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The Implementation of Integrated Curriculum for Early Education (PAUD) in Mojokerto during Covid-19

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to describe the implementation of an integrated curriculum for early childhood education (PAUD) in Mojokerto during COVID-19 pandemic. This research design uses descriptive qualitative to describe the implementation of the integrated curriculum at Mojokerto Kindergarten Early Childhood School with research subjects at Al-Amin Kindergarten and Dharma Wanita Kindergarten Mojokerto East Java. This research uses the method or observation technique, in-depth interviews and documentation. This research uses an interactive model Miles & Huberman which is carried out through 3 stages; consist of (1) data reduction, (2) data display or data presentation, (3) conclusion drawing or data verification. Based on the research results, an integrated curriculum in early childhood is required to achieve learning objectives as an effort to develop children's characteristics and their way of thinking that observe everything holistically. By this integrated curriculum, students are expected to have the ability to identify, collect, assess and use information around them in meaningful way. The Implementation of an integrated curriculum during COVID-19 pandemic carried out via online and offline.

Keywords: *Early Childhood Education, Integrated Learning, Interactive Model*

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood requires learning that provides a complete (holistic) understanding, not just fragmented knowledge. Since young children are not yet able to process learning in separate parts, they require an integrated learning approach.

During the COVID-19 pandemic and the new normal, integrated learning for early childhood requires teachers to adapt to the acceleration of learning through electronic learning. Malik & Malik (2011) define integrated learning as the organization of teaching materials in a way that connects subjects that are typically taught separately. Integrated learning involves structuring learning materials by merging separate subjects into a continuous sequence without isolating them.

The integrated curriculum is considered suitable for early childhood learning. It is not merely about combining subject content but extends further to integrating various skills, attitudes, and abilities to make learning more meaningful (Erwin Akib, 2020). Early childhood education serves as a foundational stage that prepares children for basic education, requiring a curriculum, model, or learning method aligned with their growth and development. The integrated curriculum is one approach developed for early childhood learning.

This curriculum provides opportunities for young children to connect their personal life experiences with classroom content, making their knowledge more meaningful. Through an integrated curriculum, children can form connections between different areas of knowledge. By integrating subjects, early childhood learners gain multiple opportunities to understand the relevance of specific skills or knowledge (Kevin, 2015).

Several studies indicate that early childhood learners in schools are more engaged and active when learning is integrated. Engagement, motivation, a child-centered approach, and the development of critical thinking skills are all valid reasons to implement an integrated curriculum in the classroom (Kevin, 2015).

This research aims to describe the implementation of an integrated curriculum for early childhood education (PAUD) in Mojokerto during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a descriptive qualitative design to examine the implementation of the integrated curriculum at Mojokerto Kindergarten Early Childhood School. The research subjects include Al-Amin Kindergarten and Dharma Wanita Kindergarten in Mojokerto, East Java. The study utilizes observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation as data collection techniques. Data analysis follows the interactive model by Miles & Huberman (2014),

consisting of three stages: (1) data reduction, (2) data display or presentation, and (3) conclusion drawing or data verification.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Implementation of Integrated Curriculum at Al-Amin Kindergarten: The Aspect of Child-Centered Education

The implementation of the integrated curriculum at TK Al-Amin Mojokerto follows a child-centered learning approach, actively involving children in the learning process. Observations indicate that teachers conduct apperception and consistently encourage children to be curious and engaged with the learning media provided.

Teachers utilize Webbed-type integrated learning by linking one theme to another. Fogarty (1993) presents a continuum of perspectives on curriculum integration, offering ten different ways of integrating curriculum. Many experts define curriculum based on various observations of how teachers integrate learning content.

Teachers effectively provoke children's understanding by creatively exploring questions related to places, objects, activities, important events, problems, or abstract concepts to enhance their comprehension.

Bern & Erickson (2001) state that in early childhood education, an integrated curriculum is a product of learner-centered education that emphasizes students' interests, culture, needs, and learning styles. It builds on conceptually similar disciplines, using themes or combining related subjects while maintaining flexible schedules to highlight the relationship between concepts and skills.

The Aspect of Providing Direct Experience to Children

Observations reveal that the integrated curriculum in kindergarten is implemented by immersing children in real-world experiences. During face-to-face learning, children are taken around the school environment, while in online classes, teachers send photos and videos to parents about the themes children will explore.

The Aspect of Vague Subject Boundaries

In integrated learning, curriculum integration addresses early childhood issues by mapping content horizontally and vertically without clear subject divisions. Every learning activity involves hands-on experiences, providing children with a broad understanding of their environment.

Aisyah et al. (2008) explain that thematic learning is based on central ideas about children and their surroundings. Themes should start with familiar aspects before progressing to more complex ones. Thematic learning has been widely used since John Dewey introduced a curriculum linked to real-life experiences.

Flexibility in Implementation

During the COVID-19 pandemic, integrated learning for early childhood was adapted flexibly using digital resources. Electronic learning through media, the internet, and mobile technology was widely promoted to replace traditional face-to-face learning.

The implementation of the integrated curriculum is context-dependent, adjusting to conditions and learning time. Learning technology played a crucial role in early childhood education, aiding in language development through audio media, computers, and the internet (Campbell et al., 2004). Digital learning stimulates cognitive growth in young children (Mawson, 2013).

Implementation of the Integrated Curriculum at “Dharma Wanita” Kindergarten**The Aspect of Child-Centered Education**

In preschool education, an integrated curriculum emphasizes a learner-centered approach, considering students' interests, culture, and learning styles. It helps children connect school learning with real-life experiences, making the curriculum relevant to societal needs. Students should be part of the problem-solving process to improve their communities (Jamaris, 2009; Nadar, 2020). Curriculum integration fosters a sense of community involvement among students.

The Aspect of Bringing New Experiences to Children

Observations and interviews with school stakeholders indicate that an integrated curriculum provides children with direct experiences through hands-on learning in their environment. It enables children to develop skills, retrieve information efficiently, and understand learning holistically by connecting ideas, problems, and skills.

By removing subject boundaries, curriculum integration helps young children make meaningful connections between disciplines. It supports different learning styles and conditions (Fogarty, 1993). The implementation is flexible, allowing offline and online learning through mobile learning, with parental support at home.

The Aspect of Vague Subject Boundaries

Erickson (Berns & Erickson, 2001) defines an integrated curriculum as combining multiple disciplines under a shared conceptual focus. It organizes content through themes, emphasizes relationships between concepts, and allows flexible scheduling. Strict subject separation can create artificial learning experiences, making it harder for children to grasp content.

Kindergarten learning should consider children's holistic learning experiences. Well-designed learning packages enhance meaningful learning, as

interrelated conceptual elements provide effective and engaging educational opportunities. The nature of child development impacts curriculum organization, influencing planning, implementation, and evaluation (Trianto, 2011).

Flexibility in Implementation

The implementation of an integrated curriculum follows general learning steps, including opening activities, core lessons, and closure. During the pandemic, teachers delivered lessons via WhatsApp and YouTube, while face-to-face learning involved classical methods and thematic field trips to places like zoos and outbound centers.

Electronic-based learning has become essential in early childhood education, helping children grasp abstract concepts and engage in collaborative learning. Digital learning enhances reasoning and problem-solving skills (Clements & Sarama, 2003; Plowman et al., 2010; Yelland, 2006).

CONCLUSION

The integrated curriculum is a learning approach that combines multiple subjects to provide a meaningful learning experience for children. It is designed to be a practice-oriented method that aligns with children's needs. An integrated curriculum effectively creates opportunities for students to observe and construct interrelated concepts, enabling them to understand complex environmental problems through comprehensive observation.

Through this approach, students are expected to develop the ability to identify, collect, assess, and use information in a meaningful way. This is achieved not only by providing additional knowledge but also by offering opportunities to reinforce and apply it in various situations.

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