PPSDP International Journal of Education
Volume 3 (2) (Special Issue) 22 October 2024, 111-123
2nd PPSDP International Conference on Educational Sciences (IConEds 2024)
E-ISSN 2829-5196, P-ISSN 2830-3229

Building Independent Generations from an Early Age: The Crucial Role of Early Childhood Education Teachers

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Article History: Received on 18 August 2024, Revised on 19 October 2024, Published on 7 November 2024

Abstract: This study aims to find out the crucial role of early childhood education teachers in fostering children's independence from an early age. This research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive method with data collection through observation, interviews, and documentation. The main subjects in this study were teachers and children. The results of the study show that the role of teachers in increasing children's independence by providing opportunities for children, and applying learning in school. The role of a supervisor is carried out in a way that teachers habituate and repeat to children, teachers who have extensive knowledge, and teachers who instill a neat attitude in children. Independent children always want to try their own way in doing things, not depend on others and children know when the time to ask others for help. This study contributes that the special methods used by teachers to instill independent character values in children are using habituation methods, storytelling methods, affirmation methods, singing, poetry, and knowing, feeling, and direct practice both at school and at home so that the application of independent character values is more imprinted in children.

Keywords: Early Age, Crucial Role of Teachers, Independence

A. Introduction

Early childhood education (PAUD) is the most fundamental education because children's development in the future will be greatly determined by various meaningful stimuli provided from an early age. The beginning of a child's life is the most appropriate time to provide encouragement or development efforts so that children can develop optimally. Early childhood education is essentially education that is organized with the aim of facilitating the growth and development of children as a whole or emphasizing the development of all aspects of the child's personality (Hidayah, 2019). In law number 14 of 2005 concerning teachers and lecturers, it is explained that teachers are professional educators with the task of educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing and evaluating students in this age of children's education in the formal education, primary education, and secondary education (Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2005).

In PAUD, children will be guided to be able to be independent (Marfungah, 2019). At school, teachers play a role in shaping children's independent attitudes by providing examples of activities at school, children's independent attitudes are not only formed with the role of teachers but parents must also play an active role in shaping children's independent attitudes by giving examples of activities at home (Khotimah & Zulkarnaen, 2023). Independence is the ability of children to be able to carry out various activities, organize and choose and decide confidently and responsibly (Sukiman, 2017). Early childhood independence is different from the independence of adolescents or adults (Nugrahanti et al., 2022). If the definition of independence for adults is the ability of a person to take responsibility for what is done without burdening others, while for early childhood it is the ability that is adapted to developmental tasks, such as learning to walk, learn to eat, practice speaking, learn morals and others. Being independent for early childhood also does not mean living alone (Nurmawati & Wulandari, 2020). However, every individual, especially early childhood in his life, needs the help of others. The guidance of parents and educators coupled with patience and perseverance is still necessary.

The level of independence achieved by children at each age stage varies. This is all inseparable from the stimulus provided by parents or educators. Teachers as a substitute for the role of parents when children are carrying out learning activities at school play an important role in maximizing children's growth and development, especially in increasing independence and forming independence in early childhood. According to Ametambun and Djamarah (2018) teachers are all those who are responsible for the education of students, both individually and classically, both at school and outside of school (Abidah, 2021). According to Sukmadinata (in Nasution, 2017) the characteristics of independence are goal-oriented behavior, coordinated behavior, positive physical attitude, adaptability, focus on success, high motivation, fast implementation and participation in various activities or activities (Nuraeni & Lubis, 2022).

Based on the results of the initial observations of the research carried out, it can be seen that there are still some children who are not yet independent such as children who cannot do activities on their own, when eating there are children who still have to be fed by their teachers, children still ask for help when opening bottle caps, children still ask for help with teachers to wear shoes and socks, there are still children who cry when their parents go to school, And there are still children who are lazy so they cannot complete the task on their own. This may be due to habits, children's emotions, upbringing from parents, teacher upbringing, and environmental factors. Based on this, this study will look at the crucial role of PAUD teachers in fostering an independent generation from an early age.

B. Methods

This research was carried out in a qualitative descriptive manner, with data collection techniques by observation, interview and documentation. Qualitative research intends to understand the phenomenon of the crucial role of teachers in early childhood education institutions by observing what the research subjects experience holistically, and with descriptions in the form of words and language, in a special context that is natural and by utilizing various scientific methods (Moleong, 1989). Descriptive approach which is a research method that is carried out with the main purpose of making an objective description or description of a situation (Fadli, 2021). This study aims to describe, obtain, and describe research data and produce conclusions in the field about the role of teachers in fostering independent generations in early childhood.

This study emphasizes how important early childhood education (PAUD) is to build an independent generation from the beginning. Children's skills and independence are increasingly important to face future challenges in the era of globalization. Early childhood education teachers are very important to build children's character, social skills, and independence. However, family support and difficulties in creating good teaching strategies often hinder this process.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of early childhood education teachers in building an independent generation and to find out the factors that affect their success. The results of the study were then validated by Triangulation technique, which is the process of integrating several different techniques to analyze a phenomenon from different perspectives and varied viewpoints (Valencia, 2022). In this study, the triangulation techniques applied include: (1) Triangulation method, which involves a comparison between information and data obtained through interviews, observations, and google forms; (2) Triangulation between research actors; (3) Triangulation of data sources, which evaluates the consistency between the information from the informant and the relevant documentation records. The data analysis process used to illustrate the findings of this study is structured through the stages of data mining, data filtering, presentation of results, and conclusion making process as formulated by (Miles & Hubermen, 1994). According to a study outlined by (Kurniasih, 2022) This study aims to describe the process of Planning, Organization, Implementation, and Control.

C. Results and Discussion

According to (Abidah, 2021) A teacher is an adult who is responsible for providing guidance to his students in terms of physical and spiritual development to reach a level of maturity, fulfilling his duties as a creature of God, an independent individual being, and a social being. A teacher is a person who is able to carry out

the process of educating in an educational condition to achieve educational goals or someone who is mature, honest, patient, physically and spiritually healthy, moral, open, fair, and affectionate (Yulanda, et al., 2021).

As a teacher who is a guide in the children's learning process, it is very clear that teachers are role models for children (Alkhasanah et al., 2023). So, in an effort to increase children's independence, teachers also play an important role for children so that independence becomes the main provision for children later. Teachers play a role in educating and guiding children to become independent individuals, after being given enough attention by the teacher, it turns out that there are still children who are not independent, this is where teachers play an important role in how the child can be independent and do his own activities (Wardah, 2019). In his work, a teacher will see if he is capable of teaching individuals to be free. Children can do things independently without the help of their parents or adults. A teacher can only carry out this role if he or she has the right learning strategy. Without these strategies, self-reliance learning will not succeed. Providing habituation activities that are carried out in daily activities is an important role of teachers in helping children become independent (Arsyiah, 2019).

The role of teachers in helping children improve knowledge and increase independence. Children's independence is very important to be applied from an early age because early age is a good age to develop independence in children (Zahra, 2022). Thus, teachers play a very important role in the development of children's independence, the role of teachers is very large educators, supervisors. There are several crucial roles of PAUD teachers in fostering children's independence from an early age, namely: teachers as educators and supervisors (Nalapraya, 2023).

The role of teachers as educators, teachers are more of a role model, who have moral and religious values that should be emulated and exemplified by students (Saputra et al., 2023). As educators, teachers have the final task to guide and shape the character of students. They not only inform the child but also discipline them by instilling moral values. Teachers can help students acquire social and emotional skills and critical thinking skills in a positive learning environment. With the right methods, teachers can also meet the unique needs of students and ensure that each student feels valued and motivated to learn (Munawir et al., 2022). This age is also known as the "golden age". which is very important for the continuation of human quality development. At this point, children have an imitation attitude, meaning that they imitate the behavior of adults who are considered to have authority, such as parents, older brothers, teachers, or other adults. Therefore, diverse and moral behavior must be introduced, instilled, and habituated from childhood.

The role of teachers as educators in helping early childhood children become independent: *first*, creating independent activities: Teachers create activities like game stations where children can choose games they like. It helps children learn to make decisions and take responsibility for their decisions. *Second* Independence Model: Teachers can show how to clean and explain the importance of cleanliness in certain situations, such as cleaning game tools. The children were invited to do the same afterwards. *Third*, Giving Daily Tasks: give tasks to children to take care of plants in class or help set the dinner table during snack time. This gives the child the feeling that they are responsible and successful. *Fourth* Discussion and Reflection: After the activity, the teacher invites the children to talk about what they are doing, how they are feeling, and what needs to be improved. This helps them learn to think critically and reflectively. *Fifth*, Teaching Social Skills: Teachers help children participate in group games that require them to work together and talk to each other to achieve a common goal. *Sixth* Praise for Effort: Giving praise to children who try to complete the task on their own, even if it doesn't work, builds confidence and encourages them to try again. *Seventh*, Encourages Decision Making: Teachers give children the choice to choose between playing outside or drawing. This helps them make decisions and understand the consequences. *Eighth*, building a Learning Plan: Teachers involve children in planning daily activities. This can be done by asking them to choose a learning theme or art activity that they like (Rofiah, 2022).

The role of teachers as educators or teachers in improving children's independence, is carried out by teaching children by attracting children's attention, choosing the right and most interesting learning methods as much as possible, then there are children who are not yet independent directed and taught well until the child can do it on their own, persuading children when crying to see that the children there are also independent and have taken care of their parents at school, Talk to your child, also invite parents to be involved in guiding their children to be independent and not cry anymore if left at school. As a teacher, you must be able to solve problems when the teaching and learning process is low, you can investigate in advance what the problem is so that it occurs low, the way to overcome it is that during the learning process, it is better to use different methods and media so that children do not get bored easily, teach good examples to children, we also always monitor children during the learning process and give praise to children and never compare children with children others. When learning activities take place, children's independence can be seen when children are responsible, confident, working alone is being able to take off their own socks and shoes, put their bags in their own bags, always shake hands with their teachers, take their own toys without asking for help.

Teachers as supervisors' functions to guide children in finding their potential and guiding children to be able to carry out developmental tasks. Guidance requires children to be actively involved so that the guidance process runs effectively. Teachers as motivators are an important aspect that must be done by teachers.

Teachers must be able to provide strong motivation to children because motivation is closely related to needs.

Teachers play a role as a guide in the process of children's independence in the learning process in formal education institutions can be done by selecting effective and appropriate learning strategies and models, and an important role of teachers is needed in efforts to form children's independent character. This is an important factor in the character-based learning process at an early age (Puspita, 2019). Teachers can guide children in independence by involving children in activities in early childhood education such as asking children to take their own drinks, training children to open and wear their own shoes, training children to urinate on their own, and training children to feed their own food (Furewati, 2018). The role of teachers as a guide in training early childhood independence in school activities can be carried out when: *First* Teaching Daily Routines: Teachers guide children to follow daily routines, such as washing their hands before eating or tidying up their toys after playing, so that they learn responsibility. *Second*, Guidance in Art Activities: When performing art activities, teachers let children choose materials and techniques that they like, while providing directions that help them express their creativity independently. *Third* Mentoring while Working in Groups: In group projects, teachers facilitate discussions in which children define their own roles, helping them learn to collaborate and take responsibility for their respective tasks. *Fourth* Teaching Decision Making: When choosing an activity, the teacher gives the child options and discusses the pros and cons of each option, so they learn to think critically in making decisions. *Fifth* Conflict Handling Exercises: When children are in disagreement, teachers guide them to discuss and find solutions, training them on how to manage conflicts in a constructive way. *Sixth* Encourage Initiative: When children show interest in an activity, teachers encourage them to start without direct intervention, building confidence and initiative. *Seventh* Time Management: Teachers teach children to use a timer when completing tasks, so they learn to manage their time and focus on the activities they choose. *Eighth* Post- Activity Reflection: After completing the activity, the teacher asks the child to share their experience and what they learned, helping them understand the process and results of their own efforts.

The work of a teacher as a supervisor includes many important things. Teachers direct and support students' growth academically and socially-emotionally. Teachers help create a positive environment, encourage independence, and set a good example for their students. They also help understand the subject matter, help overcome challenges, and build life skills. This method allows educators to help students reach their best potential. Early childhood education teachers are professionals who are responsible for planning, implementing, and protecting children in schools. They also have an important role in guiding and directing well-behaved children. Teaching children to feel responsible is one example.

Teachers in early childhood education are responsible for ensuring that children face any obstacles or challenges they may encounter and ensuring that their development runs smoothly. In conclusion from the previous explanation, some of the skills that teachers must have include the ability to find or flag various problems or possible problems that kindergarten children face. During the kindergarten learning process, teachers always interact with students from the beginning of the class to the end of the class (Amilda, 2017). Because children are still natural, their behavior tends to indicate the problems they are facing. Although children usually never say what they feel, teachers can notice changes in behavior through continuous observation. This study tries to explain how to apply the habituation method so that children are able to be independent from an early age through the role of teachers as educators and guides (Hartono et al., 2019).

The crucial role of PAUD teachers in fostering children's independence from an early age can be carried out at school through several activities. like: *first*: prepare learning tools: Before starting learning, children are asked to pick up and organize the tools they need. *Second*: Putting Toys Together: Teaching children to wash and store toys after use. *Third*; Self-Bathing: Teaching children to wash their hands and face before and after eating. *Fourth*; Using the Bathroom: Learn how to use the bathroom properly and clean yourself afterwards, this activity can be done with a routine activity, namely toilet training. *Fifth*; Choosing Clothes: Allows children to make decisions and become independent by letting them choose what they like to wear (Martono & Balimulia, 2023).

Actions that can be taken as early childhood education teachers to support children's independence include: giving children the opportunity to choose what they want to learn or do, such as choosing games or books. Teach Daily Routines: Make sure your child knows what is expected of them and can do it on their own. Builds Confidence: When children do things on their own, praise and encouragement will help them feel more confident. Modeling: helping children imitate everyday actions such as washing hands or cleaning places. Give Time: Give children time to complete their own tasks, although they may complete them later than expected. Discussion and Reflection: After the activity is complete, invite the children to talk about their experiences so that they can learn from each action they take. Involve children in small responsibilities: Involve children in simple tasks such as cleaning toys or helping to set up the table.

One of the important skills that need to be fostered from an early age is independence. The role of PAUD teachers is very important in helping children become independent from an early age (Komala, 2015). Independence helps children learn many things, including building their own character and confidence. These are some of the ways teachers can help early childhood children become more independent. In fostering children's independence, teachers must ensure that

children are in a safe and pleasant place where they can do what they like. A well-designed classroom with lots of learning tools can encourage children to choose activities they enjoy and help them learn to make their own decisions. Fostering children's independence in early childhood education can be done by providing small responsibilities involving children in simple tasks in the classroom, such as cleaning toys, preparing learning tools, or helping to make snacks, can help children feel more responsible, by looking at these activities can determine whether children are used to being independent or vice versa, besides that teachers can also determine the ability of each child to be independent (Hindriana et al., 2019).

Children will be more motivated to contribute if they feel they have an important role in daily activities. In addition to giving small responsibilities to children, fostering children's independence from an early age can also be done by teaching consistent daily routines. Help children understand what is expected of them. Teachers can set a daily schedule that includes time to play, study, and rest, so that children learn to participate in activities independently. By understanding routines, children will be more confident in doing their tasks. Teachers can also provide opportunities to choose: Children can increase their confidence and independence by giving them the opportunity to choose an activity, book, or game they enjoy. For example, it can provide multiple activity options and let the child choose which one they prefer. This gives the child the feeling that they have control over their learning experience. Role Model Teachers: Teachers who show an independent attitude in daily activities, such as completing assignments or cleaning the desk, set an example for children. Children tend to imitate their teachers' behavior, so it is important for teachers to demonstrate an independent attitude in their daily activities. Providing Emotional Support for Independence is also linked to emotional health. When children face difficulties, teachers must support and encourage them. By giving praise when children successfully perform tasks independently, teachers can increase children's confidence (Hidayah, 2019).

Inviting Children to Talk and Think After the activity, teachers can invite children to talk about their experiences. Talking about their experiences helps them understand what they are going through and learn from them, which in turn will help them make decisions independently. Teachers play a very important role in improving early childhood independence in early childhood education. Teachers can help children develop independence skills that will be beneficial throughout their lives. By providing responsibility, creating a positive environment, and being an example, teachers can provide confidence and the ability to face difficulties in the future.

The ultimate goal of the crucial role of PAUD teachers in fostering children's independence is Children who have high confidence and motivation so that in their behavior they do not depend much on others. Here are some characteristics of early childhood independence: *First* Self-belief. Self-confidence is placed as the first

characteristic of a child's independence trait. Therefore, self-confidence plays an important role for a person, including early childhood in behaving and behaving or in daily activities. Children who have confidence are more courageous to do something, make choices according to their own will, and take responsibility for the consequences caused by their choices. *Second*, High intrinsic motivation Intrinsic motivation is the drive that grows in the person to do something. Intrinsic motivation is usually stronger and more lasting than extrinsic motivation, although both motivations sometimes decrease but sometimes increase. A person's pure curiosity is one example of intrinsic motivation. *Third* Able and brave to make their own choices independent children have the ability and courage to find their own choices. For example, in choosing playing tools or learning tools that he will like. *Fourth* Creative and innovative Creative and innovative in early childhood is a characteristic of children who have independence, such as in doing something of their own accord without being told by others, not dependent on others in doing something, liking new things that they did not know at first and always wanting to try new things. *Fifth*, Be responsible and accept the consequences that accompany your choice Taking a decision or choice, of course, there are consequences attached to your choice. An independent child will be responsible for the decisions he makes no matter what happens, but of course for early childhood the responsibility is at a reasonable level. For example, he does not shy away when he takes the wrong toy, and is happy to replace another toy he wants. *Sixth*, Adapting to the environment. The school environment (kindergarten) is a new environment for children. This is often found in children crying when they first enter school because they feel unfamiliar with the environment in kindergarten, not a few even want their parents to wait for when their children are studying. However, for children who have independence, they will quickly adapt to the new environment. *Seventh*, Independent children always want to try their own way in doing things, not dependent on others and children know when it's time to ask for help from others (Abidah, 2021).

Building an independent generation from an early age is one of the crucial tasks or roles of PAUD teachers, school activities in PAUD have been designed in such a way to support one of the goals of PAUD, namely children are able to be independent, to instill independence in children PAUD teachers have implemented when early children enter the new school year, so that the process of independence in children is one of the flagship programs owned by several PAUDs. The real form of independent activities in PAUD can be seen from habituation activities in children at the beginning of learning/opening, core, and closing both during center activities and extra activities. This can be seen in the habituation activities in children at the beginning of the class at the opening of the class, children are directed to sit neatly to pray together. Then after the opening activity is over, the child is directed by the teacher to enter the classroom by taking off his shoes, hat and bag, then the child puts it in the place that has been provided. During the core

activity of cultivating children's independence, it can be seen when children tidy up their own toys after playing and it is certain that children do it themselves without the help of others. In the closing activity, the teacher always invites children to discuss so that independent cultivation is more imprinted in children, then before leaving the classroom children are accustomed to wearing their own bags, hats and shoes, then children line up neatly without the help of the teacher. The teacher always gives an example to the child when the child is at school and accustom the child to behave in accordance with the value of independent character, then the child imitates what has been exemplified by the teacher so that the child becomes accustomed to applying it himself in daily life without having to ask for help from others.

From the interviews aimed at 10 parents, the results show that parents always give examples of independent attitudes/characters to children when children are at home and get used to being independent, then children imitate what has been exemplified by parents so that children become accustomed to doing everything themselves in daily life without having to ask for help from others. The activities are: children are taught to get used to taking off, wearing their own shoes and clothes, children are accustomed to going to the toilet by themselves and children are not accompanied by parents when they go to school.

From the results of observations by researchers on 10 children in group B PAUD AIZA, the results show that of these 10 children, not all children can do everything on their own. There are still 3 children who need guidance from parents and teachers. There are several factors that can support and hinder independent activities in children. The supporting factor is the role of the principal, teachers, in implementing and providing examples of independent character values in schools, while the inhibiting factor is the children's environment outside of school (parents, peers and the community environment) which does not support the application of independent character values that have been given to children while at school. The teacher's hope after applying the habit of independence in children at school or at home, namely the value of independent character that has been applied to children, is expected to become a habit to become a provision that can bring children to have an independent attitude or character until the child grows up so that children can do all their own activities without having to depend on them and without having to ask for help from others. The special method used by teachers to instill independent character values in children is to use habituation methods, storytelling methods, affirmation methods, singing, poetry, and *knowing, feeling,* and direct *action*/practice methods both at school and at home so that the application of independent character values is more imprinted in children as stated by (Megawangi, 2007).

D. Conclusions

The role of PAUD teachers in increasing children's independence: first, the role of educators is carried out by providing opportunities for children to express their opinions, and applying the learning in school. Second, the role of a supervisor is carried out in a way that teachers habituate and repeat to children, teachers who have extensive knowledge, and teachers who instill a neat attitude in children. There are several factors that can support and hinder independent activities in children. The supporting factor is the role of the principal, teachers, in implementing and providing examples of independent character values in schools, while the inhibiting factor is the children's environment outside of school (parents, peers and the community environment) which does not support the application of independent character values that have been given to children while at school. The teacher's hope after applying the habit of independence in children at school or at home, namely the value of independent character that has been applied to children, is expected to become a habit to become a provision that can bring children to have an independent attitude or character until the child grows up so that children can do all their own activities without having to depend on them and without having to ask for help from others.

E. Acknowledgement

We expressed our gratitude to the lecturers who have been very helpful in the lecture process, guiding and directing researchers in every stage and educational process until the researcher is at the current point.

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