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## **LEARNING PROCESS MANAGEMENT IN POST-PANDEMIC EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

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### **Abstract**

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This study aims to analyze the management of the learning process of Early Childhood Education (ECE) after the COVID-19 pandemic in Medan City, North Sumatera Province, Indonesia. The research approach used is descriptive qualitative. The results showed that the 4 functions of learning process management can be carried out even with several obstacles in formal and non-formal Early Childhood Education institutions. There are differences in the learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic and Post-Pandemic, namely the use of blended learning methods by combining online and offline learning. The application of health protocols is also an integral part of the learning carried out by Early Childhood Education institutions. Suggestions for further research include management analysis on other Early Childhood Education standards to provide a comprehensive picture of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Early Childhood Education and become input for policymakers to establish education policies during the COVID-19 post-pandemic (New Normal).

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## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit almost all countries in the world and finally felt in Indonesia as well. The Indonesian government is working hard to prevent the spread of Covid-19. As an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the realm of education, the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) has issued several circular letters (A. E. Lubis & Nugroho, 2020). One of the Circular Letters regulates the implementation of educational policies during the COVID-19 pandemic, namely the Circular Letter of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 4 of 2020 concerning the Implementation of Educational Policies in the Emergency Period of the Spread of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). In the second point of the circular, it is explained that: "... the learning process from home is carried out with the following provisions: First, it is carried out to provide meaningful learning experiences for students, without being burdened by the demands of completing all curriculum achievements for grade promotion or graduation. Second, it is focused on life skills education, including the COVID-19 pandemic. Third, learning activities and tasks can vary between students, according to their interests and conditions, including considering gaps in access/learning facilities at home. Fourth, evidence or products of learning activities from home are given qualitative and useful feedback from teachers, without being required to give quantitative scores/grades". In addition, the Ministry of Education and Culture also issued Circular Letter Number 15 of 2020 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of Learning From Home in the Emergency Period of the Spread of COVID-19 strengthening the previous Circular Letter on learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Wijayanto, 2021).

Human Resource Management in improving learning strategies in the new normal/COVID-19 era is an effort, careful readiness, and provision both in terms of Information Technology skills and virtual learning progress. The most appropriate learning strategy in this new normal era/post-COVID-19 pandemic is to follow the rules of the Ministry of Education and Culture with virtual learning through an agreed platform. For this reason, the two main elements in teaching and learning activities take place, namely students and teachers must be equipped, qualified, and know the direction of learning that will be filtered to minimize misunderstandings between teachers and students. Learning that is carried out also does not have to be fixated on online learning and assignments. Teachers are also expected to be creative and innovative in exploring fun learning activities, especially due to limited technology and internet connection (Setiawan et al., 2022).

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is an institution that provides a learning activity that can stimulate the development and growth of children, provide motivation, foster, and provide an institution that can develop the potential of children as fully and optimally as possible. An educator must manage a learning program that can provide good service because the teacher is a facilitator in the school (Ginting et al., 2021).

Teachers have such an important role in education, teachers must plan an education program to be able to support the growth and development of children in every activity that children do. PAUD management has a very important role in seeing the many aspects that must be developed to make PAUD have good management so that the objectives are achieved properly. Related to PAUD management includes planning and how it is implemented in schools.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers must prepare face-to-face learning plans for children because previously teachers prepared online system learning plans. The learning plan prepared by the teacher during the online system is that every child's activities are carried out at home with parents and children have homework. There are many problems online, for example, networks that suddenly disappear or parents who do not have smartphones (Nugroho & Lubis, 2022).

The implementation of early childhood education during the post-COVID-19 pandemic has undergone several changes by policies issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture. This study analyzes the management of the ECD delivery process at institutions representing formal and non-formal pathways in Medan City, North Sumatra Province. Permendikbud Regulation No.

137/2014 on Early Childhood Education Standards stipulates that ECD is organized through three channels: formal, non-formal, and informal. Kindergarten (TK) and Raudhatul Athfal (RA) are formal pathways. Playgroups (KB), daycare centers (TPA) and similar early childhood education units (SPS) are the organization of PAUD in the non-formal pathway. The informal pathway is childhood education in the family. The PAUD institutions that were the subject of the study were five institutions, namely two kindergarten institutions, one RA institution, and two KB institutions.

## **METHODS**

The research objectives, namely analyzing the implementation of the management of the learning process of Early Childhood Education after the COVID-19 pandemic, the research approach is descriptive qualitative. Researchers conducted document studies and in-depth interviews at PAUD institutions in Medan City, North Sumatra Province. The research subjects were educators and education personnel using research instruments interview guidelines and documentation. Respondents involved in this study amounted to 20 people consisting of educators, and education personnel of the PAUD institutions studied. The object explored in this study is the management of the learning process of PAUD after the COVID-19 pandemic, including four management functions, namely planning, organizing, implementing, and monitoring/controlling. The thing to be measured from the instrument is the implementation of learning process management and the obstacles that occur during the implementation of education with the situation and conditions after the COVID-19 pandemic. The data analysis used in this research is descriptive analysis by providing an overview of the things that have been studied. The approach used in this research is qualitative to produce an in-depth analysis of what is being studied (M. S. Lubis, 2018).

## **RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS**

### **Results**

The results of in-depth interviews with educators and education personnel of each PAUD institution of the research subject can be obtained as important points that can be the starting point for analyzing PAUD management of post-COVID-19 pandemic education policies. ECD learning process management includes four things, namely planning, organizing, implementing, and monitoring/controlling. The learning process after the COVID-19 pandemic has undergone some changes when compared to the pandemic.

#### **Planning**

ECD institutions, both formal and non-formal, make lesson plans on the established curriculum. PAUD educators make lesson plans, RPPM/RPPH before learning. For example, Abu Hafizh PAUD makes a lesson plan a week in advance. Seen from the results of an interview with one of the educators.

"...Monday to Saturday the teacher stays in to prepare materials and tasks that will be given to children, complete school administration, teachers enter from 07.00-14.00..."

(Interview October 9, 2021)

#### **Organizing**

Learning in PAUD for the 2021/2022 academic year has started since July 14, 2021. Almost all institutions conducted opening activities to start the new school year. Educators have also prepared lesson plans, materials, methods, and learning media. The division of tasks and authority of educators for each study group (rumble) has also been determined by the Principal.

Some educators remain teachers of class A (4-5 years old) or class B (5-6 years old), while others are transferred to hold different classes than before. This can be seen from the results of an interview with one of the educators, PAUD Al-Huda educator.

" ... for this school year I moved to hold class B ma'am ... last school year I was in class A ... because last year I was still in one rombongan, now make 2 rombongan ... because we don't have a room yet ...".

(Interview, October 10, 2021)

#### Implementation

Unlike the implementation of learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, the post-pandemic learning process began to implement offline learning. Some institutions use the home visit method, some institutions conduct direct face-to-face meetings once a week for each rombongan by implementing all health protocols. For example, the results of an interview with one of the educationists, RA Al-Ihsan educators.

"... online method (through Zoom) and offline (face-to-face 1 week 1x each group) ..."

(Interview, October 11, 2021)

Institutions that apply the home visit method are not only from the formal pathway, non-formal pathways such as TK Swadaya also use this method. This was concluded from an interview with one of the educators.

"...in learning through online via wa and also through offline with visits to students' homes which are carried out 1-2 times a week, ..."

(Interview October 10, 2021)

#### Supervision/Control

Supervision of the learning process that is usually carried out by the school principal to all educators/teachers is also still carried out after this pandemic. Coaching for educators is mainly aimed at the implementation of the learning process even though the situation and conditions are less conducive because they must prioritize the safety of all parties, both teachers and students.

Learning methods and media are adjusted to the conditions of each institution and the conditions of the students' families/homes. Control of the learning process related to the parents of students is carried out by maximizing communication between the school and parents. As done by one of the educators at Syarah Kindergarten, according to the following interview results.

"...for communication between teachers and parents every day there is always via WhatsApp or during home visits the teacher interviews parents for child development..."

(Interview October 10, 2021)

#### Discussions

Based on the four management functions of planning, organizing, implementing, and monitoring/controlling, it can be seen that all four functions can be implemented in formal and non-formal PAUD institutions. However, some obstacles accompany the implementation. The first learning process management step is planning. Successful learning begins with a good teacher's understanding of lesson planning. Before conducting the learning process, teachers must design learning by developing the existing curriculum. Teachers are professional educators who are responsible for developing learning plans that can develop all children's potential. Learning plans made by teachers are intended so that the goals that have been set can be achieved (Alim et al., 2022).

The situation and conditions after the COVID-19 pandemic did not dampen the enthusiasm of PAUD educators, both formal and non-formal, to continue making lesson plans. With all the limitations that exist, educators make lesson plans to help parents when accompanying their children to study at home. Educators also try to make learning innovations so that students do not feel bored. This is by the results of (Mawardinur et al., 2022) research which emphasizes innovation in learning planning to meet the expectations and challenges of the 4.0 revolution era.

The next step of learning process management is organizing. The results showed that formal and non-formal PAUD educators continue to organize the results of learning planning that has been determined. Existing situations and conditions do require all parties to continue to prioritize health for all. The division of tasks and authority in the learning process is carried out

by looking at the overall conditions that exist both at school and in the family/home environment of each learner.

The next stage of learning process management is implementation. The implementation of the ECD learning process in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period is indeed adapted to the conditions of each institution and the families/homes of all learners. Some PAUD institutions continue to fully conduct online learning, but there are also PAUD institutions that combine two methods, namely online and offline. The combination of these two methods is better known as blended learning. Early childhood does require more direct physical/face-to-face interaction to form an emotional bond between educators and learners. The use of online-only learning methods leads to a lack of this emotional bond so sometimes we find learners who are reluctant to do learning tasks that have been planned by educators. Children's boredom is even greater in the absence of school friends who used to play and learn together. Parents who due to economic demands have to leave the house a lot to work for a living are also a factor that makes children miss school even more.

The situation and conditions after the COVID-19 pandemic have indeed affected all components of society. (Azandi et al., 2022) in his research stated that the impact of prolonged isolation causes high stress and psychological consequences on children. With the start of the new academic year and schools starting to open the learning process, can begin to be reduced. Furthermore, (Hendrawan et al., 2022) also stated that schools play an important role in overcoming the psychological impact that occurs after school closure. Teachers also play an important role in classroom organization and bringing children back to normal learning conditions.

PAUD institutions that have direct face-to-face contact with students even though only once a week for one rombel also carry out Covid-19 pandemic health protocol procedures to ensure that all parties remain safe and healthy. The discipline of all school residents and the environment is indeed a determinant of maintaining school safety and comfort. This is corroborated by research (Palinata et al., 2023) which states that the discipline of school residents and the preparation and organization of healthy classes to prevent the spread of coronavirus in early childhood is very important.

The use of information technology devices such as gadgets still dominates online learning in the post-Covid-19 pandemic period. WhatsApp groups have become a trend among early childhood educators and parents to communicate with each other. This is also corroborated by research (Nugroho et al., 2023) which emphasizes that parents and teachers can utilize information technology in online learning such as WhatsApp Group so that communication between all parties can be established.

The implementation of the PAUD learning process is not necessarily without obstacles. Educational components both internal and external to the school have their obstacles. Research (Nugroho et al., 2023) confirms this with its findings that there are several obstacles in the implementation of education policies during the COVID-19 emergency. The implementation of distance education by learning from home has not been optimal overall. The obstacles found are both in terms of human resources, organizational arrangements, curriculum, and learning facilities. (Nugroho et al., 2023) encourages the House of Representatives Commission X to synergize related sectors and conduct supervision so that the implementation of the learning-from-home policy can run well.

The last stage in the management function is supervision/control. Formal and non-formal PAUD institutions also continue to implement this management function. However, as was the case before the COVID-19 pandemic, the weakness of management in PAUD is that it has not documented all activities, including this supervision. The oral culture is indeed the strongest characteristic of Indonesia and this is also an obstacle to good management processes. However, if PAUD management is to be implemented properly, documentation of all activities must be part of the organizational culture of PAUD institutions, both formal and non-formal.

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The situation and conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic cannot be avoided because it has become an evenly distributed disaster in almost all parts of the world. An optimistic and solutive attitude and mindset are needed so that the continuity of life including the learning process for early childhood can continue. The results of research (Nugroho et al., 2023) concluded that schools and surrounding communities have a give-and-take relationship with this new normal and are interpreted as coexisting with COVID-19. Tenacity and resilience are also needed so that there is no loss of a generation of quality due to the situation of disaster conditions that cannot be avoided. Hope is always there if we unite and move forward together to achieve the nation's goals that have been aspired to.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the discussion, it can be concluded that the four functions of learning process management can be carried out even with several obstacles in formal and non-formal PAUD institutions. There are differences in the learning process during the pandemic and post-COVID-19 pandemic, namely the use of blended learning methods by combining online and offline learning (home visits). The application of health protocols is also an integral part of the learning carried out by PAUD institutions. Suggestions for further research are management analysis on other ECD Standards to provide a comprehensive picture of the impact of COVID-19 on Early Childhood Education and become input for policymakers to establish education policies during the new normal/post-COVID-19 pandemic.

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