

Teaching Strategies in Early Childhood Education during the COVID Pandemic in AZ-ZIKRI Kindergarten

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Abstract

The problem in this study is the lack of thoroughgoing teacher strategies in providing fun learning for early childhood students during the pandemic as well as the absence of understanding of parents in using online methods and limited time at home in providing meaningful learning for their children. The subjects in this study were five teachers who are currently teaching at AZ ZIKRI TK Perbaungan. The results of this research and observation indicate that the teacher's learning strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic in AZ ZIKRI Kindergarten employs online learning using a constructivist pedagogical technique strategy that includes interactions, collaborations, simulations, and discussions between teachers, children, and parents so that teachers can convey learning during the pandemic. And it is hoped that early childhood children can develop their abilities in the learning themes provided by the teachers. Even though the inhibiting factors for teachers in conducting online learning are not having cellphones, data packages, difficult signals, parents' work and students who are uninterested or idle to study. Besides these supporting factors, the understanding of parents at home in online learning will enable them to use technology and offer cherished relationships to their children

Keywords: Teaching strategy, fun learning, early childhood education, pandemic, kindergarten.

Introduction:

In order to formulate a process of learning, teachers must prepare learning strategies and plan them in advance. The importance of fun learning strategies is in alignment to those learning objectives to be achieved optimally (Barizi and Idris, 2009). Teachers are required to be as creative as possible in packaging learning so that the message to be conveyed through learning activities can be carried properly to children, especially early childhood students (Fakhrudin, 2019).

Fun learning is a teaching and learning atmosphere that can focus its full thoughtfulness while studying so that the time on task is high. Fun learning can be interpreted as applied learning

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that can attract children's attention with various methods so that when learning takes place, students do not feel bored receiving the learning agenda (Akbar, 2020). Thus, it can be said that fun learning is a practice that transpires in an enjoyable and imposing atmosphere. It is employed to achieve learning objectives in the best way.

According to Muhammad (2012, p. 72), Early Childhood Learning Strategy is a technique or method used in learning that aims to enable students to know, understand, employ and master certain learning materials. And it can be concluded to make it easy to convey material to students so that it can be understood well. It is as much as possible implemented in daily life. Wiyani & Barnawi (2017) argue that learning oriented towards early childhood is adapted to the child's age level, meaning that learning must be of students' interest, the abilities are expected to be achieved, and learning activities can challenge students to be carried out according to the child's stage of development.

Strategy is a set of procedures used by teachers to influence and utilize the advantages or potentials possessed by students to increase effectiveness and efficiency in teaching as a whole. Hamalik (2016, p. 201) said that the teaching strategy is the overall method and procedure that focuses on student activities in the teaching and learning process to accomplish certain goals. Teachers can involve parents and the environment around the school in setting themes and teaching materials for children (Suyanto, 2005). For example, teachers can maximize the natural means around the school environment to be used as teaching materials. By maximizing the potential of nature around the child's environment, the child will become more sensitive to his environment (Sujiono, 2009). In addition to maximizing the potential of nature, it can also capitalize on the potential of the parents of students. For example, teachers can invite parents of students with certain professions as guest teachers when discussing the appropriate theme. It will create a sense of pride in students of their parents as well as being more excited about these activities.

Research Methods:

This research is a type of descriptive qualitative research, which analyzes and presents facts systematically so that they can be more easily understood and concluded. It is aimed for researchers to know and describe what is happening in the field with a detailed method (Arikunto, 2019) It is hoped that the researchers can describe how teacher's strategies in preparing fun learning strategies during the COVID 19 pandemic at AZ ZIKRI Kindergarten. The research was carried out at AZ ZIKRI Perbaungan Kindergarten. The numbers of subjects in this study are five Early Childhood Education (PAUD) teachers.

To obtain data, this research uses several techniques in its collection, namely using observation techniques and interview results from both teachers and school principals. The observation used is passive participation observation (Sugiyono, 2013). In passive participation observation, the researcher came directly to the place of observation but was not involved in the teaching activity. Observations were made by going directly to the research subjects, namely group B teachers and parents from group B to find data on how the learning strategies were carried out during online learning. And what obstacles are faced during the teaching and learning activities? Observations were made directly to the teacher when starting online activities or observations were made in WhatsApp groups. From the results of observations, many answers were found from the formulation of the problem, both in terms of the network used, online implementation, online materials, display, and evaluation of the results of children's activities which were sent via photos, videos, and voice recordings.

Furthermore, interviews were conducted by researchers to find out more in-depth things about participants in interpreting situations and phenomena that occurred, where this could not be found through observation. Especially with the type of semi-structured interview, researchers find problems more acquiescently where the parties invited to the interview were asked for their opinions and ideas. According to Sugiyono (2011), semi-structured interviews are free interviews where researchers do not use interview guidelines that have been arranged systematically and entirely for data collection. The interview guide used is only an outline of the problems to be asked.

Results and Discussion:

The teaching strategy used by the teacher uses online learning. It is presented by providing learning materials and themes to children via cell phones. The procedure occurs in a way of distance learning from a network or online (E-Learning). It is also considered a learning process of internet-based interactive models and learning management systems (LMS). E-Learning is learning that uses electronic devices (LAN, WAN, or internet) to convey learning content, interaction, or guidance. This online learning greatly facilitates the interaction between students and teachers and parents. During this process, students can share information, help each other or work together and can access learning materials daily. Teachers use constructivist pedagogical techniques that include collaboration, questions, and discussions. And for offline learning, the teacher uses new learning discoveries, guided- discussion, demonstration, and cooperative learning. The constructivist pedagogical technique is the art of teaching for children which is developed through various aspects, which in this case builds knowledge from the experience of every single student.

This kindergarten school chooses a learning strategy using constructivist pedagogical techniques during online learning which includes collaboration, projects, questions, and discussions and uses strategies that are centered on child development which is aligning with the study from Jauhar (2011). Throughout the pandemic period, it was very insupportable for children to come directly to school because of the large number of COVID cases at that time. In due course, the school decided to do online learning but the teacher continued to monitor learning outcomes using this strategy. On the other hand, sometimes the teacher does not only use these 4 strategies, but also alternates with general learning such as directly providing counting material or imitating the letters of the alphabet A-Z according to the RPPH prepared by the teacher, and the teacher also sends learning videos to parents so that children and parents can have more time in reiterating the learning at home.

The schedule for implementing online learning strategies for Kindergarten A is carried out on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. For Kindergarten B, the implementation of online learning strategies is carried out on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. In implementing online learning, the teacher uses a cellphone and uses the WhatsApp application as a communication instrument between teachers and students to circulate learning materials. Parents and children can collaborate while studying at home (Yus, 2011), the teacher already has several activity learning materials such as:

- i. Doing experiments at home. This activity is designed to be able to use tools and materials at home. An example of an activity is conducting a color mixing test experiment which will later produce a new color. Parents and children will discuss with each other the tools and materials to be used, after which the results are sent to the homeroom teacher.

- ii. Having a conversation using the Javanese language. Parents and children may practice dialogue using the Javanese language about washing hands properly and how to wear masks properly and correctly. This is done by sending the video to the respective class teacher. This will be an interesting and creative activity.

In addition, there are several inhibiting factors for online learning strategies that occur in AZ ZIKRI Kindergarten, namely:

- i. The deficiency of smartphone availability. For people with economic limitations, it is difficult for them to buy mobile phones. As for those who have cellphones, they are still old version cellphones that can only make SMS and make calls. This was said by Mrs. Marsiani, the homeroom teacher for class B who stated that there are difficulties with online learning for parents who don't have cellphones. Apart from that, some parents are also in the category of not know operating or using a smartphone.
- ii. The inadequate internet quota and slow internet network. Some already have updated cellphones but have financial issues in purchasing the data packages. Parents are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and find it difficult to buy internet packages because the economy is not passable. The online learning system can work effectively if the internet network is good, but if the internet network is dodgy or unreliable, online learning activities will automatically be hampered.

Conclusion:

Learning strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic at AZ ZIKRI Perbaungan Kindergarten have employed online learning strategies. For online learning strategies, the teacher uses a constructivist pedagogical strategy which includes interaction, collaboration, exploration, projects, simulations, and discussions to convey learning even though it is carried out to facilitate the learning process so as not to be left behind, with learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Apart from that, as the conclusion of the study, it is also known for the school to have to support and inhibiting factors in implementing learning strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic at AZ ZIKRI Kindergarten, namely the deficiency of being able to use technology which will create the gap for parents to be close to their children during the process of learning at home. It also found that many parents are still not capable of comprehending information or media transferred as a way to convey academic messages or receive information.

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