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TEACHERS' ROLE IN EARLY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AT TK AL-ALAQ

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Abstract

This research is qualitative research, data collection was carried out using observation, interviews and documentation methods. This research aims to create a description, picture, or systematic facts about a case. A description of the role of mothers in early childhood literacy at Al-Alaq Kindergarten. This research is qualitative research. The method used is a research method based on the philosophy of postpositivism, used to research natural objects. The qualitative method is a method that focuses on in-depth observation. The results of the research, in accordance with the theory of the type of early literacy conversation carried out by AL-ALAQ Kindergarten which has carried out learning activities related to phonological awareness, children realize that words consist of the smallest sound units, namely the alphabet. AL-ALAQ Kindergarten has stimulated interest in printed materials, namely children grow up surrounded by books and are used to being read to from an early age. The research results show that awareness of printed materials, such as magazines, books and other media. This activity has been carried out by AL-ALAQ Kindergarten with the availability of various reading books which can be a source of information for teachers to convey to children.

Keywords: The Role of The Teacher, Early Literacy Ability, Childhood Literacy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is part of lifelong learning and serves as a crucial gateway in life. Early childhood is known as the "golden age," a critical period for the development of all essential aspects for children, including religious values, socio-emotional skills, language, cognitive abilities, physical motor skills, and arts (Karwati & Priansa, 2014; Hadiny, et.al., 2023; Ernawati, et.al., 2023; Utami, P. P., et.al., 2024; Dewi, et.al., 2021; Vioreza, et.al., 2023). In practice, early childhood development is influenced by the environment, which plays a significant role in shaping a child's character (Sanjaya, 2012; Mansoer, Z., & Susliah, E., 2024; Rosyidah et.al., 2024).

Early childhood can also be defined as a group of children who, from an educational perspective, have not yet entered formal educational institutions such as elementary schools and are still receiving education at home from parents or in pre-school institutions such as playgroups, kindergartens, or childcare centers (Rajeev, 2019; Hanum et.al., 2024; Hendawati et,al., 2024; Pawe et.al., 2023). These pre-school institutions play a role in preparing children for the learning environment they will face upon entering formal education at elementary school, helping them become more prepared, confident, and mature in learning activities while considering their developmental aspects.

A teacher is an educator or professional whose primary duties include educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students within formal education settings (Utami, P. P., & Vioreza, N., 2021; Hikmah, S. N., & Vioreza, N., 2023).

According to government regulations, teachers hold a functional position that encompasses the responsibilities, authorities, and rights of a civil servant within an organization (Ingersoll, 2014). In carrying out their duties, teachers rely on specific expertise or skills and work independently.

The role of a teacher encompasses behaviors they must exhibit while performing their duties. To achieve educational success, educators or teachers play a vital role as the main determinant of educational outcomes since they are the primary factor in the success of education (Fredricks, 2004; Vioreza, et.al., 2023). A teacher's role involves a series of interrelated behaviors performed in specific situations, aimed at fostering progress and behavioral changes in students, which is the ultimate goal of education.

The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (2005) defines teachers as educators or professionals tasked with educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students in formal educational pathways. According to Law No. 14 of 2005, teachers hold a functional position that reflects their responsibilities, rights, and duties as civil servants within an organization. Teachers work professionally by relying on specific expertise that enables them to perform their duties independently (Sardiman, 2012).

The Importance of Teachers in Education

The role of teachers is crucial, as they are the primary determinants of educational success. They are responsible for bringing about changes in students' behavior, which is the ultimate goal of education (Sudjana, 2011). Teachers are not merely conveyors of material; they also instill values that motivate and encourage students to achieve self-actualization, aligning with national educational goals (Tilaar, 2009).

Karwati and Priansa (2014:65) argue that teachers are the primary facilitators in schools, responsible for exploring, developing, and optimizing students' potential, enabling them to become part of a civilized society. Similarly, Sanjaya (2012:15) describes teachers as individuals who interact directly with students. Through a structured learning system, teachers can act as planners, designers of learning, implementers, or both. Across all societal contexts, whether in the most underdeveloped or advanced settings, teachers hold a significant role.

Teachers play a central role in the teaching and learning process. This process involves a series of actions by teachers and students, forming reciprocal relationships within an educational environment to achieve specific objectives. Teachers have numerous responsibilities, including professional, humanitarian, and community-related duties. In teaching, teachers bear both pedagogical and administrative responsibilities. Pedagogical responsibilities involve guiding and leading students.

Teachers must play a central role in the transfer of knowledge and values, as knowledge transfer without accompanying value changes can result in a fragile and meaningless learning process (Sari & Jarkawi, 2021). Thus, teachers' roles are critical in education, from designing learning activities to determining strategies and models, as well as creating safe, comfortable, and student-centered classroom environments.

The teacher's role in teaching is vital as they serve as learning leaders who significantly influence students' intellectual development. Successful teachers demonstrate competence in pedagogical, professional, personal, and social aspects. Teaching and learning processes are inseparable from the presence of teachers. Without teachers, learning becomes challenging, particularly in the context of formal education, where teachers are indispensable.

Ingersoll (2014), in The Meaning of Teaching: A National Study of Teaching as a Profession, emphasizes the multifaceted nature of teaching, encompassing the responsibilities, challenges, and societal perceptions of teaching as a profession. Similarly, Beijaard (2004), in The Conceptualization of Teacher, defines the teacher's role

as understanding their professional identity, values, beliefs, and personal experiences, which influence their interactions with students and the broader educational context. Rajeev N.V. (2019), in The Essence of Teaching, highlights that teachers are key in creating positive learning environments, motivating students for active learning, and fostering a lifelong passion for knowledge acquisition.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

Qualitative research methods are based on post-positivist philosophy and are used to study natural objects (as opposed to experiments). Qualitative methods focus on in-depth observation (Atmazaki, et.al., 2023). Therefore, using qualitative methods in research can yield a more comprehensive study of a phenomenon. In this approach, the researcher acts as a key instrument, interpreting the occurring phenomena through methods such as observation, interviews, and documentation, as outlined by Sugiyono in his educational research methods. This qualitative study aims to describe the role of mothers in early literacy skills development for children at Al-Alaq Kindergarten. The research was conducted at Al-Alaq Kindergarten in Jatibening, Bekasi City, during the 2023/2024 academic year, specifically in the even semester from August to September 2024. The data collection techniques used by the researcher included observation, interviews, and documentation.

Data analysis in qualitative research is the process of systematically searching for and organizing data obtained from interviews, field notes, and documentation. This involves categorizing the data, breaking it down into units, synthesizing the information, arranging it into patterns, selecting what is important for study, and drawing conclusions that are easy to understand for both the researcher and others. Data analysis in qualitative research is the process of systematically searching for and organizing data obtained from interviews, field notes, and documentation (Sugiyono, 2020). This process involves categorizing the data, breaking it down into units, synthesizing information, arranging it into patterns, selecting relevant data for the study, and drawing conclusions that are easily understood by both the researcher and others. Additionally, Miles, M.B., Huberman, A.M., and Saldaña, J. (2020) state that data analysis in qualitative research involves the systematic collection, categorization, and processing of data to uncover patterns, themes, and conclusions. This process includes domain identification, organizing information into categories, and integrating insights to address research questions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on research findings and the theoretical framework of early literacy skills, it was discovered that early literacy is best developed in environments rich in storytelling, oral language, singing, music introduction, and play. These activities provide a dynamic foundation for language development, cognitive growth, and social interaction, which are critical for early childhood education (Neuman & Roskos, 2020). Such practices allow children to engage actively, fostering their ability to understand, interpret, and use language effectively. The role of these environments is pivotal in creating a natural and enjoyable learning process for young children.

Teachers also play a significant role in integrating early literacy into teaching strategies, instructional media, methods, and evaluation (Morrow, 2021). By weaving literacy activities into daily routines and lesson plans, teachers help children develop foundational skills such as letter recognition, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary building. Teachers' ability to adapt their strategies to the needs and interests of the children ensures that learning remains engaging and effective. Moreover, by incorporating

tools such as storytelling props, interactive reading sessions, and playful activities, teachers can create a well-rounded approach that nurtures both cognitive and emotional development.
Furthermore, the collaborative involvement of parents, educators, and the community strengthens the literacy development process. Creating consistent literacy-rich environments at home and in schools enhances the continuity of learning and supports children's overall growth. This comprehensive approach ensures that early literacy is not only about acquiring reading and writing skills but also about fostering a lifelong love of learning, creativity, and critical thinking. Together, these efforts lay a solid foundation for children’s academic and personal success in later years.

At TK Al-Alaq, the implementation can be summarized as follows: Phonological Awareness Learning Activities, In phonological awareness activities, teachers introduce letters and sounds, such as introducing the letter "A" through the word "apple" as a preliminary step in phonology recognition (Snow et al., 2018). Additionally, TK Al-Alaq has successfully fostered reading interest through shared reading approaches, selecting books based on children's interests, and introducing letters within stories (Strickland & Shanahan, 2022),;Stimulating Interest in Reading Materials, "TK Al-Alaq has fostered children’s reading interest early on through habituation with books. Teachers actively engage by reading storybooks aloud, allowing children to choose their favorite books, and helping them recognize letters from the stories being read" (Kuttab Digital, 2024; Itjen Kemendikbudristek, 2024); Awareness of Printed Materials, TK Al-Alaq encourages awareness of printed materials, such as magazines, books, and other media, by providing various reading materials. In storytelling activities, teachers use books to introduce Indonesian culture, such as traditional dances; Letter Introduction, Although children may not yet recognize all letters, they need to understand that letters represent sounds and have distinct shapes and pronunciations, Vocabulary Development, Teachers at TK Al-Alaq have developed children’s vocabulary, particularly related to names of objects, actions, emotions, and simple concepts around them. For example, during learning activities, children are asked to name other fruits that start with the letter "A" besides "apple.",

Background Knowledge; Children are encouraged to understand the world around em and express opinions through activities like speaking, answering questions, and interacting with their environment. Teachers achieve this through storytelling, followed by evaluations after learning active; speaking skills.

Children need to develop oral language skills, especially when it comes to explaining things and retelling stories in a structured manner. After teachers read a book to children, they should be encouraged to retell the story, even if it's briefly. This activity helps children develop their language abilities, making it easier for them to articulate thoughts clearly and logically. By practicing retelling stories, children are able to internalize key concepts, which strengthens their narrative skills and enhances their understanding of the structure of storytelling (Kemendikbudristek, 2023).
Reading books to children and giving them the opportunity to retell the stories are effective strategies for expanding vocabulary, stimulating imagination, and improving verbal communication. This process fosters not only language development but also cognitive skills, as children must pay attention to the details of the story, remember its sequence, and express it in their own words. Research suggests that these activities also help children grasp the relationship between words and their meanings, laying a strong foundation for literacy (Neuman & Roskos, 2020).
Furthermore, engaging in such activities boosts children's confidence, particularly in public speaking. When children are encouraged to retell stories, they gain confidence in their ability to speak in front of others, which is a valuable life skill. As they practice, they become more comfortable with using language to communicate effectively, leading to improved self-expression and social interaction. Teachers play a vital role in creating a

safe and supportive environment where children feel encouraged to share their ideas freely (Morrow, 2021).

Additionally, retelling stories is a valuable activity that helps children develop their cognitive abilities by requiring them to organize their thoughts and present them systematically. When children retell a story, they must recall the sequence of events, understand the relationships between characters, and convey the narrative in a coherent way. This process fosters cognitive growth by engaging children in higher-order thinking, which helps them better grasp the structure and logic behind stories (Neuman & Roskos, 2020).

This activity also sharpens children's ability to think critically and logically about the content of the stories. Retelling a story forces children to focus on important details while omitting irrelevant information, which helps them identify the main points and themes of the narrative. It enhances their capacity to assess and interpret information, which is essential not only for storytelling but for a wide range of academic tasks (Kemendikbudristek, 2023).

By consistently practicing these skills, children gain a deeper understanding of narrative structure, which is crucial for their literacy development. A well-structured story provides children with a framework for organizing information logically, which can transfer to other areas of learning. As children practice retelling stories, they begin to understand how narratives are formed, and this knowledge becomes fundamental for both their reading comprehension and writing skills (Morrow, 2021).

Encouraging storytelling as part of early education ensures that children develop not only their language skills but also critical thinking, communication, and social-emotional abilities. Storytelling fosters creativity and helps children build empathy by exploring the experiences and emotions of the characters. It is a powerful tool that contributes significantly to children's overall development, helping them become not only effective communicators but also imaginative thinkers and compassionate individuals (Neuman & Roskos, 2020).

Teachers' Roles, According to Sardiman A.M., teachers have crucial roles as informants, organizers, motivators, and evaluators in the teaching-learning process to achieve comprehensive educational success (Sardiman, 2011, pp. 144-146). Specifically: Informant: Teachers implement informative teaching methods, including laboratory work, field studies, and serving as sources of information for academic and general activities; Organizer: Teachers manage academic activities and all teaching-related components to achieve effectiveness and efficiency in student learning; Motivator: Teachers stimulate and encourage students’ potential, creating dynamics in the teaching-learning process; Director: Teachers guide and direct students’ learning activities toward desired objectives; Initiator: Teachers act as creators of creative ideas for students to emulate; Conveyor: Teachers disseminate educational policies and knowledge; Facilitator: Teachers provide facilities to ensure effective learning interactions; Mediator: Teachers act as intermediaries or problem-solvers for student discussion challenges and provide learning media; Evaluator: Teachers assess students’ achievements in academic and social aspects. Perspectives on Teacher Roles, Fredricks (2004) discusses the role of teachers in influencing student engagement in the learning process. Student engagement is considered critical as it strengthens motivation and interest in learning. Fredricks suggests strategies such as creating supportive learning environments, increasing student participation, providing positive feedback, offering appropriate challenges, and utilizing diverse teaching strategies. Sardiman (2012) also emphasizes teachers' roles as facilitators, mediators, and motivators, which are relevant in the context of early literacy teaching. Teachers not only deliver materials but also guide children in developing speaking skills and vocabulary, such as naming objects that begin with specific letters (Morrow, 2021).Fredricks (2004) further highlights the importance of student engagement in learning. Teachers can create supportive learning environments and provide positive feedback to motivate students, especially in early literacy learning.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the problem formulation presented earlier, teachers play a critical role in helping children develop the skills, knowledge, and moral values needed for future success. Their role in education is multifaceted, as they act as facilitators, motivators, models, evaluators, counselors, classroom managers, and planners. To fulfill these responsibilities effectively, teachers must possess a comprehensive set of skills, knowledge, and abilities that enable them to optimize children's learning potential. Understanding early literacy learning and the developmental needs of the children they educate is a fundamental aspect of this role.

One of the key competencies of teachers is their ability to nurture foundational literacy skills. These include guiding children to ask simple questions, express their desires in their own language, and recognize basic shapes, letters, numbers, and symbols, as well as some alphabetic writing. By encouraging these basic abilities, teachers contribute to building a strong literacy foundation, which is essential for children's academic and personal growth.

Moreover, teachers' ability to adapt their methods to meet the individual needs of students plays a critical role in fostering inclusive and effective learning environments. Recognizing that every child has unique learning styles and developmental stages, teachers must tailor their teaching approaches to support diverse learners. This flexibility ensures that all children, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, can engage in meaningful learning experiences. By doing so, teachers help create an environment where every child feels valued and empowered to succeed (Morrow, 2021).

In order to effectively address these varied needs, teachers must employ a range of strategies that cater to different learning styles, such as visual, auditory, or kinesthetic methods. For example, some children may learn best through hands-on activities, while others may benefit from visual aids or auditory explanations. By diversifying their teaching techniques, teachers can reach each student in a way that maximizes their potential. This personalized approach not only helps in meeting academic goals but also fosters an inclusive atmosphere where all students are encouraged to participate (Neuman & Roskos, 2020).

Furthermore, this individualized approach to learning contributes significantly to students' literacy development. When teachers adjust their methods to support each child's unique learning pace and needs, it enhances their ability to understand and use language effectively. This support is crucial in the early stages of literacy acquisition, as it provides children with the confidence and skills needed to succeed in reading and writing. By focusing on the specific needs of each student, teachers can ensure that no child is left behind and that all students have the opportunity to develop essential literacy skills (Kemendikbudristek, 2023).

Finally, by fostering an environment where learning is tailored to the child’s needs, teachers instill a love for learning that will benefit students throughout their lives. When children feel supported and see that their learning experiences are relevant to them, they are more likely to develop a positive attitude toward education. This love for learning becomes a lifelong asset, encouraging students to remain curious, motivated, and engaged in their personal and academic growth. Thus, teachers who embrace personalized learning help nurture not only academic success but also a lifelong passion for learning (Morrow, 2021).

In conclusion, the role of a teacher extends beyond imparting knowledge; it encompasses shaping young minds, building character, and fostering essential skills. Through their dedication and expertise, teachers lay the groundwork for lifelong learning, enabling children to navigate an evolving world with confidence and adaptability. Their impact on literacy development is profound, ensuring that future generations are equipped to thrive academically, socially, and morally.

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