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Cooking as Play, Role as Work: Integrating Fun Cooking and Role Play for Early Childhood Entrepreneurship Skills—A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract: *This systematic literature review synthesizes evidence on the use of fun cooking and role play to develop entrepreneurship-related skills in early childhood education. The review followed PRISMA 2020 principles and examined publications from 2020 to 2025 identified through Google Scholar, Scopus, DOAJ, Sinta, university repositories, and reference tracking. Of 303 records identified, 54 duplicates were removed, 249 titles and abstracts were screened, 84 full-text reports were assessed, and 20 studies were included in the qualitative thematic synthesis. Three themes emerged. First, fun cooking provides a production-oriented learning context in which children practice planning, measuring, creating, collaborating, persisting, and taking responsibility for a tangible product. Second, role play provides a social and market-oriented context that strengthens communication, negotiation, decision-making, confidence, and early understanding of exchange and service. Third, integrating both activities creates a developmentally appropriate production-to-market learning cycle in which children make, present, exchange, and reflect on products or services. The evidence is nevertheless geographically concentrated, methodologically heterogeneous, and dominated by short-term studies; direct tests of an integrated model remain rare. The review proposes an experiential framework and recommends classroom-based, longitudinal, and cross-cultural research using clearer measures of early entrepreneurship skills.*

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INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship education in early childhood is not intended to turn young children into miniature business owners. Its educational value lies in cultivating dispositions and practical capabilities that support initiative, creativity, independence, collaboration, persistence, decision-making, and problem solving. These competencies are increasingly discussed as part of holistic preparation for uncertain social and economic futures, yet their integration into early childhood curricula remains uneven (Floris & Dettori, 2020; Nadya Salsabila et al., 2023; Prasakti & Idrus, 2024). Reviews of the field also indicate that early entrepreneurship education is expanding as a research area, while conceptual clarity and developmentally appropriate practice still require attention (Nur Kholifah et al., 2023; Safitri & Munastiwi, 2023).

Implementation difficulties are visible at curriculum, teacher, and community levels. Entrepreneurship-related activities are often treated as occasional events rather than a coherent strand of learning, teachers may have limited preparation or instructional resources, and parents may interpret entrepreneurship too narrowly as selling or earning money. Such conditions reduce opportunities for children to experience the broader processes of planning, producing, communicating, serving, and reflecting (Fitria et al., 2025; Onojah et al., 2025). Stronger collaboration among schools, families, and communities is therefore needed to make entrepreneurship learning meaningful and culturally relevant (Nadya Salsabila et al., 2023; Vernia & Widiyarto, 2023).

Research suggests that young children learn entrepreneurial values most effectively through concrete, playful, and participatory experiences. Market-day activities, projects, craft production, STEAM tasks, gardening, and role-based simulations can create opportunities to take initiative, solve simple problems, cooperate, and experience the consequences of choices (Aulia & Munastiwi, 2024; Chojak, 2024; Hanik et al., 2023; Rukanda, 2020; Saugi et al., 2020). These activities are consistent with the early childhood principle that learning develops through active engagement with people, materials, and meaningful situations rather than through abstract explanations.

Role play contributes a complementary social dimension. When children act as sellers, buyers, cashiers, cooks, customers, or service providers, they practice dialogue, perspective taking, negotiation, turn taking, emotional regulation, and decision-making. Simulated transactions help make ideas such as exchange, value, responsibility, and service understandable through action (Fikri et al., 2024; Monika, 2021; Nurhayati & Millenia, 2024). Role play has also been associated with greater creativity, confidence, communication, and social-

emotional competence (Amanah Rahma Ningtyas & Amrillah, 2024; Husnah & Hasanah, 2025; Musthofiyyah et al., 2025; Wintari et al., 2024).

Despite these parallel developments, the literature remains fragmented. Cooking studies frequently focus on cognitive, motor, nutritional, or social-emotional outcomes, while role-play studies commonly emphasize communication, confidence, or social development. Entrepreneurship studies often prioritize market day or thematic projects without tracing how children move from creating a product to presenting, exchanging, and evaluating it. Direct empirical research that combines fun cooking and role play as a single production-to-market learning sequence is still limited.

This review therefore synthesizes research published from 2020 to 2025 on fun cooking, role play, and early childhood entrepreneurship-related skills. It addresses three questions: (1) How is fun cooking used to develop entrepreneurship-related competencies in young children? (2) How does role play support social, economic, and decision-making competencies associated with entrepreneurship? and (3) What patterns, enabling conditions, and research gaps emerge when both activity strands are considered together? The review contributes an integrative framework that connects product creation with market and service simulation in a developmentally appropriate learning cycle.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Early Entrepreneurship Skills as Developmental Dispositions

Early entrepreneurship skills are best conceptualized as developmental dispositions rather than commercial competencies. Creativity, initiative, curiosity, independence, confidence, persistence, collaboration, responsibility, and problem solving are transferable capabilities that can be nurtured through play and daily routines. Entrepreneurship-oriented programs in kindergarten have been associated with improvements across cognitive, social-emotional, and character domains when activities are concrete and supported by adults (Ah & Munip, 2019; Ismaiyah et al., 2022; Nugrahani et al., 2021). International project work similarly emphasizes creativity, proactivity, teamwork, and leadership rather than profit-making (Chojak, 2024; Petkova, 2024).

This developmental interpretation also requires ethical and pedagogical boundaries. Activities should remain voluntary, playful, inclusive, and appropriate to children's abilities. Simple ideas of cost, value, exchange, or customer service can be introduced through familiar situations, but they should not displace imagination, relationships, or broad developmental goals. The teacher's role is to create a safe environment, invite children to make choices, and help them reflect on process, effort, cooperation, and improvement.

Fun Cooking as Production-Oriented Experiential Learning

Fun cooking transforms the classroom into a small production environment. Children identify ingredients, plan steps, divide tasks, measure and combine materials, monitor change, decorate or package a product, and clean the workspace. These actions make production visible and allow children to experience sequence, quality, effort, time, and responsibility. Cooking-day and cooking-class studies report growth in creativity, independence, discipline, cooperation, aesthetic sensitivity, and confidence (Fuadul Mustofa et al., 2024; Khopipah et al., 2023; Khusna et al., 2022; Widiasari & Yoestara, 2021).

The entrepreneurship relevance of cooking does not arise automatically from preparing food. It emerges when teachers connect the activity to purposeful planning and reflection: What will be made? Which materials are needed? How can the group share the work? How can the product be improved or presented? Such questions encourage children to exercise initiative and practical judgment. Fun cooking also supports family engagement and interpersonal bonding, particularly when tasks are continued at home (Laela & Citra Novita, 2022; Pramadhaningtyas & Santana, 2024).

Role Play as Market, Service, and Social Simulation

Role play creates an imagined but socially structured environment in which children can explore occupational roles, rules, and transactions. A shop, café, bakery, restaurant, delivery service, or market stall requires children to communicate needs, respond to others, take turns, manage simple conflicts, and adapt their actions to a shared scenario. Studies of market-day and seller-buyer play indicate that such simulations can strengthen communication, social interaction, confidence, and understanding of exchange (Fikri et al., 2024; Monika, 2021; Nurhayati & Millenia, 2024).

Structured role play can also stimulate creativity and leadership because children develop storylines, assign responsibilities, and make decisions in response to changing situations. Concrete props help children interpret the scenario, while reflective teacher questions can draw attention to fairness, service, cooperation, and the reasons behind choices (Amanah Rahma Ningtyas & Amrillah, 2024; Dhawil Ilmiyah Albirkiy et al., 2025; Irmayanti et al., 2025; Wintari et al., 2024).

Toward an Integrated Production-to-Market Cycle

Fun cooking and role play address different but complementary phases of entrepreneurial activity. Cooking emphasizes planning and production; role play emphasizes presentation, communication, exchange, service, and decision-

making. Connecting the two enables children to experience a coherent sequence: create a product, decide how it will be presented, assume roles, interact with peers or adults, and reflect on what worked. Market-day reviews and project-based studies support the educational value of integrating product creation with social exchange, even though direct tests of a combined fun-cooking-and-role-play model remain uncommon (Hilya Aulia Aulia & Abdul Muhid Muhid, 2024; Sukma et al., 2024; Was'an et al., 2023).

The integrated perspective also highlights the importance of context. Teacher scaffolding, adequate time, safe and accessible materials, opportunities for child choice, and family or community participation can determine whether an activity becomes genuine experiential learning or merely a teacher-directed demonstration. These conditions form a central analytical category in the present review.

RESEARCH METHOD

Review Design and Reporting Framework

The study used a systematic literature review design to identify, appraise, and synthesize evidence concerning fun cooking, role play, and entrepreneurship-related skills in early childhood education. Systematic review was selected because it provides a transparent structure for organizing a diverse body of educational research and identifying convergence, variation, and gaps (Snyder, 2019). Reporting was aligned with PRISMA 2020 principles, including explicit eligibility criteria, a documented selection flow, and a traceable synthesis process (Page et al., 2021).

The included studies used varied designs and outcomes, including qualitative case studies, classroom action research, quantitative or quasi-experimental studies, mixed approaches, project reports, and high-relevance reviews. Because measures and interventions were heterogeneous, statistical meta-analysis was not appropriate. A qualitative thematic synthesis was conducted through iterative coding, comparison, grouping, and refinement of themes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

Search Strategy

Searches covered publications from January 2020 through December 2025 and were conducted in Google Scholar, Scopus, DOAJ, and Sinta, supplemented by university repositories and backward reference checking. English and Indonesian combinations included "entrepreneurship skills," "entrepreneurial character," "fun cooking," "cooking class," "cooking day," "role play," "market day," "early childhood education," "preschool," "kindergarten," and "PAUD." Broader

combinations were used because relatively few studies examined fun cooking, role play, and entrepreneurship outcomes simultaneously.

Table 1. Search Protocol

Component	Specification
Purpose	Identify studies on fun cooking, role play, and entrepreneurship-related skills in early childhood education.
Databases	Google Scholar, Scopus, DOAJ, and Sinta.
Supplementary searching	University repositories and backward reference checking.
Publication period	2020–2025.
Language	English or Indonesian.
Document type	Peer-reviewed full-text empirical study or high-relevance review.
Core terms	entrepreneurship skills; entrepreneurial character; fun cooking; cooking class/day; role play; market day; early childhood education; preschool; kindergarten; PAUD.
Initial yield	303 records before duplicate removal.
Final synthesis	20 studies.

Source: Search protocol reconstructed and standardized from the submitted SLR dataset.

Eligibility Criteria and Quality Appraisal

Eligible studies focused on children aged approximately 3–8 years in early childhood, kindergarten, preschool, or closely related family/community settings and addressed fun cooking, cooking class/day, role play, market day, entrepreneurial values, or related developmental competencies. Empirical qualitative, quantitative, classroom action, quasi-experimental, and mixed-methods studies were eligible, together with highly relevant systematic reviews that contributed directly to the review questions. Full text and sufficient methodological detail were required.

Table 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Published in 2020–2025.	Published before 2020 or outside the review period.

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
English or Indonesian full text.	Abstract only, inaccessible full text, or another language.
Peer-reviewed empirical study or high-relevance review.	Editorial, opinion, popular article, unreviewed proceeding, or institutional publicity.
Early childhood, preschool, kindergarten, PAUD, or closely related family/community context.	Population outside early childhood with no direct relevance to the review questions.
Addresses fun cooking/cooking activities, role play/market simulation, entrepreneurship skills or values, or closely related developmental outcomes.	Does not address the focal activities or outcomes.
Adequate methodological transparency and at least moderate appraisal quality.	Insufficient description of design, data collection, analysis, or evidence supporting conclusions.

Source: Eligibility rules derived from the submitted review protocol and evidence matrix.

Study Selection, Data Extraction, and Synthesis

The selection flow began with 303 records. After 54 duplicate records were removed, 249 titles and abstracts were screened. A total of 165 records were excluded at this stage, leaving 84 full-text reports for eligibility assessment. Sixty-four reports were excluded because they fell outside the early childhood context, did not address the focal activities or entrepreneurship-related outcomes, lacked accessible full text, or provided insufficient methodological information. Twenty studies were retained for the final qualitative synthesis.

A structured extraction matrix captured author and year, educational context, study design, activity or intervention, participants, outcomes, principal finding, and relevance to the review questions. Quality appraisal was informed by criteria adapted from CASP and JBI approaches, with attention to purpose, design appropriateness, transparency of data collection and analysis, and the credibility of conclusions. The submitted working document contained inconsistent category-specific quality totals; therefore, this manuscript reports the final 20-study set that met the review's relevance and minimum-quality threshold without presenting unsupported category counts.

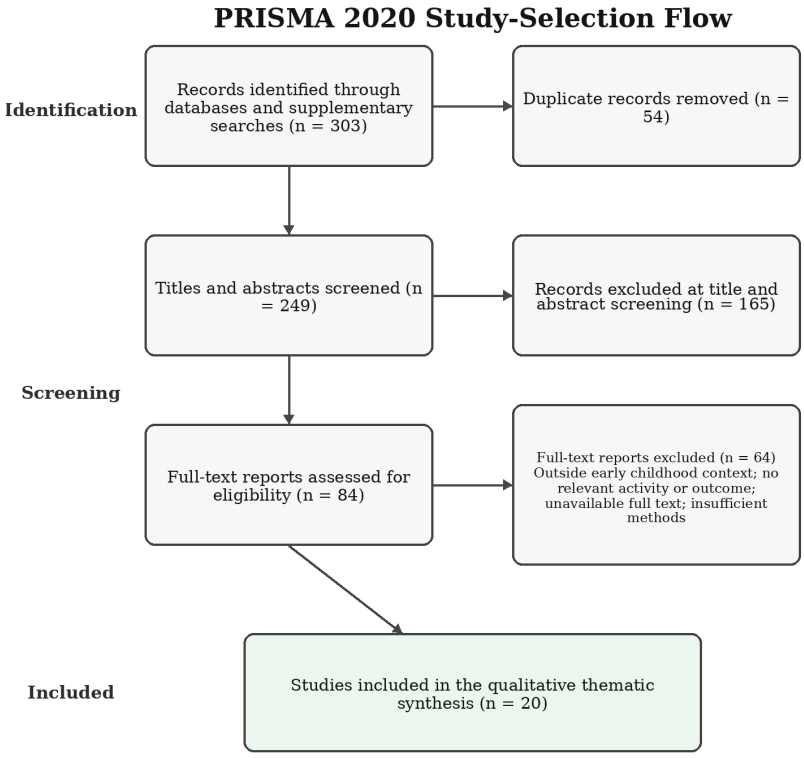


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow of study selection.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Included Studies

The final synthesis included 20 studies published between 2020 and 2025: two from 2020, two from 2021, four from 2022, four from 2023, seven from 2024, and one from 2025. The increasing concentration in 2024 suggests growing interest in experiential entrepreneurship activities in early childhood education. The evidence base was geographically concentrated in Indonesia, with limited international representation. This concentration strengthens contextual relevance for Indonesian PAUD but restricts cross-cultural generalization.

The methodological profile was diverse. Classroom action research and qualitative case studies were common, alongside quantitative evaluations, project descriptions, and systematic reviews. Outcomes also varied: some studies measured entrepreneurship values directly, whereas others examined creativity, cooperation, independence, confidence, cognitive development, science-process skills, social-emotional competence, or character. These outcomes were retained when the activity and developmental mechanism were relevant to early entrepreneurship skills.

Table 3. Summary of the 20 Included Studies

Study	Activity/focus	Main contribution
Rukanda (2020)	STEAM and entrepreneurship character	Playful STEAM learning supported creativity and problem solving as foundations of entrepreneurial character.
Saugi et al. (2020)	Contextual entrepreneurship activities	Gardening, traditional play, and market-day experiences supported responsibility, effort, and initiative.
Nugrahani et al. (2021)	Activity-based entrepreneurship program	Market day, cooking class, outings, and family support fostered courage, independence, and creativity.
Sumarseh & Suryana (2021)	Fun cooking	Home-based fun cooking supported cognitive development during distance learning.
Ismaiyah et al. (2022)	Edupreneurship and independence	Gardening and mini-society activities strengthened independence and problem solving.
Jumaisah (2022)	Contextual cooking class	Cooking class supported discipline, independence, and character formation.
Khusna et al. (2022)	Cooking day	Cooking day fostered creativity, persistence, and entrepreneurship values.
Laela & Citra Novita (2022)	Family fun cooking	Cooking strengthened parent-child bonding and social-emotional competencies relevant to collaboration.
Hanik et al. (2023)	Market-day model	The model improved confidence and independence, with a moderate reported gain.
Khopipah et al. (2023)	Cooking-class aesthetics	Cooking supported aesthetic expression and product creativity.
Vernia & Widiyarto (2023)	Entrepreneurship for Kids	Children learned basic buying-selling concepts, product creativity, and communication; family support aided continuity.

Study	Activity/focus	Main contribution
Wanli & Zulminiati (2023)	Fun cooking and science processes	Making onde-onde improved observation, sequencing, and science-process skills.
Amanah Rahma Ningtyas & Amrillah (2024)	Structured role play	Role allocation and interaction stimulated creativity, confidence, and collaboration.
Aulia & Munastiwi (2024)	Market day	Market activities supported buying-selling concepts, simple management, teamwork, and parent involvement.
Chojak (2024)	Entrepreneurial Kids project	Play-based international activities emphasized creativity, collaboration, and proactivity.
Hilya Aulia Aulia & Abdul Muhid Muhid (2024)	Systematic review of market day	Market day, mini-business, cooking, and crafts were frequently reported as effective experiential methods.
Nisasia et al. (2024)	Fun cooking and cooperation	Classroom action cycles produced progressive improvement in children's cooperation.
Fuadul Mustofa et al. (2024)	Cooking class and entrepreneurial spirit	Hands-on cooking supported time management, creativity, cooperation, and confidence.
Nurhayati & Millenia (2024)	Craft-making and seller-buyer role play	Production and role play strengthened creativity, confidence, and social interaction.
Nisrin Humaida Annur & Abdul Khobir (2025)	Fun cooking and social-emotional development	Planned cooking activities supported social-emotional development from preparation through evaluation.

Source: Authors' synthesis of the submitted 20-study evidence matrix; descriptions were standardized for consistency.

Theme 1: Fun Cooking Builds Production-Oriented Competencies

Across the included evidence, fun cooking consistently created a concrete context for planning, sequencing, producing, and completing a task. Children handled ingredients, followed or negotiated steps, shared tools, observed change, and worked toward a tangible product. These processes were associated with

creativity, cognitive development, science-process skills, cooperation, independence, discipline, and social-emotional growth (Fuadul Mustofa et al., 2024; Jumaisah, 2022; Nisasia et al., 2024; Sumarseh & Suryana, 2021; Wanli & Zulminiati, 2023).

From an entrepreneurship perspective, the most important mechanism was not the culinary product itself but the child's participation in a purposeful production process. Children encountered small problems—how much to use, what to do next, how to divide tasks, what to do when a mixture changed, or how to improve presentation—and were encouraged to persist and make decisions. Cooking-day and cooking-class studies linked these experiences with creativity, responsibility, confidence, and the willingness to complete a product (Khopipah et al., 2023; Khusna et al., 2022; Nugrahani et al., 2021).

The findings also show that cooking can connect school and home. Family-based fun cooking strengthened interaction and emotional bonding, while health-oriented cooking introduced responsible food choices (Laela & Citra Novita, 2022; Umami et al., 2024). These extensions are relevant because entrepreneurship dispositions are reinforced when adults value children's effort, allow meaningful participation, and invite reflection rather than taking over the task.

However, fun cooking is highly dependent on teacher preparation. Developmentally appropriate tools, allergy and hygiene checks, manageable group size, sufficient time, and clear but flexible scaffolding are necessary. When adults control every step, the activity may produce a neat product but offer little opportunity for initiative or problem solving. The educational focus should therefore remain on children's decisions, cooperation, and reflection.

Theme 2: Role Play Develops Market, Communication, and Decision-Making Skills

Role play supported a different set of entrepreneurship-related competencies by placing children in social situations that required communication, coordination, and adaptation. Seller-buyer play, market day, cafés, shops, and other service scenarios allowed children to practice requesting, explaining, responding, taking turns, and negotiating. Such experiences were associated with social interaction, confidence, communication, creativity, and early understanding of transactions (Aulia & Munastiwi, 2024; Fikri et al., 2024; Monika, 2021; Nurhayati & Millenia, 2024).

The social nature of role play is especially important in early childhood. Children must interpret another person's role, consider needs or expectations, and regulate their own behavior within a shared storyline. Studies of role play with concrete materials report benefits for social-emotional development, self-confidence, and creativity (Amanah Rahma Ningtyas & Amrillah, 2024; Dhawil Ilmiyah Albirkiy et al., 2025; Husnah & Hasanah, 2025; Wintari et al., 2024). These competencies are closely related to later entrepreneurship because they support collaboration, leadership, customer awareness, and constructive problem solving. Role play also makes basic economic ideas accessible without relying on formal instruction. Through tokens, play money, menus, labels, or product displays, children can experience exchange, comparison, choice, and service. The goal is not mathematical accuracy or commercial pressure; it is to help children understand that products and services involve effort, communication, responsibility, and mutual agreement.

As with cooking, the quality of teacher scaffolding matters. Props should support imagination rather than prescribe a single script, roles should rotate, and teachers should intervene carefully when conflict or exclusion occurs. Reflection after play—what was easy, what was difficult, how customers or workers felt, and what could be improved—helps transform a lively scenario into intentional learning.

Theme 3: Integration Creates a Coherent Production-to-Market Learning Cycle

The central synthesis of the review is that fun cooking and role play are complementary rather than competing approaches. Fun cooking gives children experience with creation and production, whereas role play provides experience with presentation, exchange, service, and social decision-making. When linked, the activities create a coherent sequence in which children plan and make a product, decide how to display or describe it, assume roles, interact with others, and reflect on the outcome.

Evidence for individual components is stronger than evidence for the complete sequence. Market-day and entrepreneurship programs often include products, crafts, or cooking, and case studies combining craft-making with seller-buyer play show benefits for creativity and confidence (Hanik et al., 2023; Hilya Aulia Aulia & Abdul Muhid Muhid, 2024; Nurhayati & Millenia, 2024). Nevertheless, few studies isolate and empirically test an integrated fun-cooking-and-role-play model. This gap limits conclusions about added value, optimal duration, and which outcomes are uniquely strengthened by integration.

The combined model has strong developmental logic. Production problems activate planning, persistence, creativity, and responsibility; market and service problems activate communication, negotiation, perspective taking, and decision-making. Reflection connects both phases and helps children understand that an idea becomes meaningful through effort, cooperation, communication, and improvement. The model also allows differentiated participation: children can select roles that match their interests and gradually try new responsibilities.

Enabling Conditions, Research Gaps, and Conceptual Contribution

Several enabling conditions appeared across the evidence. Teachers need practical knowledge of safe cooking, role-play facilitation, inclusive grouping, observation, and reflective questioning. Programs are strengthened by adequate time and materials, flexible classroom organization, and support from families or community partners (Nadya Salsabila et al., 2023; Onojah et al., 2025; Vernia & Widiyarto, 2023). Parent involvement can provide materials, cultural knowledge, authentic audiences, and opportunities to continue learning at home, but participation should not shift the activity away from children's agency.

The review identified four major gaps. First, direct integration studies are scarce. Second, entrepreneurship-related outcomes are measured inconsistently, often through teacher observation without standardized criteria. Third, many studies use short-term classroom action or descriptive designs, limiting conclusions about durability and causality. Fourth, the evidence is geographically concentrated and rarely compares rural, urban, inclusive, or culturally diverse settings.

Figure 2 presents the conceptual contribution of the review. Fun cooking and role play are connected through an integrated production-to-market cycle. Teacher scaffolding, safety, time, materials, and family/community support enable the cycle, while entrepreneurship-related outcomes emerge across personal, cognitive, and social domains.

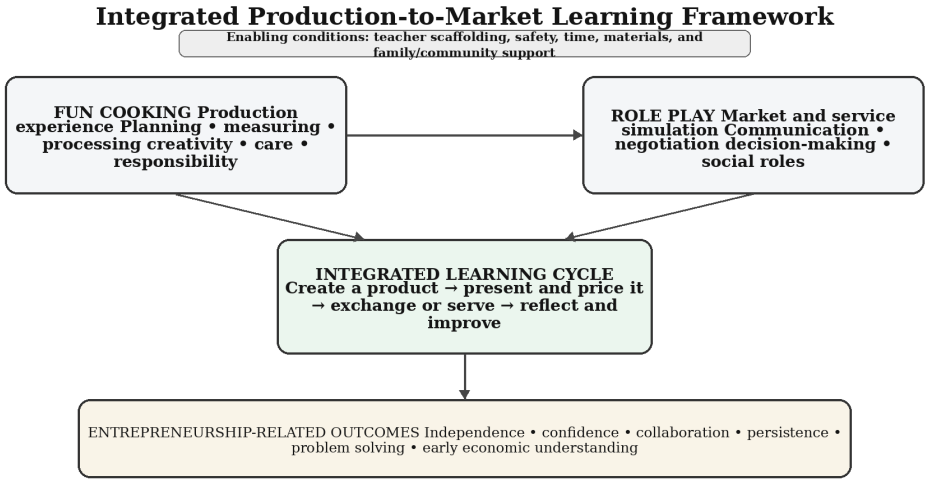


Figure 2. Integrated production-to-market framework for early childhood entrepreneurship learning.

CONCLUSIONS

This systematic literature review concludes that fun cooking and role play make complementary contributions to early childhood entrepreneurship-related skills. Fun cooking provides a production-oriented context that can strengthen planning, creativity, sequencing, cooperation, persistence, independence, and responsibility. Role play provides a market and service context that can strengthen communication, confidence, negotiation, perspective taking, decision-making, and early understanding of exchange. Their integration offers a coherent and developmentally appropriate learning cycle in which children create, present, exchange, serve, and reflect.

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