

## Educational Culinary Approach to Enhance Students' Interest, Skills, and Knowledge in Cooking at SMA Katolik Stella Maris Surabaya

Daniel Pandu Mau<sup>1,a)</sup>, Ivy Dian Puspitasari Prabowo<sup>1)</sup>, Elvin Adisatria Lukman<sup>2)</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Akademi Sages, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Sekolah Tinggi Pariwisata Satya Widya, Indonesia

<sup>a)</sup>Corresponding author: daniel.pm@sages.ac.id

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### ABSTRACT

Education in Indonesia often overlooked practical skills such as cooking, despite their importance for health and independence. This program implemented the Educational Culinary Approach at SMA Katolik Stella Maris in Surabaya to enhance students' interest, skills, and knowledge in cooking. The method involved preparation, planning, implementation, and evaluation of cooking training. Initial observations indicated that only 30% of students initially showed active interest in cooking activities. Following the training, results showed a significant increase in interest (90%) and cooking skills (80%) among students. Besides improving practical skills, the program integrated Catholic values such as social service. Group cooking activities provided psychosocial benefits, including enhanced self-confidence and social interaction. The final evaluation demonstrated that this program successfully enhanced students' holistic interests, skills, and knowledge in cooking. It proved that integrating academic education with practical skills could yield positive outcomes, both in practical skills and students' character and social development.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia is regarded as the primary vehicle for shaping a generation that is academically proficient and possesses practical skills relevant to daily life. However, practical skills, particularly cooking, are often neglected in the educational curriculum. Cooking is integral to daily life, significantly impacting health, independence, and understanding of local values. According to Farmer et al. (2018), cooking initially developed as a survival activity, helping humans process food to make it more digestible and reduce the risk of disease from bacteria.

The lack of emphasis on cooking skills can have widespread negative effects, such as long-term health risks, a lack of understanding about the importance of cooking, and a tendency to rely on fast food. Cooking skills are defined as the confidence, attitude, and application of one's knowledge in performing culinary tasks, such as planning meals, shopping, and preparing different kinds of food (fresh and/or processed) (Jomori et al., 2018). Studies have shown the importance of the development of cooking skills for adopting healthy eating habits because homemade foods favor the consumption of vegetables, improving the nutritional quality of the meals (Tani et al., 2020; Van Der Horst et al., 2011; Lam & Adams, 2017; Brazil Ministry of Health, 2014). Cooking is known to improve dietary patterns, enhance nutrient intake, help achieve a healthy weight, and reduce the risk of diseases like diabetes and hypertension (Mosko & Delach, 2020; Veneruso et al., 2022). These impacts are personal and contribute to social and environmental aspects, including budget management and awareness of the environmental impact of eating habits.

SMA Katolik Stella Maris Surabaya acknowledges the importance of cooking skills by incorporating them into extracurricular activities. Although not part of the core curriculum, this activity is considered an integral part of the student's overall educational experience. Cooking activities can play a crucial role in character development, social skills, and competencies that cannot always be achieved through formal curricula alone. As a Catholic educational institution, the school recognizes that cooking skills are not just about food preparation but also reflect values of love and social service. This approach lays the foundation for students to develop practical skills while internalizing moral and social values upheld in a Catholic educational environment.

In addition to meeting physiological needs and improving physical health, cooking activities also provide psychological benefits. According to a study by Farmer et al. (2018), which reviewed eleven previous studies, group cooking activities can offer psychosocial benefits such as increased self-confidence, enhanced social interaction, and a strengthened sense of community. Cooking can also boost positive moods, reduce negative moods, and improve the quality of life-related to health and psychological well-being (Güler & Haseki, 2021; Barak-Nahum et al., 2016; Jyväkorpi et al., 2014). Additionally, cooking serves as a form of recreation and entertainment and helps meet needs across Maslow's hierarchy, including physiological, safety, social (love, affection, and belonging), esteem, and self-actualization needs (Daniel et al., 2011).

Preliminary observations and interviews with students at SMA Katolik Stella Maris revealed that their understanding of the benefits of cooking skills is not fully adequate. Observations showed that only 30% of students were actively involved in extracurricular cooking activities, while 50% were present but showed passive participation, and 20% rarely attended or were not involved at all. Basic cooking skills were also low, with only 40% of students able to perform basic cooking tasks such as chopping ingredients, frying, and boiling, while 25% had difficulty performing these tasks.

Interviews highlighted major challenges related to motivation and cooking knowledge. A student from the 11th grade expressed enjoyment in cooking activities but felt that the skills were not very important for daily life and participated mainly because of friends. Another student expressed a desire to learn more about cooking but did not know where to start. A lack of understanding of the relevance of cooking skills

in daily life was also a barrier. For instance, one student recognized that cooking could help maintain a healthy diet but was unaware of other benefits. There was also a perception that cooking was only important for those aspiring to be chefs and not seen as beneficial for daily life. Additionally, diverse food preferences among students influenced their motivation toward cooking. Some preferred to buy fast food rather than cook themselves, finding the cooking process boring and time-consuming. Other challenges included a lack of time due to a busy school schedule and a mismatch between the materials and equipment used at school and those available at home, making it difficult for some students to follow cooking activities effectively at school.

In response to these challenges, Akademi Sages and SMA Katolik Stella Maris initiated activities to enhance students' interest, skills, and knowledge in cooking through an Educational Culinary Approach. The primary goal was to bridge the gap between academic education and practical skills by integrating Catholic values and practical skills learning. The program aims to address the obstacles students face in increasing their interest, skills, and knowledge in cooking. The approach combined culinary elements with broader educational goals. Besides focusing on developing cooking skills, this method broadens students' awareness of nutritional values, sustainability, food safety, and other related culinary aspects. Thus, students are not only empowered with cooking expertise but also engaged in a deep understanding of important culinary aspects.

According to Farmer et al. (2018), cooking activities have also been used in occupational therapy and rehabilitation to evaluate and develop cognitive and physical skills. In the educational context, cooking can serve as a rich learning method, ranging from motor skill development to enhancing cognitive abilities like planning and decision-making. Therefore, an engaging, inclusive, and relevant learning environment is needed to stimulate interest and enhance students' cooking skills and knowledge. Implementing strategies and approaches that accommodate students' needs and preferences will be key to creating an effective learning environment and building sustainable motivation.

In the context of Catholic education, cooking activities at SMA Katolik Stella Maris not only develop students' practical skills but also follow the core principles of Catholic education. Through cooking, students are taught values such as social service, caring for others, and forming strong character. The activities also emphasize the importance of physical health and body maintenance, reflecting the care for oneself and others emphasized in Catholic education. Thus, the Educational Culinary Approach not only empowers students with practical skills but also enriches their educational experience holistically by integrating Catholic values into daily life. This aligns with the goals of Catholic education to develop students who are academically intelligent, compassionate towards others, and capable of making positive contributions to society.

## METHOD

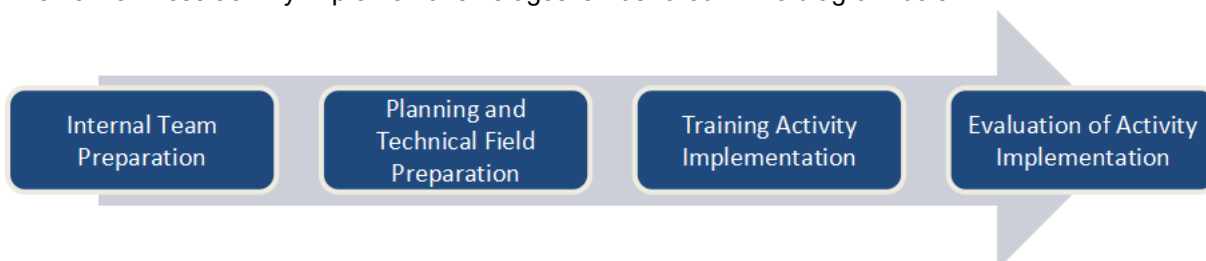
The Educational Culinary Approach employed a comprehensive technique at each stage of the implementation of activities aimed at improving students' interest, skills, and knowledge in cooking. Below is a detailed description of how these methods are used:

- 1) Internal Team Preparation, involves conducting in-depth observations on students' preferences related to educational culinary activities, evaluating internal readiness, maintaining intensive communication with the school and students, and designing a research-based program.
- 2) Planning and Technical Field Preparation, includes designing the training activities, obtaining permits, coordinating the team, and preparing technical aspects such as setting up the space, equipment, and cooking materials.
- 3) Training Activity Implementation, begins with introductory sessions and conceptual understanding, followed by interactive demonstrations and practical sessions. It enhances

creativity and innovation, integrates educational values, uses interactive evaluative methods, and builds collaboration and social involvement.

- 4) Evaluation of Activity Implementation, involves structured evaluation methods, measuring program goal achievements, qualitative analysis of students' work, increased self-confidence, enhanced social interaction and collaboration among students, and analysis of supporting and hindering factors to identify areas for future improvement.

The flow of these activity implementation stages is illustrated in the diagram below:



**FIGURE 1.** The flow of Training Activity Implementation Stages

Students were expected to enhance their cooking skills and gain meaningful learning experiences by integrating the Educational Culinary Approach at each training stage. This approach can significantly enhance students' interests and skills and holistically enrich their cooking knowledge.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The training activities took place over a series of sessions with the participation of 33 students from grades X to XI, all of whom showed an interest in culinary arts, including members of the cooking extracurricular team.

### 1) Internal Team Preparation

The internal team preparation stage encompassed a series of thorough and meticulous steps to ensure every aspect of the activities was well-prepared. The implementation team adopted a systematic approach and conducted in-depth observations to understand students' trends and preferences regarding the Educational Culinary Approach. These observations included literature reviews, surveys, and direct interactions with students to identify the types of dishes they were interested in, preferred ingredients, and appealing visual presentations. The information obtained from these observations served as the primary basis for designing training activities aligned with students' interests and preferences, enhancing participation, and creating an engaging learning environment.

The observations revealed that students were highly interested in culinary experiences involving direct interaction, such as cooking practice and exploring various food types. Students tended to prefer dishes that combined innovative and traditional elements, creating unique and interesting combinations. Additionally, it was found that appealing visual presentations, with the use of bright colors and clean visual layouts, were crucial for increasing student engagement. Consequently, the implementation team included attractive visual design elements in the training materials, such as infographics, videos, and practical cooking demonstrations.

Observations also indicated that students were more interested in exploring international cuisine compared to local dishes. Therefore, the training sessions were designed to introduce students to recipes from other countries, which were expected to increase their participation and interest. Furthermore, integrating Educational Culinary topics with the school curriculum, such as

nutrition and food culture, became easier. Identifying gaps in the curriculum provided opportunities to design new learning modules that were relevant and supported the achievement of educational goals.

The findings also showed that students demonstrated high interest in group and collaborative activities involving them in the cooking process. An important finding was a positive response to a relaxed learning environment that supported creative exploration. Therefore, the training activities were designed to emphasize collaborative activities in culinary learning, expected to increase student participation and engagement.

As a result of the observations regarding student preferences, the Vietnamese Rice Noodle Salad with Chicken was chosen as the menu for educational culinary training. This menu was selected because it involved direct interaction with various food ingredients, combining innovative and traditional elements, and providing students with the opportunity to try dishes from different cultures. The preparation process of this salad also became a collaborative activity that involved students in the dish-making process, aligning with the finding that students showed high interest in group and collaborative activities. With this approach, it was hoped that students would not only enhance their cooking skills but also gain meaningful learning experiences that could holistically enrich their culinary knowledge and skills.

Evaluating the internal team's readiness was the next priority. Each team member's interpersonal skills, ability to work together, and deep understanding of students' needs were assessed. Internal training was necessary to enhance facilitators' skills in interacting with students and presenting material engagingly. The training facilitators had to be capable of creating a supportive and motivating environment for students while having a strong understanding of the concepts of the Educational Culinary Approach.

Furthermore, this evaluation involved assessing the specific knowledge and skills possessed by each team member. Each team member needed to have an in-depth understanding of culinary concepts, nutritional values, and cooking techniques that would be taught to students. Additional training was required to ensure the team had comprehensive knowledge and could effectively address students' questions and challenges.

As part of the preparation stage, the team maintained intensive communication with the school and students. Meetings with teachers helped the team understand classroom dynamics, student characteristics, and potential challenges that might arise. Collaboration with the school also included coordination regarding technical needs, such as preparing rooms and equipment that supported the Educational Culinary activities. This intensive communication helped the team understand the school's context and built good relationships with stakeholders. Facilitators could understand the school's and students' expectations and adapt the training materials to align with the school's curriculum and policies.

The team designed the training program based on observational findings as an additional step. Each training session was designed with the students' identified interests and needs in mind. Training materials were linked to the school curriculum to ensure relevance and integration with formal learning. Additionally, the program was designed to include aspects of active learning. Interactive and participatory teaching methods were applied to increase student engagement. Discussions, simulations, and hands-on practice became integral parts of each training session. This aimed to create enjoyable and profound learning experiences for the students.

Through detailed preparation steps, the team established a solid foundation for the implementation of the Educational Culinary training activities. A deep understanding of students'

interests, team readiness, and coordination with the school was key to successfully enhancing the motivation and cooking skills of students at SMA Katolik Stella Maris through this innovative approach.

## 2) Planning and Technical Field Preparation

The second stage played a central role in the smooth implementation of the Educational Culinary activities. The main focus at this stage was to detail the strategies to ensure the smooth and effective execution of the activities. Planning began with designing the training activities, which included detailed observations, permission applications, team coordination, and the preparation of the training activity plan. Observations were conducted to directly assess the needs and dynamics of the students. The team needed to understand how students interacted with instructors, how they worked in groups, and their level of understanding of the material.

The training activity plan included scheduling, training materials, and the selection and provision of the necessary cooking equipment and ingredients. Thorough consideration was given to ensure that each stage of the activity was designed to maximize its impact on the participants.

Team coordination was essential to ensure that all team members understood their roles and responsibilities. The team maintained alignment and collaboration among members through effective coordination, minimized potential obstacles, and ensured that each training session could be optimally conducted. Obtaining permission from the school was a crucial step in the planning process. This permission was necessary to ensure that the activities could occur according to school rules and relevant regulations. This process involved intensive dialogue between the team and the school to discuss the activity details, room requirements, and other technical preparations.

Technical field preparation involved structuring the training activity plan methodically. This plan had to accommodate all aspects of the activities, from introductions to practical sessions, with a clear understanding of timing and material allocation. Technical field preparation also included preparing the space, equipment, and cooking ingredients. The room was inspected to ensure the safety and comfort of participants. Additionally, kitchen equipment, such as stoves, ovens, and other tools, was checked for functionality. The selection and preparation of cooking ingredients received special attention. The team ensured the availability of the necessary ingredients according to the training plan. This included selecting high-quality ingredients, proper storage, and efficient distribution during the training sessions.

Before the actual implementation, trial runs of materials and aids were a crucial step. The team conducted simulations of the training activities to evaluate the feasibility of the materials and ensure that aids, presentations, and demonstrations could be performed smoothly. These trial runs also provided an opportunity to identify potential technical and logistical issues that might arise during the actual implementation. For example, the team tested the effectiveness of presentations, the readiness of multimedia aids, and students' responses to the teaching methods used.

By detailing each aspect of the planning and technical field preparation, the team aimed to ensure that all elements of the educational culinary activities had been thoroughly considered. Thus, it was hoped that the training could proceed effectively and result in a significant positive impact on the students' motivation and cooking skills at SMA Katolik Stella Maris. This planning and technical field preparation stage formed a solid foundation for the comprehensive implementation of the program.

### 3) Training Activity Implementation

After thorough preparation, the next step was to move into the core of the effort. At this stage, various strategies and methods were applied to achieve the primary objectives of the program, which were to enhance students' interest, skills, and knowledge in cooking, using Vietnamese Rice Noodle Salad with Chicken as a concrete example. Implementation began with an introductory session, where the team provided a comprehensive understanding of the goals, benefits, and basic concepts to be learned during the activities. In the context of this salad, students were given an understanding of the uniqueness of the dish, including techniques for cooking main ingredients like chicken and using fresh ingredients such as vegetables and Vietnamese rice noodles. This introduction helped students grasp the essence of Vietnamese cuisine comprehensively.



**FIGURE 2.** Explanation of the Objectives, Benefits, and Basic Concepts to be Learned in Educational Culinary Approach

One important element of the Educational Culinary Approach was interactive demonstrations and practical sessions. Instructors played a key role in showcasing cooking techniques, applying nutrition knowledge, and demonstrating practical skills in kitchen management. Demonstrations were conducted using Vietnamese Rice Noodle Salad with Chicken as an example, where instructors explained the preparation and presentation steps in detail. Interactive practical sessions provided moments where students were directly involved in the cooking process, giving them hands-on experience in applying the techniques they had learned.



**FIGURE 3.** Instructor Demonstration

The Educational Culinary Approach placed special emphasis on enhancing students' creativity and innovation. During the implementation sessions, students were encouraged to experiment with various ingredients, create variations in dish presentation, and develop their skills with a personal touch. In the context of this salad, students were invited to combine ingredients creatively, such as adding additional elements that suited personal preferences or modifying the recipe according to their tastes.



**FIGURE 4.** Student Cooking Activities

Besides cooking skills, this approach also incorporated other educational values. During implementation, instructors integrated knowledge about nutrition, principles of sustainability, and culinary ethics. For instance, in selecting ingredients, students were taught about taste quality and the environmental impact and health aspects associated with the dish.

The use of interactive evaluative methods complemented the implementation process. These included reflective discussion sessions, questions and answers, and direct feedback from students. This method ensured that students did not passively receive the material but actively engaged in understanding and reflecting on their experiences in cooking Vietnamese Rice Noodle Salad with Chicken.



**FIGURE 5.** Team Guiding Students while Educating them on Insights into Nutrition Values, Sustainability, Food Safety, and Other Aspects



It was crucial to build collaboration and social engagement among students. Cooking activities in groups stimulated the exchange of ideas, active involvement in the learning process, and the development of teamwork skills. This created a positive and supportive social environment, enhancing the student's learning experience in preparing dishes together.



**FIGURE 6.** Students Cooking while Interacting with Teammates to Build Cooperation

As a final step in implementation, a knowledge consolidation session was held to integrate all the concepts and skills learned during the activities, using Vietnamese Rice Noodle Salad with Chicken as an example. The team provided a summary, emphasized key points, and stimulated questions from students. This session also inspired enthusiasm for continuous learning and skill development, particularly in the context of this dish.

Through careful and interactive implementation using Vietnamese Rice Noodle Salad with Chicken as a sample dish, this program impacted students' cooking skills and stimulated their interest in exploring the culinary world more deeply. The Educational Culinary Approach created a holistic learning experience, encompassing technical, creative, social, and educational values, all of which could be applied in cooking this dish.



**FIGURE 7.** Students' Culinary Creations

#### 4) Evaluation of Activity Implementation

The evaluation of the training activity implementation was a crucial step in the learning cycle. Its purpose was to investigate the extent to which the program's objectives were achieved and to provide deep insights into its impact on students. This evaluation aimed not only to measure outcomes but also to serve as a basis for future improvements and program development.

The evaluation process began with conducting structured interviews with the participants. The results of these interviews showed that the majority of participants felt the activity met their expectations. Of the 33 participants interviewed, 85% expressed high satisfaction with their experience in the Educational Culinary training. These interviews provided direct insights into the impact of the activities on participants, allowing the team to understand the views and experiences of the participants during the activities.



**FIGURE 8.** Evaluation of Activity Implementation

The evaluation focused on measuring the achievement of the program's objectives, namely increasing students' interest, skills, and knowledge in cooking. Through the analysis of questionnaires completed by all participants (33 students), 90% stated that they had increased their interest in cooking after attending the training. Additionally, 80% reported an improvement in their cooking skills. This indicates that the program successfully achieved its main goal of enhancing students' interest, skills, and knowledge in cooking. These findings align with previous research that highlights how cooking activities can improve dietary patterns, enhance nutrient intake, and promote a healthy lifestyle (Mosko & Delach, 2020; Veneruso et al., 2022).

Qualitative analysis of the students' work provided further insights into their progress in applying cooking skills. Students successfully created dishes with higher complexity levels and demonstrated better cooking skills after the training. In terms of cooking techniques, students showed progress in ingredient preparation, use of kitchen equipment, and dish presentation.

The evaluation also noted an increase in students' confidence in handling cooking activities. Through the questionnaire analysis, 75% of the 33 participants stated that they felt more confident in facing cooking challenges they might encounter in the kitchen. This result indicates that the program not only impacted students' technical skills but also built psychosocial aspects such as confidence and courage to experiment in the kitchen. These psychosocial benefits are supported by research, which suggests that cooking can enhance self-confidence, social interaction, and a sense of community (Farmer et al., 2018; Güler & Haseki, 2021).

The evaluation identified that social interaction and collaboration among students increased after the training. Through interview results, students revealed that they felt more engaged in group activities and more open to sharing ideas and experiences. This is consistent with findings that cooking activities can improve social skills and group dynamics (Barak-Nahum et al., 2016; Jyväkörpi et al., 2014).

As part of the evaluation, the team also considered supporting factors and obstacles that influenced the implementation of the activities. This analysis included the support from the school, the suitability of the facilities, and the interaction between participants and facilitators. The analysis found that school support and adequate facilities were important factors in the successful implementation of the activities, while challenges such as time constraints or equipment limitations were obstacles that needed to be addressed for future improvements.

The cooking training program with the Educational Culinary Approach at SMA Katolik Stella Maris can be continually developed and refined by integrating the evaluation results with the initial observations. This evaluation serves as a foundation for enhancing this innovative approach, ensuring that the program remains relevant, and effective, and has a sustained positive impact on students' motivation and cooking skills. The integration of practical skills with educational goals is critical for fostering holistic development in students, as demonstrated by the positive outcomes observed (Daniel et al., 2011).

## CONCLUSION

The Educational Culinary Approach implemented at SMA Katolik Stella Maris Surabaya has proven to be effective in improving students' interest, skills, and knowledge in cooking. The carefully designed cooking activities have facilitated not only the development of practical skills but also the internalization of moral and social values in line with Catholic education principles. By emphasizing direct interaction and collaborative learning, this program has enriched students' educational experiences holistically, covering technical, creative, social, and educational aspects.

The culinary training program, conducted through a series of sessions focusing on specific dishes such as Vietnamese Rice Noodle Salad with Chicken, successfully captured students' interest through a combination of innovative and traditional elements. Evaluation results have shown significant improvements in students' cooking skills and interests, as well as increased confidence and knowledge in nutrition and food sustainability aspects. Thus, this approach has empowered students not only in cooking skills but also in promoting a deeper understanding of health, environmental, and social values in daily life.

Through this approach, SMA Katolik Stella Maris Surabaya has effectively addressed challenges such as lack of motivation and cooking knowledge among students, demonstrating how extracurricular activities can play a crucial role in holistic education that integrates practical skills with moral and social values. The Educational Culinary Approach can serve as an effective model for implementation in other schools to develop students' practical skills and character comprehensively.

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