples. In addition, teachers consider children's participation during learning activities as part of the assessment process. These findings suggest that evaluation practices remain predominantly product-oriented, emphasizing the quality of completed work rather than the originality of ideas or the imaginative processes demonstrated by children during learning activities. This finding suggests that evaluation practices remain predominantly product-oriented, with greater emphasis placed on the final outcomes of children's work than on the creative processes involved in producing them. Consequently, important aspects of imagination development, such as originality, idea generation, and creative exploration, are not yet systematically incorporated into the assessment framework of fine arts learning.

Findings from interviews with teachers indicate that the evaluation of fine arts learning at Aisyiyah 1 Kendari Kindergarten is predominantly focused on children's final products, particularly aspects such as neatness, color composition, and conformity to teacher-provided examples. While teachers also observe children's involvement during the learning process, this assessment remains general and is not systematically structured. In addition, the principal confirmed that the current evaluation system has not yet incorporated specific indicators of imagination as a core assessment component. Creativity is still assessed through general classroom observation without clear criteria related to imaginative development. These findings indicate that the evaluation framework has not yet fully captured children's imaginative growth, making it difficult to systematically assess how fine arts learning contributes to imagination development in early childhood. This condition demonstrates that fine arts learning assessment remains largely product-oriented and lacks a structured framework for evaluating children's imagination and creative processes. Consequently, the potential of assessment as a means of supporting and monitoring imaginative development in early childhood has not yet been fully realized.

## **Discussion**

The findings of this study suggest that although fine arts learning management at Aisyiyah 1 Kendari Kindergarten has followed the fundamental stages of planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating, its implementation remains largely teacher-centered and product-oriented. The dominance of teacher guidance, structured learning activities, and product-based assessment indicates that opportunities for children to engage in independent exploration and imaginative thinking are still limited. These

findings highlight the need to shift fine arts learning management toward more imagination-oriented practices that emphasize creative processes, child autonomy, and open-ended artistic experiences.

From a theoretical perspective, learning management involves the interconnected functions of planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluation, as described in the POAC framework proposed by George R. Terry (Wijayanti & Wicaksana, 2023). The findings of this study confirm that these management functions were implemented systematically at Aisyiyah 1 Kendari Kindergarten. However, the results also indicate that the application of POAC was primarily directed toward maintaining instructional order and achieving planned activities rather than fostering children's imagination and creative development. This suggests that effective learning management in early childhood education should not only emphasize procedural implementation but also create conditions that support exploration, self-expression, and imaginative learning experiences.

In relation to cognitive development theory, Piaget argues that children in the preoperational stage learn through symbolic representation, imagination, and active engagement with their environment (Indriyani et al., 2024). Likewise, Vygotsky emphasizes that creativity develops through social interaction and guided learning experiences that encourage exploration and meaning making (Qomariah et al., 2025). The findings of this study reveal that although children were provided with various art materials and learning activities, classroom practices remained heavily influenced by teacher modeling and example-based instruction. This condition contrasts with the principles of imagination-oriented learning because children tend to reproduce teacher-provided models rather than generate original ideas through independent exploration. Consequently, opportunities for developing imagination and creative thinking were present but not fully optimized within the learning process.

The findings of this study support previous research indicating that overly structured learning environments can restrict children's creative expression (Annisa & Pamungkas, 2025). Conversely, play-based and open-ended learning approaches have been shown to enhance imagination and creativity in early childhood by providing greater opportunities for exploration and self-expression (Nurlina & Omalyah, 2025). In the present study, although teachers utilized diverse materials such as watercolors, natural materials, and recycled objects, these resources were generally used within teacher-directed activities and example-based instruction. This finding suggests that the availability of varied learning media alone is insufficient to promote imagination development. Rather, the way learning experiences are designed and facilitated plays a more significant role in encouraging children's creative and imaginative engagement.

Therefore, the findings suggest that although fine arts learning management at Aisyiyah 1 Kendari Kindergarten has followed the POAC framework, its implementation remains largely teacher-centered and product-oriented. Strengthening more flexible planning, promoting exploratory and child-centered learning practices, and developing assessment systems that recognize creative processes as well as learning outcomes are essential for supporting children's imagination development. The main contribution of this study lies in highlighting the gap between structured management practices and the need for imagination-oriented approaches that provide greater opportunities for creativity, exploration, and self-expression in early childhood education.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that fine arts learning management at Aisyiyah 1 Kendari Kindergarten has been implemented through the stages of planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating. Although these management processes follow a structured framework, their implementation remains largely teacher-centered and product-oriented, with greater emphasis placed on the final outcomes of children's work than on the creative and imaginative processes involved in learning. The findings indicate that while various learning activities and materials are provided, opportunities for children's independent exploration, self-expression, and imagination development are still limited. Teacher guidance, example-based instruction, and product-focused assessment continue to shape classroom practices, reducing the potential for more open-ended and imagination-oriented learning experiences.

These findings highlight the need to strengthen child-centered and process-oriented approaches in fine arts learning management. More flexible planning, exploratory learning experiences, and assessment systems that recognize children's creative processes as well as learning outcomes are essential for supporting imagination development in early childhood education. This study contributes by highlighting the gap between structured learning management practices and the need for imagination-oriented fine arts learning that promotes creativity, exploration, and self-expression. Future research is recommended to develop and examine practical models of fine arts learning management that more effectively support imagination-oriented practices and creative development in early childhood settings.

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