Management of the Emergent Literacy Program for Early Childhood at the Birrul Walidain Learning House

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Abstract: Early literacy is now an essential need in early childhood. Children must have initial reading and writing skills to be ready to enter the elementary school level. This study aimed to describe and analyze four management activities of an emergent literacy program in early childhood. This study is qualitative research classified as phenomenological research. The subjects of this study consisted of the managers, teachers, parents, and students of the Birrul Walidain learning house. This study applied interviews, observation, and documentation to collect the data. Then the data were analyzed using the data analysis techniques of the Miles and Huberman models, including data reduction, data presentation, and verification. The findings showed that the four management activities of the emergent literacy program in early childhood at the Birrul Walidain learning house are as follows: (1) planning the emergent literacy program; (2) organizing the emergent literacy program; (3) implementing an emergent literacy program by organizing initial reading and writing learning activities according to a predetermined schedule; (4) controlling the emergent literacy program. The results of this study had implications for the reconceptualization of emergent literacy programs in early childhood in terms of four managerial activities: planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling.

Keywords: early childhood, emergent, literacy, program.


Introduction

Indonesian society has now become a global society. Indonesian people currently live in the era of social society 5.0. Life in that era was increasingly complex. Every change can occur in seconds and affect various areas of people's lives. The community must also have a set of competencies to survive in the era of social society 5.0 (M. M. Nair et al., 2021). Literacy competence will make society “data literate” (Grillenberger & Romeike, 2018). These data were obtained from reading and writing activities using digital technology's sophistication (Mihailidis & Thevenin, 2013). Literacy activities are vital in early childhood in today's digital era. It is because the results of literacy activities will greatly determine a child's ability to communicate and work together (Mardliyah et al., 2020)
Reading and writing are routine activities carried out by children in any educational institution. However, each child has a different intensity related to their reading activity. Unfortunately, the reading intensity of children in Indonesia is relatively low. Based on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, 70% of Indonesian children had lower reading skills than the minimum competency. The data revealed that Indonesian children's reading skills ranked 72 out of 77 (Yoni, 2020). The facts are hard to ignore. Through Permendikbud Number 23 of 2015, the government promotes the School Literacy Movement (GLS). One of the goals of GLS is to develop students' culture of literacy at school (Rochmah & Bakar, 2021). Since 2015, every school has finally tried implementing GLS, starting from the elementary to high school levels. To support the implementation of the GLS, the curriculum at every level, including in elementary school, is designed to enable students to have initial reading and writing skills from the first grade. Reading and writing skills are the basis for learning materials in subsequent classes (Muhyiddin, 2018).

The community demands teachers in Kindergarten (TK) and Raudhatul Athfal (RA) to organize early reading and writing learning activities. On the other hand, until now, whether or not early reading and writing lessons are appropriate for young children remains subject to debate (Yulisar et al., 2020). Until now, it has become a debate in TK/RA. While the community require TK/RA to organize early reading and writing lessons to prepare the children entering elementary schools, in the other hand, TK/RA is not recommended to hold early reading and writing lessons (Asiah, 2018). This debate has shown that basic literacy skills are essential for children when they want to study at the elementary school level (Yansyah et al., 2021). Basic literacy skills are an asset for children to learn various materials at the elementary school level. The children learn the materials through reading and writing activities (Fajriyah, 2018).

The results of other studies show that literacy skills in early childhood will lead to positive perceptions in parents regarding the readiness of children to continue their studies at the elementary school level (Maghfirah et al., 2021). Amid this debate, parents are also trying to organize early reading and writing lessons for their children. However, busyness, psychological factors, and the lack of pedagogical skills make it hard for parents to manage their children’s early reading and writing lessons (Fajriyah, 2018).

Based on the results of the interviews, parents in the villages of Kajongan and Bojongsari, Bojongsari sub-district, Purbalingga district, Central Java province, have the same issue. Parents experience difficulties teaching children early reading and writing skills because they lack pedagogical skills and experience organizing early literacy activities in the family environment. The reason is that most parents in Kajongan and Bojongsari villages have junior high school and senior high school education backgrounds. Parent educational attainment provides a foundation that influences parents’ treatment in educating children (Widaningsih, 2022).

Based on this problem, an RA teacher in the Bojongsari sub-district organized an emergent literacy program in early childhood at villages by opening a non-formal educational institution in the form of tutoring called the Birrul Walidain Learning House. The preliminary study showed that 30 children from Pembina Bojongsari Kindergarten, RA Diponegoro Karangbolong, and other children who have not attended school learn reading and writing at the barrel validation learning house. They are 3 to 6 years old. The emergent literacy program aims to support the children’s initial reading and writing skills. Emergent literacy is a concept used to prepare children to read and write before entering elementary school (Fajriyah, 2018).
Astuti (2015) reported that emergent literacy development in urban areas and suburbs differs (Astuti, 2015). The emergent literacy abilities of children in urban areas develop more rapidly when compared to children in the suburbs. It is due to differences in environmental characteristics and the parents’ socioeconomic background (Astuti, 2015). Children learning to read and write at the Birrul Walidain learning house come from low socioeconomic status. They live on the outskirts of Purbalingga. The parents work as small traders, homemakers, and factory workers. The Birrul Walidain Learning house manager also confirmed the lack of literacy skills in early childhood in the villages of Kajongan and Bojongsari. This issue hinders the optimal emergent literacy program. These problems motivated the authors to conduct research focusing on early childhood emergent literacy management. The study results of the emergent literacy program at the Birrul Walidain learning house can be used as a reference for other parties who wish to organize an emergent literacy program at other non-formal educational institutions.

This study aims to describe and analyze the process of emergent literacy management in early childhood at the Birrul Walidain Learning House, Bojongsari, Purbalingga. At the same time, the benefits of this research are obtaining guidelines for non-formal educational institutions such as tutoring and including PAUD institutions on non-formal channels such as Playgroups (KB) in organizing emergent literacy programs in early childhood.

**Method**

This study is phenomenological research with a qualitative natural descriptive approach. This study describes a phenomenon that occurs in an environment without engineering elements (Sugiyono, 2010). This study was conducted at the Birrul Walidain Learning House, Kajongan village, RT 1 RW 9, Bojongsari sub-district, Purbalingga district, Central Java province. The study was implemented in November and December 2022. The Birrul Walidain Learning House was selected as the research location because it is a non-formal educational institution that organizes literacy activities in early childhood in the Bojongsari sub-district.

Data sources in this study included a tutoring manager, two tutoring teachers, two parents, and 20 children. The authors used interviews, observation, and documentation as data collection techniques based on these data sources. More interviews will be conducted to gather data on planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising the emergent literacy program in early childhood at the Birrul Walidain learning house. The parties interviewed were the teachers and parents. The author used an open interview technique to avoid using instruments. Then observations were performed to gather data on implementing an emergent literacy program in early childhood at the Birrul Walidain learning house. This study applied participant observation, so the researcher participated directly in literacy learning activities and recorded the results in field notes. The documentation was intended to collect data related to plans prepared by managers related to emergent literacy programs. The documents were in the form of reading and writing materials and the assessment results. The data collected were then tested for validity using the data source triangulation technique (Moleong, 2010). Then the data were analyzed using the data analysis technique of the Milles and Huberman models, which consisted of data reduction, data display, and verification stages (Milles et al., 2014).

**Result And Discussion**

**Planning for an Emergent Literacy Program in Early Childhood at the Birrul Walidain Learning House**
Program planning is an activity that will be carried out to achieve the goals of a program (Bryson et al., 2018). Thus planning an emergent literacy program in early childhood is a variety of activities that will be carried out to achieve the goals of an emergent literacy program in early childhood.

There are six steps taken by the management of the Birrul Walidain learning house in preparing an emergent literacy program plan for early childhood. The first step is setting the goals of the early literacy program. Based on the research results, the emergent literacy program in early childhood at the Birrul Walidain learning house aims to develop early literacy skills so that children are ready to attend elementary school. The data showed that in 2023 there would be 19 children aged six who plan to continue their studies at elementary school.

The goals formulated in the emergent literacy program at the Birrul Walidain learning house are based on the expectation and needs of the community, where they want their children to be able to read so that they are ready to go to elementary school. The basis of this goal, in the context of total quality management, has made people having young children the main customers for the Birrul Walidain learning house (Tomic & Spasojevic Brkic, 2019).

The second step is setting targets for participants in early literacy activities based on predetermined goals. There were three groups of participants, namely: (1) the 3-4-year-old group, namely children who had not studied at TK/RA; (2) the 4-5 year age group, namely children studying in class A at TK/RA; and the 5-6 year age group, namely children studying in class B at TK/RA. The grouping ensures that the learning strategies that the teacher will use to carry out literacy teaching and learning process have relevance to the child’s developmental stage and the concept of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP). The target participants above are input for the Birrul Walidain learning house in the emergent literacy program. These inputs fall into a varied category, making organizing a varied literacy program possible. The more varied a program is, the more programs will be produced (Saitis & Saiti, 2018).

The third step is determining the strategy for implementing an emergent literacy program. Strategies in the context of management describe a process of activities carried out to achieve goals. Implementing appropriate strategies will produce optimal outputs and outcomes from an activity program, including the emergent literacy program (Cavaleri & Shabana, 2018). There were four strategies designed to be implemented in the emergent literacy program at the Birrul Walidain learning house, namely: (1) practising reading vowels; (2) reading vowels and consonants; (3) reading aloud; (4) reading story books; and (5) posterization strategy for children’s study rooms.

The fourth step is developing media and learning resources for emergent literacy programs. The media and learning resources in the emergent literacy program in early childhood at the Birrul Walidain learning house included (i) Islamic children’s reading books I like to read volumes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5; (2) children’s story books; and (3) children’s literacy posters. Based on the study’s results, it can be seen that overall the media and learning resources used are still based on printed media. The Birrul Walidain learning house manager has not used digital media learning resources. It is due to the limited ownership of digital media by parents. Using media and print-based learning resources in literacy activities can lead children to accurate understanding. The study results show that the understanding of text from digital media is lower than that of text from print media. Reading activities in early childhood are more optimal when carried out using print-based media and learning resources (Ben-Yehudah & Eshet-Alkalai, 2018).
The fifth step is determining the tuition for each participant in the emergent literacy program. It is undeniable that a program requires operating costs. Therefore, the Birrul Walidain learning house management determines the fees for each child participating in the emergent literacy program. The tuition to take part in the emergent literacy program at the Birrul Walidain learning house is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numb.</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Study Duration</th>
<th>Monthly fee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>TK/RA</td>
<td>30 minutes/day</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>TK.RA</td>
<td>60 minutes/day</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Early childhood</td>
<td>60 minutes/day</td>
<td>70,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Every month, the children learn in 12 meetings. Every week the children learn in three meetings. The study session is 30 minutes per day, and if a child is absent three times in one month, then the monthly fee will be deducted by Rp. 5,000. Then if a child is absent four times in one month, the monthly payment will be deducted by Rp. 10,000. The study session for TK/RA group is 30 minutes per day. If a child is absent three times in one month, the monthly fee will be deducted by Rp. 5,000. Then if a child is absent four times in one month, the monthly fee will be deducted by Rp. 10,000. If a child is absent for three meetings in one month in the early childhood group, the monthly fee will be deducted by Rp. 5,000. Then if a child is absent four times in one month, the monthly fee will be deducted by Rp. 10,000. The Birrul Walidain learning house manager revealed that the above deductions were made so parents would not suffer financial losses when their children did not attend 3 to 4 meetings for one month. Participating in an emergent literacy program at the Birrul Walidain learning house is cheap. It allows the parents, primarily farmers and labourers, to enrol their children.

The last step is scheduling the learning activities for children. The Birrul Walidain learning house manager creates a schedule of learning activities based on the children’s study schedule in RA and kindergarten. Based on the study results, the learning schedule is made based on the grouping between the early childhood, RA, and kindergarten groups. Learning activities in the early childhood group are carried out on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays from 10.15 to 11.30. In the TK/RA group, the study sessions are divided into two sessions, namely (1) session for students from TK Pembina Bojongsari held from 11.30 to 12.00 every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; and (2) session for students from RA Diponegoro Karangbolong held from 10.30 to 11.00 every Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday.

Organizing the Emergent Literacy Program in Early Childhood at the Birrul Walidain Learning House

There are four steps in organizing an emergent literacy program in early childhood at the Birrul Walidain learning house. The first step is socializing emergent literacy programs in early childhood in the community. Socialization activities are carried out by making and distributing posters to the community, especially people who have children aged 3 to 6 years. The contents of the poster consist of: (1) inviting parents to introduce reading and writing activities to their children from an early age; (2) advising parents to send their children to the Birrul Walidain learning house if they do not have opportunities to introduce reading and writing activities for their children themselves; (3) materials and activities for learning to read and write at the Birrul Walidain learning house; and (4) tuition and fees.

The socialization of the emergent literacy program to the community is an effort to market educational services organized by the management of the Birrul Walidain learning house. So far, The activities have only been carried out in Karangbolong village. The management should conduct socialization in other villages in the Bojongsari sub-district,
Purbalingga district, to expand the target market. The wider the consumer, the more Birrul Walidain learning houses to get new students.

The sophistication of information and communication technology can be utilized by the management of the Birrul Walidain learning house to expand its consumer areas. Utilization of ICT in socialization activities not only saves costs but can also save time and make socialization activities take place effectively and efficiently. The use of ICT in this socialization is very appropriate for the management of the Birrul Walidain learning house in Purbalingga district, a small town in Central Java province (Mboup, 2017).

The second step is recruiting new students in an emergent literacy program for early childhood. Recruitment activities are carried out at the end of each month before the end of the learning activities in one month. The manager’s position as a teacher at RA Diponegoro Karangbolong makes it easier for him to recruit new students. Most emergent literacy program participants came from RA and TK Pembina Bojongsari. Recruitment of early childhood at TK Pembina Bojongsari can be done easily because the manager of the Birrul Walidain learning house is a colleague of the teachers at TK Pembina Bojongsari.

The Birrul Walidain learning house manager also recruits early childhood children aged 3 to 4 years. They have not studied at non-formal PAUD institutions such as Playgroups because there are no Playgroup services in Karangbolong village. It allows the manager of the Birrul Walidain learning house to maximally recruit new students for children aged 3 to 4 years. Children aged 3 to 4 years are external customers who can study at the Birrul Walidain learning house for a long time. They can join the TK/RA group after age five.

The third step is grouping new students in the emergent literacy program. The group division was based on the child’s age and the study duration at the Birrul Walidain learning house. There are three groups of students, namely: (1) the early childhood group with a study duration of 60 minutes per day; (2) the TK/RA group with a study duration of 30 minutes per day; and (3) the TK/RA group with a study duration of 60 minutes per day. The grouping of students in the Birrul Walidain learning house will have implications for class management activities in the literacy program. The proper grouping of students will make it easier for teachers to carry out optimal classroom management. Optimal classroom management will produce a learning climate that supports an emergent literacy program (Cooper et al., 2018).

The last step is organizing learning materials for students based on their groups. After dividing the groups, the manager manages the learning material. The primary learning material comes from reading books for Islamic children who like to read volumes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. Early childhood groups learn to read these books in volumes 1, 2, and 3 with vowel recognition material. The TK/RA group learned to read books in volumes 4 and 5 with material on introducing syllables, words, paragraphs, and punctuation. Organizing learning materials is very important to obtain literacy learning materials that are by the characteristics and development of children. The discrepancy between material and the children’s characteristics and development will lead to school stress. If that happens, the emergent literacy program will only make children experience emotional problems (Wong, 2015).

The fifth stage is coordinating with parents before implementing an emergent literacy program. Coordination is carried out to communicate the learning schedule, the equipment, and the materials. Coordination between the managers of the Birrul Walidain learning house and the parents is an effort to establish communication to get the managers to bring moral and material support from parents. In addition, the coordination is also carried out to develop good relations with parents as external customers of the Birrul Walidain learning house. From this good relationship, parents will have confidence in the management of Birrul Walidain to
educate their children according to their expectations and needs. If trust can be obtained, satisfaction with the educational services provided by the *Birrul Walidain* Learning Center for parents may also be obtained (Famiyeh et al., 2018).

**Implementation of the Emergent Literacy Program in Early Childhood at the Birrul Walidain Learning House**

The emergent literacy program in early childhood at the *Birrul Walidain* learning house is carried out according to a predetermined schedule. In the early childhood group learning activities are carried out on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays from 10.15 to 11.30. In the TK/RA group, the learning was divided into two sessions, namely (1) a session for students from TK Pembina Bojongsari held from 11.30 to 12.00 every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; and (2) a session for students from RA Diponegoro Karangbolong held from 10.30 to 11.00 every Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday.

Learning activities begin with praying together and then continue with reading activities using reading books that the teacher has determined. Reading activities are carried out individually. Each child takes turns reading a reading book guided by the teacher for 2 to 3 minutes. Children waiting for their turn are writing, drawing, colouring, and playing with educational game tools that the teacher has prepared.

The results of other studies show that reading activities have a very close relationship with writing activities. The experience gained by children when reading will be the primary capital for children in carrying out writing activities. It can be said that the ability to write in children will be significantly influenced by the ability to read (Puranik et al., 2018). After all the children have had their turn to read, the teacher asks the children to collect their writing. The teacher gives feedback on students’ writing to motivate them to like writing. After that, the children do reading-aloud activities. The teacher will introduce storybooks to the children and reads them. The aim is to raise curiosity in children so that children are encouraged to read the storybook.

The children were enthusiastic about participating in reading and writing activities at the *Birrul Walidain* learning house. They not only carry out literacy activities but also artistic activities, social activities, and spiritual activities. Every Friday, the teacher teaches children to read the *Koran* using the *Yanbu’a* method. Before and after carrying out learning activities, the teacher always invites children to pray. Then after the learning activities are finished, the teacher asks the children to carry out the midday prayer. Based on the research results, it can be seen that children can participate in reading and writing activities well. Reading and writing activities can make children have the following literacy abilities: (1) the ability to recognize vowels; (2) the ability to recognize consonants; (3) the ability to read one syllable; (4) the ability to read one word; (5) the ability to read one simple sentence; (6) the ability to read a simple paragraph; (7) the ability to recognize numbers; (8) and the ability to read *Hijaiyah* letters.

Based on the abilities above, children’s literacy skills will also influence their numeracy abilities. When children learn to read, they find numeracy concepts on the page number and in reading material content. The results of other studies show that there is indeed a relationship between literacy skills and numerical abilities, so it is better if the provision of numerical activities accompanies the literacy activities given to children. (Napoli & Purpura, 2018). Literacy abilities in children also contribute to optimizing cognitive development in early childhood. The results of other studies revealed that children’s mastery of vocabulary from reading activities positively influences their academic achievement. The more intensely a
child reads, the more new vocabulary he will acquire and the better his academic abilities will be (Shahaeian et al., 2018).

Reading activity is a receptive activity carried out by children. Through these activities, children can acquire new vocabulary that can be used as capital to carry out expressive activities in language. That is what makes literacy activities can have a positive influence on language development in children. Literacy activities at the Birrul Walidain learning house are also carried out through playing activities that contain elements of literacy. It supports reading activities but also avoids boredom in children when learning to read. The results of other studies show that play activities that contain literacy elements can positively influence children’s reading skills. When playing, children carry out expressive activities where they can express their feelings through the various vocabulary they get from reading activities (Toub et al., 2018).

At the Birrul Walidain learning house, children learn to read the same reading books to facilitate reading activities together. All children learn to understand letters, syllables, words, sentences, and paragraphs through these joint reading activities. The reading activity together has taught them to share knowledge and care for each other. It contributes to the social-emotional development of children. The results of other studies show that reading together activities carried out by children can prompt cooperative behaviour and suppress aggressive behaviour in children when socializing (Rose et al., 2018).

The emergent literacy program implemented at the Birrul Walidain learning house supports the implementation of the early literacy program contained in the independent curriculum. In the independent curriculum, every formal educational institution, including TK and RA, must organize literacy programs so that children can develop critical thinking, as contained in the Pancasila student profile.

![Figure 1. Book Reading Activity](image)

Control of the Emergent Literacy Program in Early Childhood at the Birrul Walidain Learning House

Control of emergent literacy programs in early childhood is carried out to ensure that program implementation can go according to plan. The Birrul Walidain learning house manager takes several steps to control the emergent literacy program.

The first step is monitoring learning activities to ensure all learning facilities are available and ready to carry out literacy activities. In addition, the management also ensures the readiness of teachers to carry out learning activities. Adequate literacy facilities will influence the development of literacy skills in children. The literacy facilities in the Birrul
Walidain learning house include reading books, literacy posters, stationery, and literacy learning videos. The results of other studies reveal that literacy tools are a physical literacy environment whose use can implement emergent literacy programs varied (Dynia et al., 2018).

The second step is cooperating with parents to encourage interest in organizing literacy activities at home. The management asks parents to guide their children to learn to read at home for at least 2 to 5 minutes every day. According to the Birrul Walidain learning house manager, literacy competency development in children will be more optimal when it is carried out in educational institutions and the family environment. The results of other studies indicate that parental concern for children strongly influences the presence or absence of an emergent literacy program in the family environment. With this concern, parents will be more serious about guiding their children in learning even though they come from families with middle to lower economic conditions (Fikrat-Wevers et al., 2021).

The third step is inviting parents as their external customers to provide criticism and suggestions. The manager believes that criticism and suggestions from parents can be used as material for continuous improvement efforts. In integrated quality management, continuous improvement must be made to satisfy external customers (Santouridis & Veraki, 2017). Continuous improvement efforts to satisfy the community as an external customer of a non-formal educational institution can strengthen the position of the Birrul Walidain Learning Center as a centre for community learning activities (Saepudin et al., 2022).

This research presents four management activities of an emergent literacy program. Every program and every management activity from the implementation is based on a policy. In this study, the authors have not described the various policies that serve as the basis for implementing an emergent literacy program in early childhood. This is the limitation of this research.

Conclusion

Implementing an emergent literacy program in early childhood at the Birrul Walidain learning house aims to develop early literacy skills so that children are ready to enter the elementary school level. The management achieves this goal by carrying out four management activities, namely: (1) planning an emergent literacy program in early childhood; (2) organizing emergent literacy programs in early childhood; (3) implementing emergent literacy programs in early childhood, and (4) managing emergent literacy programs in early childhood. The four management activities are carried out systemically; thus, an emergent literacy program can be planned and directed to achieve the objectives. This helps the Birrul Walidain learning house accomplish the goals of the emergent literacy program. The achievement of these objectives can be indicated by: (1) the increasing number of new students every month; (2) many alums from the Birrul Walidain Learning House were accepted to attend the best public elementary schools in the Bojongsari sub-district, Purbalingga district.

References


