

Implementation of Early Childhood Education Institution Management Based on the Independent Curriculum at Darul Fallah 2 Kindergarten

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the implementation of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) management based on the Independent Curriculum at Darul Fallah 2 Kindergarten in Samarinda. This study used a descriptive qualitative approach, with the principal and one class teacher as the subjects. Data were collected through interviews and observations, and supported by case studies. The results indicate that Darul Fallah 2 Kindergarten has implemented effective institution management through four main management functions: planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating. The principal acts as a strategic leader who directs the course of educational activities, while teachers act as facilitators who focus on child-centered learning. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at this institution emphasizes center-based learning that allows children the freedom to explore according to their interests and talents. The institution also actively involves parents in the educational process and collaborates with external parties, such as community health centers, to support children's growth and development. Human resource management, infrastructure, and learning activities are aligned with the principles of the Independent Curriculum, which fosters independence, creativity, and religious character in children. Therefore, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum-based management at Darul Fallah 2 Kindergarten has created a meaningful, enjoyable, and holistic learning environment for early childhood.

Keywords: *PAUD Management; Independent curriculum; Early-childhood education.*

INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is one of the basic institutions that focuses on the formation of quality Human Resources. It is contained in part seven, article 28 paragraphs 1 to 6, where Early Childhood Education is directed at pre-school education, namely children aged 0-6 years. According to Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System regarding the importance of handling Early Childhood Education, it states that Early Childhood Education is a development effort aimed at children from birth to the age of six years which is carried out through providing educational stimulation to help physical and spiritual growth and development so that children have readiness to enter education to a more advanced stage (Rizki Abadi et al., 2025). Management, essentially, comes from the English word "management," which is derived from the term "manage." In general, "manage" means to organize, manage, or administer. Furthermore, there is

another understanding of management that refers to the term "managiare," which refers to the activity of caring for, implementing, and organizing.

The educational curriculum is inextricably linked to improvements and development. Learning in early childhood education institutions, with its continually revised curriculum, presents a challenge for all educators. Changes in curriculum development undoubtedly impact children's learning activities and the management of the institution, which must comply with established regulations. In Indonesia, during Minister Nadiem Makarim's term, a new curriculum, the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, was launched, hoping to foster a generation grounded in Pancasila. Previously, the 2013 curriculum was used. Research showed that the 2013 curriculum was still teacher-oriented and rendered children passive. The hope is that the new curriculum will further improve the quality of learning in early childhood education.

Independent learning means freedom to learn, providing students with the opportunity to learn freely. In the independent curriculum, children are encouraged to learn as freely as possible, calmly, relaxed, and happily, without stress or pressure, while taking into account their desires and mastery of a particular field of study beyond their hobbies and abilities. This allows each student to develop a portfolio that aligns with their passions (Abidah et al., 2020; Rasmani et al., 2022). Driving teachers are those who possess awareness, willingness, professional competence, and prioritize student development, ensuring they consistently deliver excellence in the learning process (Sihombing et al., 2021). The Ministry of Education and Culture grants early childhood education (PAUD) units the freedom to implement the curriculum in their respective institutions. The independent curriculum is divided into three categories as options for implementation in educational institutions (Eka Retnaningsih & Patilima, 2022). The three curricula are independent learning, independent change, and independent sharing. The independent learning curriculum is implemented by granting educational units the freedom to implement several parts and principles of the Independent Curriculum. Independent curriculum, without changing the curriculum, is implemented independently educational units currently being implemented in PAUD educational units. The Independent Sharing Curriculum, where educational units develop various teaching tools themselves in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) units (Kemendikburistek Republik Indonesia, 2022; Syahrir, 2022).

METHODS

Subjects of Research

The subjects in this study included the principal and one class teacher at Darul Fallah 2 Kindergarten in Samarinda. These subjects were selected because they had direct

knowledge and understanding of the management of the independent curriculum-based early childhood education (PAUD) at the kindergarten.

Instruments and Interview Questions

The research method and approach used descriptive qualitative research. Qualitative research is an activity related to observational actions, attempting to study something naturally, understand it in depth, or interpret, give meaning to phenomena by describing, decoding, translating, and understanding the context naturally (Merriam, 2009). The purpose of this research is to fulfill the task of PAUD 1 Implementation Management (SPS, TPA, KB). This research approach aims to describe and understand phenomena in depth such as words, experiences, or context. The research steps began with a literature study on PAUD quality regarding how to Implement PAUD Institution Management Based on the Independent Curriculum. The literature study was conducted by collecting data through books or journal articles.

Data Collection

The data collection technique used interviews with the principal and teachers. Interviews were conducted with two individuals, the principal and a teacher. The data collection period was approximately two weeks. Data collection will be conducted using primary data from direct interviews with teachers. The interview instructions contain information on the Implementation of Early Childhood Education Management Based on the Independent Curriculum at Darul Fallah 2 Kindergarten, which has begun implementing the Independent Curriculum, from planning, organizing, controlling, and supervising. In addition, this study uses secondary data as supporting data in the analysis in this study, in the form of journals and books.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of observations conducted at Darul Falah 2 Kindergarten show that this institution has implemented effective and targeted management of early childhood education, especially in the implementation of the child-centered Merdeka Curriculum. Darul Falah 2 Kindergarten is a private early childhood education institution located at Jalan Cendana No. 04 RT 12, Teluk Lerong Ulu Village, Sungai Kunjang District, Samarinda City, East Kalimantan Province. This institution has a vision to "Form a generation that is religious, independent, innovative, and entrepreneurial." This vision is implemented in all learning activities and institutional governance that focuses on the formation of children's character and spiritual values from an early age. (Noer Ashfarina & Tri Wijayati, 2023) The preparation of the independent curriculum in PAUD units has a clear process and structure. The government, specifically the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research,

and Technology, has given each early childhood education unit the option to implement various versions of the Merdeka Curriculum, depending on each unit's readiness to implement it. In fact, the 2013 curriculum doesn't completely change or eliminate elements of the Merdeka Curriculum. Learning objectives, learning outcomes, and other terms remain relevant to the 2013 Curriculum (Siregar & Mashudi, 2024).

In curriculum management, Darul Fallah 2 Kindergarten applies management principles that include curriculum planning, organization, implementation, and evaluation. Curriculum planning is divided into annual and semester planning, weekly and daily planning. The organization is carried out by grouping the tasks and responsibilities of each educator and teaching staff. Implementation is carried out in accordance with the prepared learning plan. Management at Darul Falah 2 Kindergarten is carried out professionally and in an organized manner. The principal serves as the primary leader, overseeing academic and non-academic activities. He or she also makes strategic decisions, directing the institution to ensure it continues to operate in accordance with its established vision and mission. The principal fosters a positive work culture, motivates teachers, and maintains positive relationships with parents and the community. Teachers and other educational staff play a crucial role in classroom learning. They not only teach but also guide and assist children in developing all aspects of their development, including cognitive, language, social-emotional, motor skills, and moral and religious values. Teachers are also responsible for developing learning materials, such as teaching modules and daily lesson plans (RPPH), tailored to student characteristics. Furthermore, teachers create a fun learning environment by using a variety of educational media and age-appropriate thematic games.

Darul Falah 2 Kindergarten has implemented the Independent Curriculum effectively. This curriculum emphasizes student-centered learning and deep learning. Children are given the opportunity to explore, think critically, imagine, and discover meaning in every activity they undertake. (Safitri Maya & Salsabila Alya, 2025) Kusuma (2023) found that educators use various methods to stimulate children's critical thinking, such as hands-on experiments, assignments, and stringing activities. They also introduce colors, sizes, and counting using natural materials such as sticks. Question-and-answer methods, discussions, and conversations help children solve problems and deepen their understanding. In addition, stories, interactive videos, icebreakers, and block games provide interesting variations in creating a learning atmosphere that encourages critical thinking. Teachers act as facilitators, guiding children to learn through direct experience, not just providing information. During activities, teachers often use trigger sentences to spark children's curiosity and imagination, such as "What if

flowers could talk?" or "If you were a cloud, where would you fly?" These simple yet meaningful sentences can foster children's curiosity, spark their imagination, and make learning activities more lively and enjoyable. Learning at Darul Falah 2 Kindergarten also uses a center-based approach, including the Natural Materials Center, Preparation Center, Role Center, and Block Center. Through this approach, children are free to choose activities that suit their interests. For example, in the Natural Materials Center, children are invited to plant seeds using polybags. This activity begins with watching an educational video about the process of plant growth, followed by hands-on planting practice.

This learning not only provides real-world experiences but also fosters a love of nature, responsibility, and environmental awareness. Human resource management at Darul Falah 2 Kindergarten is also effective and focused. The principal serves as a director, teachers focus on children's learning activities, and administrative staff are responsible for administrative tasks. A clear division of tasks ensures the smooth running of all school activities. The school also supports teacher professional development through training and workshops related to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Each teacher is encouraged to continuously improve their teaching skills to create innovative and child-centered learning. Furthermore, Darul Falah 2 Kindergarten collaborates with the local community health center for routine child health checks and outreach activities. Collaboration with the community and external institutions demonstrates Darul Falah 2 Kindergarten's open and collaborative management system.

The learning facilities at Darul Falah 2 Kindergarten are adequate and support all children's activities. There are four classrooms: A1, B1, B2, and B3. Each classroom is equipped with Educational Play Tools (APE) such as number cards, picture cards, puzzles, and thematic-based learning media. In addition to classroom activities, the institution also provides outdoor facilities such as swings and slides, which are used to develop children's gross motor skills. Although the outdoor play area is not very large, teachers make optimal use of the school grounds so that children can continue to have free and enjoyable activities. The institution also strives to develop environmentally-based learning through gardening activities using polybags as an alternative medium. Parental involvement in the educational process is a key strength at Darul Falah 2 Kindergarten. The institution actively establishes communication and collaboration with parents through daily contact books, parent-teacher meetings, and parenting activities. Parents are also involved in various activities such as competitions with their children, social visits, and religious activities. Another form of collaboration that is clearly visible is in mentoring children with special needs, such as those with speech delays. In this case, teachers collaborate with psychologists and parents to provide continuous

stimulation both at home and at school. Parental involvement has been proven to increase children's enthusiasm for learning, strengthen emotional bonds, and create positive synergy between home and school. Pamela Phelps explains that the principle applied in center learning is constructivism, which means that the learning process is not only focused on the teacher and memorizing the material, but also that students actively play a role in building their own knowledge (Ar-Raisul Karama Arifin and Nur Ainy Fardana, 2014). (Alfianti, 2020) Jean Piaget argued that children develop their knowledge through continuous interaction with their environment, tailored to their developmental stage. Meanwhile, Lev Vygotsky also stated that knowledge is not simply transferred from others but is shaped and created by the child themselves. According to both figures, children play an active role in the learning process (Fitriana, 2018).

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of the management of the Early Childhood Education (PAUD) institution based on the Independent Curriculum at Darul Fallah 2 Kindergarten in Samarinda has been very successful and well-directed. This institution is able to apply the principles of effective educational management, prioritizing collaboration between the principal, teachers, education staff, and the active role of parents in supporting children's learning success. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Darul Fallah 2 Kindergarten fosters a fun, flexible, and child-centered learning environment. Children are given the freedom to explore, imagine, and develop their potential according to their interests and talents. Teachers act as facilitators who guide children through meaningful and contextual play activities. Through center-based learning, children learn not only from material, but also from direct experience and social interactions in their environment. Furthermore, the institutional management implemented shows alignment with the spirit of the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes independence, creativity, and innovation. Darul Fallah 2 Kindergarten has successfully created a conducive educational environment, full of religious enthusiasm, and oriented towards developing children's character from an early age. Supportive facilities, collaboration with parents and the community, and efforts to improve teacher competency further strengthen the quality of education at this institution. Therefore, it can be concluded that the management of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) based on the Independent Curriculum at Darul Fallah 2 Kindergarten is a clear example of the successful implementation of a curriculum that adapts to the needs of the times. This institution has demonstrated that child-centered learning, supported by professional and collaborative management, can create a generation of young

children who are independent, have character, and are ready to face future challenges.

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