



The Efforts of Lifelong Education through Life Skills for Early Childhood in the Play Groups

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Abstract: Education has a vital role in stimulating the growth and development of children. Currently, education is only focused on achieving cognitive outcomes, even though children need to be able to help themselves and become empowered for their lives in lifelong through life skills. This study described efforts to implement lifelong education by training life skills in early childhood in playgroups and its impacts. The method used is a case study with a qualitative approach. The subjects of this study were six teachers, four parents, and two students involving two playgroups. The stages of analysis data include data collection, reduction, and conclusion. The implementation of lifelong education in playgroups is carried out by providing stimulus regarding activities that trigger the growth of life skills for early childhood. Life skills in playgroups are applied through life skills centers. Life skills include social life, responsibility, self-awareness, gender awareness, decision-making, survival, and self-care. Activities related to life skills stimulate children's lifelong learning. This research can be a reference for early childhood teachers to facilitate children learning through life skills for lifelong education.

Keywords: early childhood, lifelong education, life skills

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INTRODUCTION

Lifelong education is continuous support to stimulate and empower individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, and skills needed throughout life and to apply them with confidence, creativity, and fun in all roles, circumstances, and environments (Laal & Laal, 2012). Lifelong education happens from the individual's birth until they pass away, from early childhood until adulthood. Based on late research, early childhood is crucial in human life (Birbili, 2013). The first six years in human life is a very influential time for individual success, and stimulus is needed. Early childhood education lays the foundation for physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional growth and development, language, and communication (Wahyuningtyas, 2019). Today, instead of focusing on being innovative, our society values the concept of an all-rounder. Therefore. Educational institutions must provide learning content that can facilitate children to live as individuals who are aware of what they have, are at peace with their environment and themselves, and can embrace life and contribute to the society in which they live. The needs described earlier are referred to as the needs of the 21st century, including critical



thinking, problems solving, communication, and so on (Bilir, 2022). The needs of the 21st century can be met through lifelong education, especially during early childhood.

Statistical data in Indonesia show that 86,787 study groups implement early childhood education programs (Kemenristekdikti, 2022). These results indicate a trend of parents enrolling their children in Early Childhood Education Institutions. This result has led to new findings that children's time in childcare is related to low social competence of children's interpersonal conflict and only focuses on cognitive learning outcomes (Luczynski & Fahmie, 2017). One of the institutions that focus on the process of early childhood education is the playgroup. This institution emphasizes the preparation of children to transition from the preschool stage to the following educational setting and have learning readiness and life readiness in the future (Gunning et al., 2019). Designing educational programs according to the child's developmental level is crucial to accommodate early childhood development. Programs that genuinely educate lay the foundation for behaviors that children can leverage for their future. Early childhood education and life skills-based learning patterns need to be developed. Life skills in early childhood include dealing with emotions and stress, decision-making, problem-solving, creative and critical thinking, communication, interpersonal skills, self-awareness, and empathy (Bilir, 2022).

The problem currently faced by playgroups is the need for educators to realize learning that can stimulate thinking, psychomotor, and affective skills in students' daily activities at home and school. It is in line with previous research where there has been considerable interest in developing educator skills to stimulate children's thinking and regarding program designs or approaches that 'specify what is to be learned and how to teach based on Life Skills' (Birbili, 2013); (Gupta, 2021); (Purnamasari et al., 2020). Previous research also confirmed that early childhood experiences rapid development reaching 50-80% from birth to 4 years of age, then another 30% increases until the child is eight years old (Mosweunyane & Molosi-France, 2017); (Adyanto, 2018); (Bilir, 2022). This recent research becomes necessary to investigate where teachers/educators in play groups need to implement activities that can stimulate early childhood development in achieving their future lives through life skills activities.

Through the ministry of education and culture, the Indonesian government has launched various efforts to improve education in Indonesia. One way is to implement an independent learning curriculum for every level of education, including early childhood education (Jannah & Harun, 2023). The independent learning curriculum aims to change traditional learning patterns to be more innovative and emphasizes the freedom of teachers and students to explore learning activities so that they are more appropriate to real-life contexts. In addition, the study's results also show that educators' role is more focused on providing stimulation related to life skills. The Merdeka curriculum can develop children's interests and talents, which are beneficial for students to adapt to the surrounding environment, (Jannah & Harun, 2023); (Parkinson & Jones, 2019). The government diffuses policies by driving schools to implement the independent learning curriculum. For the playgroup level, there are only 5,653 institutions that have been declared as driving schools out of 86,787 study groups that have been registered (Directorate of Elementary Education Teachers, 2023). This finding strengthens the research objective to examine lifelong education efforts through life skills in early childhood study groups, which have yet to receive much research.

Playgroups are a form of non-formal education PAUD unit that organizes educational programs for children aged 2 to 6, prioritizing ages 3 and 4 (Purnamasari et al., 2020). The playgroups that have implemented life skills as one of the mandatory contents in the curriculum are the Play Groups at the UNNES Lab School and the Pelangi PAUD Post. Since 2021 during a pandemic, educators have realized that the essence of

education is not only focusing on preparing children for further instruction. However, it is precisely to prepare themselves so that early childhood can prepare for adaptation to the surrounding environment and take a significant role in their lives. Based on the abovementioned problems, this study describes lifelong education efforts in stimulating early childhood life skills in the UNNES Lab School Playgroup and Pelangi Early Childhood Education Groups. This study also aims to explain in more detail the implementation of early childhood education focusing on life skills and the impact of lifelong education on early childhood.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method in playgroups. The case method is used because every playgroup has not yet implemented lifelong learning through life skills education. The playgroup also has different characteristics. The data obtained from the playgroups will be presented descriptively through the case study method in the UNNES Lab School playgroup and the POS PAUD Pelangi playgroup. The qualitative data in this study focuses on explaining lifelong education efforts through life skills for early childhood implemented in the play groups above. The subjects of this study included three teachers, two student guardians, and one student who attended the UNNES Lab School. In addition, three teachers, two guardians of students, and one student attending PAUD Pelangi. Data collection techniques using interviews, observation, and documentation. Primary data sources were obtained through interviews and direct observation in the field. Meanwhile, secondary data sources were obtained from the results of the documentation obtained.

The stages of the research were carried out by obtaining permits for the Pelangi Paud Institute and the UNNES Labschool, collecting primary data through structured interviews with research subjects—direct observation during planning, implementing, and evaluating learning in each playgroup. Researchers also complement the preliminary results with secondary data to enrich the findings. Secondary data includes documentation results such as school curriculum books, student report cards, parent-child contact books, and learning SOPs. After the primary and secondary data have been collected, the researcher tabulates the data to ensure that the data obtained follows the research objectives (Cohen et al., 2018). The validity of the data in this study uses source and method triangulation techniques. Triangulation is used so that tabulated data is objective and consistent. Data analysis in this study used Miles and Hubberman's qualitative analysis techniques, which included three stages of data analysis. These stages include data collection, reduction, and conclusion (Miles et al., 2014).



Bagan 1. Data Analysis by Miles and Hubberman

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on research conducted for six months at the Playgroup Pelangi and the UNNES Lab School, the researchers managed to examine several findings. The Playgroup Pelangi and the UNNES Lab School were chosen for research because these two study groups had implemented life skills education as learning content that supports lifelong education. In short, Playgroup Pelangi is located at Jl. South Sriwidodo, Purwoyoso, and Ngaliyan Semarang City. Playgroup Pelangi is a private PAUD post born in a community within the Rukun Warga area. Playgroup Pelangi was established in 2017 but has yet to be accredited. Currently, there are 35 students and four educators. The UNNES Lab School was founded in 2010, providing several early childhood education programs such as daycare, playgroups, and kindergartens. The implementation of playgroups is included in the non-formal education path. Non-formal education pathways are education outside the formal school. It can be held both institutionally and not institutionally. Non-formal education also does not have to be tiered or continuous (Yatimah & Karnadi, 2009). The playing group aims to provide a growth and development stimulus for early childhood focusing on children aged 2-4. The stimuli given prioritize the achievement of growth and development according to age maturity and prepare children to be independent according to their age. The findings also agree that ages 2 to 4 are the period to prepare children to grow and develop according to their age to be ready for the future. Efforts can be made in this stimulus by developing life skills (Paes & Eberhart, 2019).

Implementation of Lifelong Education through Life Skills for Early Childhood in Playgroups

The implementation of lifelong education in playgroups is carried out by providing stimulus regarding activities that trigger the growth of life skills for early childhood. Based on the results of research at the Playgroup Lab School UNNES and Pos Paud Pelangi, implementing learning activities that do not only focus on cognitive, psychomotor, and social aspects but include application in everyday life with child-centeredness. This result is in line with research on early childhood education that it is essential to be able to arrange child-centered activities. In their learning, educators consider children's abilities, development, and interests (Paes & Eberhart, 2019).

Educators in implementing children's learning emphasize the values of children's independence and learning about things that children find in everyday life. It is intended to prepare children to let them be independent in their future lives (Adyanto, 2018).. The study results show that learning activities are structured through the ABCD5E curriculum. This curriculum emphasizes implementing problem-based learning from the planning process to the evaluation. Learning planning is prepared using the ABCD formula: Audience, Behavior, Condition, and Degree. While 5E is a step in the learning process consisting of Engagement, Explain, Exploration, Elaboration, and Evaluation. Learning activities with the ACBD5E curriculum are implemented by providing various learning centers that children need as the focus of learning every day. One of them is the Life Skills Center, which directly offers daily life activities in the learning process of life skills provision. The goal of developing practical life for children is for children to get to know their behavior or daily activities, to foster a sense of concern for children, to train children's independence, and to accustom children to completing tasks with a small amount of guidance (Laal, 2012); (Laal & Salamati, 2012). Interviews with the teacher for implementing learning support these results.

In labschool, we develop the Merdeka Belajar curriculum by modifying the ABCD5E curriculum

Learning activities in play groups are carried out every Monday to Thursday, from 08.00 to 10.30 WIB. The total time given each day is 2.5 hours. This time is by early childhood learning standards (Retnaningrum, 2018). Children's daily learning activities in the playgroup consist of morning arrival, opening, extensive group time, small group time, activity period, outdoor activity, and ending with closing. In more detail, early childhood learning efforts in play groups will be presented in the table below:

Table 1. Learning Schedule

Time	Activity	Detail Activity	Goals
07.30 - 08.00	Morning Arrival	Students begin to develop their independence, such as placing things brought from home (bags, provisions, etc.) according to the locker and preparing everything that needs to be used on that day. Social skills are developed by inviting students to interact with teachers, friends, and people in the school environment.	Students can be independent and get used to being ready for a day
08.00 - 08.15	Opening	Edutainment learning through audio-visual devices introduces children to children's songs, traditional culture, fairy tales, etc. Song habituation Indonesia Raya, Pancasila, and other national anthems. Physical exercise through traditional games, gymnastics, dance, and games created by teachers. Singing the song Mars PAUD Lab School UNNES, praying, attending, and interactive activities continued with religious activities.	Stimulate children's Psychomotor and real-life habituation for nationality
08.15- 08.30	Large Group Time	Students are grouped according to their age before entering the learning class.	Stimulate children's social-emotional skills through daily activities in the social environment
08.30- 08.45	Small Group Time	Students participate in independent assignments that allow them to practice their learned skills. The student with teacher groups in learning centers in groups with friends	Stimulate children to have learning behavior and children growth and

		to complete the tasks according to the day's activities	development
08.45-09.15	Activity Period	Students carry out assignments according to choose or engage in different activities helps them to be creative, think logically, and develop socialization along with learning activities	Stimulate children to have learning behavior and children growth and development
09.15-09.30	Outdoor Activity	In this activity, children fill their time by playing and socializing with friends, teachers, and people in the school environment.	Stimulate children to have learning behavior and children growth and development
09.30	Closing	Students getting ready to go home (waiting to be picked up)	Students can be independent and get used to being prepared for going home.

Table 2. Thema and Course Planning

Month	Monday	Wednesday	Friday
January	Beams	Preparation	Lifeskills
	Literacy	Role Playing	Arts
	Kinesthetic	Natural	
February	Preparation	Beams	Arts
	Role Playing	Literacy	Lifeskills
	Natural	Kinesthetic	
March	Beams	Preparation	Lifeskills
	Literacy	Role Playing	Arts
	Kinesthetic	Natural	
April	Preparation	Beams	Arts
	Role Playing	Literacy	Lifeskills
	Natural	Kinesthetic	
May	Beams	Preparation	Lifeskills
	Literacy	Role Playing	Arts
	Kinesthetic	Natural	

Based on the schedule of activities described in the table above, daily learning activities have linked all aspects of development. They aim to provide life skills for early childhood through habituation so that they are ready for life in the future. It aligns with research stating that early childhood needs routine and consistent habituation (Hsu, 2005); (Sa'diyah & Arbarini, 2021); (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2010). The lifelong learning framework emphasizes that learning occurs during the whole course of a person's life. The process of coming up with plans or solutions to get over a challenge is known as problem-solving. This frequently entails applying unconventional thinking and creative

object usage. There is the theoretical presumption that children may perform better in subsequent problem-solving activities if they have had the opportunity to play with the respective things earlier because children often employ objects in their play in a variety of ways (Paes & Eberhart, 2019).. A broader conception requires countries to improve access to early childhood education, improve young people’s motivation and capacity to learn independently and address learning deficiencies in adults.

Life skills education efforts for early childhood are also carried out through center-based learning. As they actively explore, inquire about, and make discoveries, children actively take ownership of their learning experiences. Child-centered pedagogy can help early childhood educators promote and scaffold learning based on children’s developmental needs, interests, and talents when considering the different needs of early years children. Children grow and develop holistically in all their domains (social, emotional, cognitive, language, and physical), which are interconnected but constantly changing and fluctuating due to brain development, social interaction, and variations in experiences, especially cultural experiences (Brown, 2021); (Cade et al., 2022). Additionally, since the teacher continued to be present in the environment after the trial was over, having her assist with intervention implementation probably boosted skill maintenance and generalization. Parents may have noticed and praised their children for practicing the target skills at home as a result of the certificates the kids received for mastering each skill, which may have aided in generalization and early maintenance. Numerous parents claimed that their children's troublesome conduct at home and their preschoolers' life skills had improved (Gunning et al., 2019). Lifelong education is provided in play groups through early childhood learning centers, which are described in the table below:

Table 3. Detail of Center Development implemented in Playgroups

Centers	Center Details
Beam	Beam centers contain hundreds of blocks in various shapes. Facilitate children in building imaginative buildings that children can create. The activity of children will develop all aspects of early childhood development. Exploring in the center of blocks is also supported with accessories made by teachers from recycled materials and materials waste
Role Playing	It activates the child with contextually created role themes. Role centers develop intrapersonal language skills and interpersonal and emotional maturity.
Kinesthetic/ <i>Semawis</i>	It emphasizes large muscle movements, training coordination, courage, and social children to the level of sportsmanship. It has innovative indoor learning facilities and outdoor in the form of learning media made by the teacher and ready-to-use products to forge mental strength and resilience in children.
Arts	An art center with a complete range of media is provided for developing children’s motor skills, aesthetics, creativity, and imagination. Activities undertaken include traditional dance, music, drawing, batik, and creating waste or recycled materials to shape the soul of child conservation.
Literacy	This center activates children’s ability to recognize, understand and apply the basic concepts of literacy, numbers, math, and fine motor skills. Center teacher innovation develops abilities literacy (literacy) gradually

		appropriately, activating the whole child's senses with various media support from the teacher and the game provided
Natural		The center for natural materials is thick with science, mathematics, and art knowledge. The natural material center is filled with various natural ingredients, such as water, sand, rocks, leaves, etc.
Life Skills	Skills/Practical	Enhance nurturing classroom environment in which all teachers and children promote and reinforce prosocial skills. The skills of "Social Life", "Responsibility", "Self-Awareness", "Gender Awareness", "Decision-Making", "Survival," and "Self-care."
Preparation		The Preparation Center provides opportunities for students to develop math, pre-writing, and pre-reading skills, including sorting, classifying, and grouping various other activities that support cognitive development.

Each center described in the table above focuses on lifelong education adapted to early childhood growth and development stimulus needs. The developed centers always link learning contextually. For example, one life skills education activity program implemented in playgroups is the You and Me program. This program focuses on introducing sexual reproductive health from an early age. Children are expected to be able to take care of themselves very well to prevent bad things that might happen and even threaten them (children can maintain their body's health well and protect themselves against sexual violence from the start). This finding confirms that playgroups hold the key to the primary foundation. The primary foundation is character education, where education aims not only to produce cognitively intelligent students but also to form positive characters so that students are ready to become Indonesia's golden generation with 21st-century skills (Adyanto, 2018); (Retnaningrum, 2018).

The Impact of Lifelong Education through Life Skills for Early Childhood in Playgroups

Lifelong education through center-based life skills for early childhood in play groups impacts social life, responsibility, self-awareness, gender awareness, decision-making, survival, and self-care. It is evidenced by the research results where educators' learning activities in play groups link learning content with life skills. Research studies found out that the form of parental involvement in decision-making is involving parents of students in making school decisions by gathering parents' voices and opinions to achieve school goals through joint deliberations to reach consensus (Widaningtyas, 2022). The results of interviews with educators and Bali class play groups convey that:

Learning activities in play groups are carried out as a lifelong education effort. For example, activities in learning centers are adapted to activities familiar to children in their daily lives.

This statement is supported by the results of documentation on learning concept maps which show that student learning is carried out actively by associating routine activities. By that, children can practice habituation. An example of a concept map is illustrated in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Activity based on centers theme

Examples of activities that increase independence through students are setting their own goals and tracking their progress toward learning goals. They also assist them in improving their self-regulation skills. It requires children to control their learning, which a teacher must first arrange before finally being carried out by students, (Vieira, 2020). Children could learn something relevant when adults consider their thoughts and interests. Teachers can help students learn more about a particular topic by providing scaffolding if students state whichever component of the case (such as plant growth) they are most interested in. Instead of giving solutions, teachers can aid student learning by assisting them in gaining access to resources or conducting small experiments. Child hands-on play indoors (e.g., craftwork, drawing, colouring, jigsaw puzzle assembling, and role-play activities) or outdoors (playground activities such as climbing, tag games, running, throw and catch, and energetic play) especially when accompanied by parent or caregiver are opportunities for high-quality interactions that promote nurturing and caring bonds between parent and child—creating meaningful memories that could linger

beyond the early childhood years (Nopembri et al., 2023). On the other hand, In children, physical-motor skills need to develop continuously, through both early childhood education and family. People's knowledge of optimal child development tasks needs to support children's motor development (Fauziah et al., 2023).

Learning in literacy centers has the impact of increasing young children's vocabulary by repeatedly exposing them to target words, holding their attention, cultivating a collaborative and open environment, and offering meaningful contexts. It can be achieved through play activities and other interventions that regularly introduce new words to children (such as reading books) and encourage them to use them in new contexts (Agussani, 2020). Activities in literacy centers include reading books or telling stories. Teachers can help students think from different perspectives, learn new words, and understand events/concepts that occur frequently (e.g., restaurant visits). Children connect with deeper vocabulary and make it more meaningful when they exchange ideas. Children can also be encouraged to adopt different viewpoints. For example, the teacher reads about space with the children, creates space props with the children, and then plays a sociodramatic drama about the area. Therefore, children can interact meaningfully with new words like astronaut, outer space, doctor, space, or others complex vocabulary.

Children learn best when given opportunities to actively explore and engage in hands-on, teacher-led experiences. In particular, hands-on activities that produce unexpected results for young people do not expect (such as observing how stones and wooden blocks behave in water and wondering why one object floats). Open-ended questions from the teacher can stimulate students' thinking and deepen their understanding. Asking children to describe their experiences in the context of a science experiment is an example of open-ended questions (examples: "What just happened?" and "Why do you believe wood floats and rocks sink?"). After that, children can make predictions and try to justify their ideas. Through self-care, environmental care, cultivating gratitude and mutual respect, and coordination of bodily motions, practical life enables the development of organizational tasks and cognitive sequences. Developing a child's psychological abilities is closely related to religious signals in the youngster. The lack of religious engagement on the child is a result of impaired psychological functioning. However, the child's exposure to their environment will help shape their sense of religion (Wahyuningtyas, 2019).

The impact given by the Life Skills Center is that students try to understand gender roles and the domestic tasks that an individual has in society. Interviews with parents of students support these results.

"Alhamdulillah, since entering class A, my child likes to play pretending to be a mother, a father, and sometimes a grandmother. But yes, on a positive note, they want to be active with me, what a mother is, what you do, and what kind of a good mother is. Then they can appreciate the mother figure more, right?"

The results of this study are supported by research conducted in 2022 explaining that the interests, abilities, and developmental needs of young children are revealed through play. Therefore, children must actively participate in learning and builders of their curriculum. As such, a child-centered approach recognizes individual differences and abilities and respects children's social interests and experiences (Cade et al., 2022); (Williams, 2017). When asked about it in early years, some kids exposed to a pedagogy that integrates play and learning do not distinguish between the two. The perspectives of schoolchildren on play and learning are intriguing since many of them demonstrate parallels in how they discuss the two. This indicates that people view play and learning as enjoyable activities or transgressive behaviors, and that the two interact with one another, cross paths, and undergo transformations as a result. The discussion of play and

learning among schoolchildren frequently include an element of transgression (Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2008).

CONCLUSION

The implementation of lifelong education in playgroups is carried out by providing stimulus regarding activities that trigger the growth of life skills for early childhood. The goal is to develop life skills for children so that children are familiar with behavior or daily activities, foster a sense of concern for children, train children's independence, and familiarize children with completing tasks with a small quantity of guidance. Lifelong education through center-based life skills for early childhood in playgroups impacts social life, responsibility, self-awareness, gender awareness, decision-making, survival, and self-care. It will be very helpful if every teacher can implement this approach on teaching in early childhood education.

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