

Enhancement Of Children's Learning Focus Through Project-Based Learning Method At Paudqu An-Nisa Syarifah

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Abstract

This study aims to improve children's learning focus through the implementation of project-based learning methods (PBL) at PAUDQu An-Nisa Syarifah. The research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with subjects consisting of five children in group B and two teachers. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study show an improvement in children's learning focus, marked by increased attention, concentration, and active participation in project-based learning activities. The application of this method encourages children to be directly involved in a contextual, collaborative, and enjoyable learning process.

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Introduction

Focus is one of the important aspects in the learning process and plays a crucial role as a factor that can influence the developmental phase in every individual, whether children, adolescents, or adults. However, in early childhood, their focus span is relatively short, which can become a problem in the learning process where children's attention can be easily distracted and they may lack consistency in completing tasks. Children with good focus levels tend to more easily receive, understand, and remember information, as well as process it as a form or result of the learning they acquire. In efforts to improve learning outcomes, the lack of focus in early childhood presents its

own challenges for educators in creating more effective and efficient learning strategies because learning at this early age level must not only be engaging but also able to maintain children's attention.

One approach considered effective for improving focus in early childhood learning is the project-based learning method (Project-Based Learning/PBL). In this method, learning is conducted more interactively, involving children directly in simple practices, making learning not only more enjoyable but also meaningful. Besides emphasizing play aspects, children are also given the freedom to explore what they are working on, either individually or in groups.

In this method, children also have the opportunity to learn through direct experiences according to the learning context being provided. At the early childhood education level, learning is usually thematic and integrative. In addition to being a solution or effort to improve children's learning focus, the PBL method can also help enhance other developmental aspects such as language, social-emotional, sensorimotor, and even cognitive skills.

Materials and Methods

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Sampling was done purposively for children aged 5–6 years at PAUDQu An-Nisa Syarifah. According to Moleong, qualitative methodology is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior (Moleong, Lexy, 2012:4). The research uses purposive sampling or snowball sampling techniques, focusing on subjects who can provide in-depth information related to the phenomenon being studied. This approach is directed at the context and individuals holistically. Thus, in qualitative research, individuals or organizations should not be isolated into variables or hypotheses but should be viewed as part of a whole.

With this method, researchers conduct research to obtain descriptive qualitative data regarding the implementation of the project method in children aged 5-6 years at PAUDQu Annisa Syarifah. Researchers establish direct relationships with the research subjects. Data collection is done naturally (natural setting) using techniques such as in-depth interviews, participatory observation, documentation studies, and field notes.

Data analysis is conducted simultaneously with data collection, using techniques such as data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. The report writing presents the results narratively and descriptively, accompanied by direct quotes, interpretations, and in-depth reflections.

Results

1. Project-Based Learning Method (PBL)

Observations (observations) were conducted to observe the implementation of the project-based learning model (PBL) to improve learning focus in early childhood to obtain the necessary information and data.

According to Kleil, et al (2009), the definition of the project-based learning method (PBL) is a teaching strategy that empowers students to pursue their own knowledge and demonstrate their new understanding through various presentation modes. Meanwhile, Intel Corporation (2007) defines the project-based learning method (PBL) as an instructional model that involves students in investigating interesting problems that culminate in authentic products. A more complete definition of the project-based learning method can be found in the opinions of Barell, Baron, and Grant, who define PBL as authentic real-world projects, based on highly motivating and interesting questions, tasks, or problems to teach academic content to students in the context of collaborating to solve problems.

From the several definitions above, it can be concluded that the project-based learning method (PBL) is a learning strategy that uses projects or activities as learning tools to achieve attitude, knowledge, and skill competencies. The emphasis of learning lies in student activities to solve problems by applying research, analytical, creative, and presentation skills of learning products based on real experiences. This strategy allows students to work independently or in groups to construct authentic products derived from real-life problems.

Therefore, project-based learning is a learning strategy that uses problems as the initial step in integrating new knowledge based on real experiences. Project-based learning is carried out systematically by involving students in learning attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Project-based learning is an innovative learning strategy that

emphasizes contextual learning through complex activities. The implementation of project-based learning provides opportunities for students to think critically and develop their creativity through initiatives to produce real products in the form of goods or services.

In project-based learning, students are actively involved in solving problems assigned by the teacher in the form of a project. Students actively manage their learning by working on real tasks that produce real products. Project-based learning can reduce competition in the classroom and direct students to be more collaborative rather than working individually. Additionally, project-based learning can also be done independently by constructing their learning through new knowledge and skills and realizing them in tangible products.

2. Communication

a. Communication between researchers and research subjects, namely students

Communication between researchers and research subjects at PAUDQU Annisa Syarifah includes interactions that occur during the research process, such as data collection, interviews, and observations. This communication is important to obtain valid and relevant data and to understand the dynamics occurring in the institution itself.

The communication conducted includes:

- 1) Using language that is easy for children to understand and appropriate for their age.
- 2) Using varied and engaging speech intonation to maintain children's concentration/attention.
- 3) Using positive and encouraging language.
- 4) Besides spoken language, positive and calming body language is also used.
- 5) Showing friendly and attentive facial expressions.
- 6) Using eye contact to make children feel comfortable and confident.
- 7) Using visual media such as pictures/videos to attract children's attention.

And of course, the communication is not one-way; researchers become good and active listeners, listening attentively to what children say, encouraging them to ask questions or speak up, providing positive responses to encourage children to keep

talking, and creating a communicative and supportive environment for children to interact.

Observations conducted include direct observation in the classroom or environment to observe their interactions, interviews with children and teachers to get different perspectives, and using visual aids and interactive media to help deliver lesson material.

b. Communication between researchers and teachers at the institution

To gain a deeper understanding of the students' conditions and the school environment, researchers communicate with teachers at the institution. The communication focuses on questions that explore information about student behavior, learning difficulties, motivation, and the school environment conditions. Examples of questions used include:

- 1) How do teachers assess student behavior in class?
- 2) Are there students who have difficulty interacting with peers?
- 3) What difficulties do teachers face?
- 4) What should be done to improve children's focus and concentration in learning?
- 5) Are there certain learning styles preferred by students in class?
- 6) What do teachers need as educators?
- 7) Are there facility limitations that hinder the learning process?

3. Collaboration

After communicating with the research subjects, researchers design and plan a learning program aimed at improving children's focus and learning motivation by conducting active and interactive learning activities using the Project-Based Learning (PBL) method, in collaboration with the institution's policies, including the environmental conditions, curriculum, syllabus, and daily learning themes ongoing at PAUDQu Annisa Syarifah. In its implementation, the teachers at PAUDQu Annisa Syarifah are also directly involved as supervisors and mentors for students during activities, both inside and outside the classroom.

4. Implementation

As mentioned earlier, after conducting communication through data collection, interviews, and observations in the first cycle of the research process, we identified a

problem, namely the short attention span of children. This was shown by the pre-test results, where many students chose to play and run around disorderly in the classroom during learning sessions and did not pay attention to the lesson material, even though the duration of each material delivery was averaged to no more than 10 minutes.

Therefore, researchers implemented a program through active activities, namely the project-based learning (PBL) method combined with integrated learning and other learning methods. Because integrated learning is an approach in learning that integrates several teaching materials or related subjects harmoniously to provide meaningful learning experiences to students. The meaning of integrated learning can be seen as:

- a. A learning approach that connects various subjects reflecting the real world around them and within the range of students' abilities and development.
- b. A way to develop students' knowledge and skills simultaneously.
- c. Assembling or combining several concepts in different subjects, with the hope that students will learn better and more meaningfully.

Integrated learning is believed to be a practice-oriented approach that suits children's needs. With this integrated learning, children are expected to have the ability to identify, collect, assess, and use the information around them meaningfully. Integrated learning is one of the learning models that use themes to link several subjects, thus providing meaningful experiences for students. Integrated learning is defined as learning that connects various ideas, concepts, skills, attitudes, and values, both across subjects and within a single subject.

Integrated learning emphasizes the selection of a specific theme that matches the lesson material to teach one or several concepts that integrate various information (Permendikbud No. 57 of 2014).

There are two terms that are theoretically interrelated and interdependent, namely integrated curriculum and integrated learning. An integrated curriculum is a curriculum that combines several disciplines by integrating content, skills, and attitudes (Wolfinger, 1994:133).

Additionally, the implementation also connects with the Experiential Learning model. Experiential Learning is a learning model that activates the learning process to build knowledge and skills through direct experience. This model becomes meaningful

when students participate in activities (Silberman, 2015). Several studies that have been conducted on the Experiential Learning model include research by Raga (2014), which found that the Experiential Learning model influences students' critical thinking skills. The positive influences of this model are possible because it can attract and challenge someone to learn, thus fostering motivation that will later influence their learning process.

The implementation carried out was the PBL program, which began with observing plants in the surrounding environment so that children could recognize the parts of plants through direct observation, from roots, stems, branches, leaves, to fruits. This was followed by a direct practice of planting mung beans, which could be observed daily by students until they grew into plants.

This activity greatly impacted the children, starting from their feeling of success in planting a plant that clearly had roots, stems, and leaves. Then, in terms of memory, children could better absorb the information conveyed because they were directly involved, making them remember and understand the material or lessons better. After the children observed the plants they planted themselves, in class, we created a philosophical tree where the plant images were turned into a problem that would be filled by the students, starting from the roots, stems, to leaves.

a. Roots

In the roots section, we asked the children what they aspired to be when they grew up. Of course, their answers varied. Then, we gave them sticky notes to write down their aspirations, and we pasted them together in the roots section.

b. Stem

Moving up to the next problem, the stem section, we asked the children again what they needed to do to achieve their aspirations, so that those aspirations could be realized. Of course, the answers varied as well, with some saying study, effort, or pray, with some stimulation or prompting given due to their young age.

c. Leaves

Continuing to the leaves, we asked again why they wanted those aspirations, and they answered to make their parents proud. Then, we pasted their writings in the leaves section. Without realizing it, activities like this indirectly provide a plant analogy for them to

grow. They not only learned about plant parts but also combined it with integrated learning to stimulate their thinking and make the learning more meaningful and memorable.

However, if this method is frequently used, there will be some obstacles, starting from costs. Projects often require significant costs, from purchasing tools and materials to travel expenses if the project involves field visits. Additionally, facility limitations may arise, as some schools may not have adequate facilities to support project implementation, such as equipment, workspace, or internet access. Furthermore, if the project-based learning method is continuously used, there may be difficulties in time management, especially if the project involves many stages.

Implementation and Reflection

The implementation of the PBL method at PAUDQu An-Nisa Syarifah was carried out gradually and continuously. Teachers facilitated the process by providing space for children to choose, explore, and complete the challenges given in the project. Adjustments were made to the duration of activities, task complexity, and the use of learning media according to the characteristics of early childhood.

Teacher reflections showed that the success of PBL is highly determined by the selection of relevant themes, children's involvement from the beginning, and flexibility in guiding the learning process. The main challenge faced was the need for longer time to complete projects, as well as the need for teacher training to deeply understand the philosophy and practice of PBL.

Discussion

This study aims to describe and analyze the implementation of the project-based learning model (Project-Based Learning/PBL) in improving the learning focus of early childhood. Learning focus is one of the important aspects in children's cognitive development that forms the basis for the growth of thinking, concentration, and independent task completion abilities.

Specifically, this study aims to find out how the planning, implementation, and evaluation of project-based learning are carried out by early childhood educators in the context of thematic activities that suit the characteristics and needs of early childhood. This study also aims to identify the impact of implementing the PBL model on children's active involvement in learning activities, increased concentration, and their ability to collaborate and complete tasks continuously.

Additionally, another objective of this study is to explore educators' experiences in facing challenges during the implementation of the PBL model, as well as to find strategies used to create a fun, meaningful, and developmentally appropriate learning atmosphere.

Thus, the results of this study are expected to provide practical contributions to the development of effective learning models in early childhood education, as well as serve as a reference for educators in designing learning activities that can optimally improve children's focus, motivation, and active participation.

Conclusion

The project-based learning method (PBL) has proven successful in improving children's learning focus. PBL places students at the center of learning, where they are actively involved in real and relevant projects or tasks, making them more motivated to learn. In PBL, students do not only passively receive information but are directly involved in the learning process. They are given tasks or projects that require them to think critically, solve problems, and collaborate with their peers. These activities direct their attention to the tasks at hand, automatically increasing focus.

Projects are usually related to real-world problems relevant to students. When students see that what they are learning has a direct impact on the world around them, they feel more motivated and enthusiastic about completing the task. This helps them maintain focus longer because they feel they have a clear purpose. PBL often involves group work, which teaches students how to work in teams. This collaboration requires communication and attention to each team member, increasing student engagement and focus. They also learn to support each other and take responsibility for the project's success, adding to their sense of responsibility.

Although the project-based learning method (PBL) has many advantages, it does not mean this method is without shortcomings. Of course, if this method is continuously implemented, it will require more time and resources.

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