

Implementation of Curriculum Development: Case Study on Early Childhood Education Teachers in Sragen Regency

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Abstract. This study examines the implementation of early childhood education curriculum development in rural areas by early childhood education teachers in Sragen Regency. The research aims to place teachers as facilitators in school changes based on their perceptions of implementation as a result of developing the Early Childhood Education curriculum that the Regional and Central Government continuously develops. This study used a qualitative design with a case study approach. The informants of this research were ten early childhood education teachers in rural and urban areas of Sragen Regency, where the key informants were policymakers, namely the Head of the Education and Culture Office of Sragen Regency. The study results illustrate the advantages and disadvantages of competency-based curriculum implementation based on the experience of each according to the location of the teacher where he teaches. It is also implied that effective curriculum implementation is something or information conveyed by the teacher to students when the learning process takes place. Such conditions did not run smoothly, but there were many challenges, especially for teachers in rural areas. Apart from the problem of implementing the curriculum, facilities and infrastructure, there is also a lack of funding and inadequate human resources. It is recommended that future policymakers, teacher attention, and parental involvement could employ these findings for a decision basis. It is also suggested that policymakers could prioritize educational arrangements in complex Early Childhood Education before curriculum planning and implementation. The importance of involving teachers in rural areas can accommodate the aspirations of local wisdom and cultural behaviour as a characteristic of a plural nation-state.

Keywords: Curriculum Implementation; ECE Teachers; Rural Areas

Abstrak. Penelitian ini mengkaji penerapan pengembangan kurikulum PAUD di pedesaan oleh guru PAUD di Kabupaten Sragen. Penelitian bertujuan untuk menempatkan guru sebagai fasilitator dalam perubahan di sekolah dengan mendasarkan pada persepsinya dalam pengimplementasian sebagai hasil pengembangan kurikulum di kelembagaan PAUD yang terus dikembangkan oleh Pemerintah Daerah dan Pusat. Studi ini digunakan desain kualitatif, ada 10 guru PAUD di pedesaan dan perkotaan wilayah Kabupaten Sragen sebagai informan, selain informan kunci adalah pemangku kebijakan yaitu Kepala Dinas Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Kabupaten Sragen. Hasil penelitian menggambarkan bahwa ada kelebihan dan kelemahan dari penerapan kurikulum berbasis kompetensi yang didasarkan pada pengalaman masing-masing sesuai lokasi guru tempat mengajar. Tersirat juga bahwa implementasi kurikulum yang efektif adalah instruksi guru kepada peserta didik ketika proses pembelajaran berlangsung. Perspektif seperti itu juga banyak memberikan wawasan bahwa tantangan yang dialami oleh guru PAUD di pedesaan selain dalam implementasi kurikulum juga sarana dan prasarana yang kurang memadai, selain juga kekurangan sumber dana dan sumber daya manusia. Hasil penelitian merekomendasikan bahwa temuan penelitian ini dapat digunakan sebagai dasar untuk pemangku kebijakan di masa depan, perhatian guru, dan orang tua, bahkan ditegaskan bahwa pengaturan pendidikan di PAUD yang kompleks harus diprioritaskan oleh pembuat kebijakan sebelum perencanaan dan penerapan kurikulum, yang melibatkan guru PAUD di pedesaan sehingga kearifan lokal dan budaya perilaku sebagai ciri negara bangsa yang plural dapat terwadai.

Kata Kunci: Implementasi Kurikulum; Guru PAUD; Pedesaan.

INTRODUCTION

Some people think that early childhood education (ECE) teachers are only caregivers of children. In contrast, others are more assertive that ECE teachers are significant in preparing children for academic continuation in the future and providing opportunities for children to reach their maximum potential. Therefore, it is natural for some people to think that the government still lacks prioritizing funding for education at ECE. This condition further adds to the lack of enthusiasm for some teachers in carrying out their teaching tasks, especially in the community of teachers in rural areas (Biesta, Priestley, & Robinson, 2015). This condition is contrary to Article 24 of the African Charter (1986), which states that all human beings have the right to an excellent general environment to support the development of children. This regulation is essential for ECE teachers and students, who should enjoy the right to a conducive learning environment designed to increase early childhood (EC) in achieving optimal development. Therefore, it is necessary to involve teachers from the planning stage to implementation in preparing a curriculum.

(Kehily, 2012) stated that there is a lot of literature and research results showing that the lack of education policy stakeholders pays serious attention to the ideal concept of education, even if ECE in rural areas is neglected and marginalized from the educational circle as a result of which

children's development suffers from sluggishness. This condition is not much different from ECE in Sragen Regency, where ECE in urban areas dominates more than in rural areas. This condition also is contrary to the Education and Culture Office policy of Central Java Province, which is increasingly concerned with early childhood education. However, it is very different when the learning experience occurs in ECE students in rural areas from ECE in urban areas, even though they are still in one regency.

There is still much that needs to be addressed and done by the government and the community in order to improve the quality of the current ECE program, especially in rural areas, which lack learning facilities and infrastructure, including human resources.

There are around 998 ECE registered with the Education and Culture Office of Sragen Regency until now. Regarding the differences between urban and rural ECE, there needs to be a solution as alternative solutions to differences. This condition is solved if it begins with the identification of understanding of how to implement and develop a curriculum for ECE teachers who teach in rural areas to then discuss with ECE teachers in urban areas, either through regular, periodic meetings or other academic meetings in the form of pieces of training and others.

This research focuses on the belief of ECE teachers in rural areas to understand the existing conditions to stay motivated in

carrying out learning tasks. In addition, it also makes teachers carry out a series of learning activities for effectiveness in curriculum implementation. In order to fulfil and be able to answer these problems, the researcher asked several research questions related to the obstacles to implementing an effective curriculum, especially ECE in the rural areas of Sragen Regency.

The direct benefit of this research is to convince teachers to implement the curriculum as a result of development that is adapted to the conditions of the teaching area so that, in practice, it will be more effective in implementing the learning process in rural ECE. This is important because the existing policies cannot be applied optimally for ECE in rural areas due to many shortcomings. However, it is different from ECE in urban areas where human resources and learning facilities and infrastructure have met the standards of an ideal school. Therefore, this study also discusses the gap between ECE education in rural and urban areas in Sragen Regency. Thus, the main objective of this research is to explore the ECE teachers' perception regarding curriculum implementation in Sragen Regency, which has been developed by each ECE teacher and adapted to the conditions of the area where the teacher teaches. The curriculum implementation can be used as a framework that aims to value cultural identity and values and behaviour in addition to preparing children

for life in the future through the acquisition of practical competencies, literacy, and skill activities implied in the description of the implementation of ECE curriculum development in Indonesia, especially in rural areas with various obstacles.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research method used a qualitative design with a case study approach. *Qualitative research methodology* is a procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or oral data and also words (Sugiyono, 2012). The research design is by looking at cases that describe the complexity of implementing rural PAUD curriculum development in Sragen Regency. The informants taken in this study were 10 ECE teachers representing ECE teachers in rural and urban areas.

Determination of the informants of this research used the purposive sampling technique. This technique includes people selected based on specific criteria made by researchers based on research objectives (Moleong, 2012). Informants were taken from organizational elements involved in the PAUD world, both teachers and education policymakers.

The data collection technique used documentation and also the application of the interview method, while to ensure the data was obtained, a focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted with the participants of PAUD

teachers in rural and urban areas as well as policymakers from the Education and Culture Office of Sragen Regency and the Center Development of Early Childhood Education and Community Education of Central Java Province. The data analysis used the model from Miles and Huberman. The stages of data analysis start from data reduction, data presentation, and concluding (Sugiyono, 2012).

DISCUSSION

These research findings show that there are 3 (three) main problems that affect the effectiveness of implementing the ECE (read: new) curriculum as a development. The findings are: first, the new curriculum is applied by "coercion" at ECE; second, both teachers are less than optimal in understanding and interpreting the ECE curriculum because teachers (as change facilitators) are not actively involved in curriculum planning; and third, the lack of resources to support the successful implementation of the ECE curriculum, especially ECE in rural areas. In order to reduce these obstacles, it is recommended that some of the best practices for teachers are implementing the curriculum as a result of developing individual teachers adapted to their respective regions in the form of attitudes and cultural values as local wisdom.

The importance of curriculum implementation lies in ensuring teachers,

students, and parents are involved in curriculum implementation; therefore, students could get the desired learning experience in terms of knowledge, skills, ideas, and attitudes who are adapted to community conditions so that they later will have a spirit of independence (Mitchell, 2010). Meanwhile, the need for curriculum policymakers and implementers to always work together in bringing about curriculum changes because this change will be beneficial for the progress of the nation-state in the future (Nsamenang, 2018).

It can be emphasized that the involvement of ECE teachers as essential stakeholders in development considerations when planning and implementing the new curriculum needs to be involved. This is important because there is a view that childcare services view children as partners in implementing programs and providing services globally for the benefit of the future (Alfageme, Cantos & Martinez, 2013; Cook et al., 2014).

The introduction of children's participatory pedagogy into school curricula could enable more competent children and ECE educators as "guides" (Guo & Dalli, 2016; Maynard, 2012). Therefore, curriculum planners need to focus on achieving children's activities with various kinds of information to get input in planning and implementing the curriculum. This allows children to acquire practical and significant knowledge. The

findings show that curriculum implementation must go through a gradual process (Yan, 2014). It was further stated that because change is a complex phenomenon, policymakers need to work with stakeholders regarding the certainty of successful curriculum implementation. Evidence shows that policymakers need to understand that curriculum changes can affect various groupings, so there is a need to be prepared for stakeholders on all relevant props before new curriculum changes are implemented. (Woerkum et al. 2011) agree that some individuals may be resistant to curriculum changes when suddenly imposed on curriculum implementation. In other words, the curriculum can be implemented in stages to provide room for interest for curriculum review and improvement before the curriculum is implemented.

Teacher's Failure in Interpreting Curriculum Implementation

The findings in this study indicate that teachers are minimal in interpreting the new curriculum due to the little guidance and support provided when it is introduced. This means that best practice as an agent in implementing the ECE curriculum must include training before teachers implement it. (Rusman 2015) says that some teachers can interpret and implement the curriculum through the steps that must be taken to ensure quality improvements in managing and

processing goals to improve learning and education. Much attention has been paid to various aspects of teaching, but some attention is less directed at understanding the material, specifically through the training of individual teachers (Ball, Thamnes & Phelps, 2012). It can be concluded that rural ECE teachers need to be given sufficient opportunity and time to study and interpret content with the help of other practitioners, for example, through training, because the level of understanding is significantly different from that of urban ECE teachers who have adequate human resources and infrastructure. Based on the study's findings, it was explicitly stated that the teacher's understanding of curriculum implementation would have a significant effect on the implementation of learning in the classroom.

Lack of Resources and Infrastructures in Learning Support

The results show that rural ECE teachers lack quality resources to improve curriculum implementation. The study results also show that the lack of resources and material support (facilities and infrastructure) experienced and owned in some schools limits teachers from developing their creative skills (Johnson, Monk, & Swain, 2010; Nishino, 2013). Policymakers need to consider the availability of teacher resources as an essential factor when planning changes to a curriculum to improve

successful curriculum implementation (Eckel, 2013; Guo & Dalli, 2016; Kristen et al., 2016).

It is dangerous to expect teachers to implement work plans with little classroom teaching support, so stakeholder considerations should be focused on these conditions. Thus, the best practice for teachers for effective curriculum implementation is the need to involve teachers, parents, and students as essential players in resource mobilization during curriculum planning and implementation in schools.

The findings in this study also show that teachers from rural schools face more severe challenges in terms of lack of facilities and infrastructure and resources, materials and others (Croydon et al. 2016). It is clearly stated that ECE in rural areas is a small school organized around a community environment with sufficient resources. In Sragen Regency, a school with minimal activities is characterized by minimal facilities without appropriate classroom equipment. The Dapodik and EMIS (2019) reports show that at least 800 schools in rural areas in Sragen Regency are experiencing such conditions. Apart from the challenges teachers face in schools, within the new curriculum framework, all teachers are expected to ensure that students can achieve development and growth according to essential competencies, including creativity, independent and responsible character, and the development of broader life skills. Teachers become learning

facilitators in conditions of minimal resources, such as in several ECEs in Sragen Regency. It was concluded that there is an urgent need to prioritize allocating resources in schools to ensure successful curriculum implementation in teacher best practices. Children at the ECE level need the proper facilities and facilities according to the development of children aged 0-6 years so that learning activities can be practical. Several studies have shown that children learn best through fun play and object manipulation (Chikutuma & Mawere, 2013; Heckman, 2010; Stebbing, 2017). However, the lack of facilities and resources to use during play and learning experiences can harm a child's capacity to reach his or her full potential as a student.

New Form of ECE and Curriculum in Sragen Regency

There is a tendency to recognize early childhood as a hot issue in the academic world in the international world, so various studies have been carried out mainly on child development. Several approaches have emerged as the accepted and dominant theory that explores child development. Some describe biological, physical, psychological, and socio-emotional processes, while others explain how and why these processes continue once they have been initiated. However, some models emphasize findings based on developmental and growth changes that occur among children; for some reason, in developed

countries, the context is very different from that in developing countries.

The rural context related to implementing the ECE curriculum in this research is Sragen Regency. Thus, increasing the training of ECE educators and integrating ECE into the mainstream of primary education has become a significant achievement for Sragen Regency Government; this is marked by the achievement of BAN ECE Accreditation and Non-Formal Education in 2019.

Various studies have also informed that integrating ECE into the mainstream aims to achieve overall child development, school readiness, problem detection for early intervention, prevention of problems later in life, and promotion of healthy development (Rusman, 2015).

Moreover, integrating Holistic Integration (HI) into the mainstream has various benefits. The IR program is confronted with classroom teaching and motivation to learn and perform school assignments more effectively. However, since 2013, several limitations of the previous ECE Curriculum have provided an opportunity to review the framework for ECE managers, including in Sragen Regency. For example, the old curriculum has been criticized for being too academic and restricting students from advancing early childhood character. The ECE curriculum reviewed is related to the character in lifelong learning, equality and justice, and

gender sensitivity. The preamble preceded this framework in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning National Education Education; the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum began in the first phase in April 2013. Although the new curriculum benefits students, the weaknesses still exist, especially some ECE educators in rural areas still lack sufficient resources to spearhead the successful implementation of the framework.

(Ornstein & Hunkins 2014) state that at least effective curriculum implementation comes from careful planning and focusing on three key elements: people, programs, and processes. The researcher noted that certain schools failed to implement the curriculum due to negligence directed at teachers. In addition to the emphasis on teachers, some schools rely more on program or process modifications. Curriculum implementation is a separate process; teachers are expected to be able to plan, implement, and evaluate (Rusman, 2015). Thus, amid the Government's call to immediately implement the new curriculum (2013), ECE educators in rural areas are also expected to carry out classroom teaching well and have been able to implement it. (Goodwin, Roegman & Reagan 2016) argue that considering the importance of the role of educators as drivers of change to ensure that ECE students can reach their full potential for child development, even in all areas of life and for the preparation of children in the future. Therefore, teachers need to correctly define

and implement an effective curriculum, one of which is the application of learning based on environmental conditions and local wisdom in the learning process in the classroom and meaningful interactions in learning so that children's character can be appropriately represented formed.

Several ECEs in rural areas of Sragen Regency have weaknesses such as the lack of teacher resources that do not meet the standards of ECE teachers, lack of facilities and infrastructure, and the ratio between the number of educators and students has not been fulfilled. Therefore, the role of the PUAD teacher also influences the way the curriculum is understood and implemented. Even the interviews with teachers show that most educators in rural areas spend time interacting with students and collaborating with local communities. As a result, their perspectives, practices, and roles in curriculum implementation are even less than optimal. One procedure that can be done to overcome this problem is that Sragen Regency Government provides education and training, workshops are often held for ECE teachers, and scientific meetings or forums for academic activities, especially for ECE teachers, by bringing in competent resource persons in their fields. As a result, changes in understanding and implementation of the curriculum for ECE teachers in rural areas are beginning to be resolved through identifying teacher practices in the learning process, and henceforth being

almost parallel to the teaching practices of ECE teachers in urban areas eventually; therefore, the environment and local wisdom become a consideration in the implementation of the curriculum in the learning process for ECE teachers in Sragen regency.

CONCLUSION

The results of the research and discussion conclude that there are many challenges experienced by teachers in implementing the curriculum for ECE in rural areas. This finding is based on interviews with teachers' experiences during a teaching at ECE. Effective curriculum implementation at the ECE level is not only based on the implementation of the curriculum set by the Government but also on the importance of the environment as local wisdom; even more important is the understanding of everything that the teacher conveys to students in the form of behaviour and character. In children, through the learning process.

This study adopts the ECE teacher institution as a theoretical framework as in the research findings that previous researchers have presented. ECE teachers in rural areas can apply this curriculum model because the resources and quality of teachers are not the same from one region to another, and the learning facilities and infrastructure owned by schools and the quality of human resources and the ratio of teachers to students are also different.

The curriculum implementation model can be an explanatory tool for ECE teachers in rural areas because these teachers represent rural areas in terms of resources and quality. This condition is undoubtedly different from implementing the curriculum in urban areas, which have been able to develop ECE with higher standards and quality. It all happened due to the availability of ready resources with quality academic support as well. Therefore, complex ECE arrangements must be prioritized by policymakers before curriculum planning, and implementation is implemented. It also means that the implementation of the curriculum must be based on ECE needs that are tailored to the geographical conditions of each school.

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