# Implementation of Contextual Learning In Improving Early Children's Cognitive Ability

Novita Loka<sup>1</sup>, Raden Rachmy Diana<sup>2</sup>, Muhammad Sirril Wafa<sup>3</sup>

<sup>12,</sup> UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta
<sup>3</sup> Global University Beirut
e-mail corresponden: <u>novitalokastg@gmail.com</u>

#### ABSTRAK.

Kemampuan kognitif anak usia dini saat ini menurun. Hal ini didukung berbagai faktor, salah satunya adalah kurangnya penggunaan pembelajaran yang inovatif yang mampu mengembangkan berbagai aspek perkembangan anak, khususnya ada kemampuan kognitif anak.. Pembelajaran yang bisa digunakan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan kognitif anak adalah pembelajaran kontekstual. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui kemampuan kognitif anak pada pembelajaran kontekstual di Taman Kanak-kanak Islam Al-Ittifaqiah Indralaya. Penelitian ini berjenis kualitatif deskriptif dengan pengumpul data yakni observasi, wawancara dan dokumentasi dengan subjek penelitian anak usia 5-6 tahun di kelas B Maria al-Qibty Taman Kanak-kanak Islam al-Ittifaqiah Indralaya. Sedangkan analisa data yang digunakan dengan pendekatan Miles dan Huberman. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kemampuan kognitif anak meningkat pada pembelajaran kontekstual ini. Hal ini dibuktikan dengan beberapa indikator kemampuan kognitif anak seperti meningkatnya kemampuan memecahkan masalah sederhana, memahami konsep sains dan konsep bilangan. Anak yang semula tidak mengetahui warna dan bentuk, ketika dilaksanakan pembelajaran kontekstual mulai memahami warna dan bentuk tersebut.

Kata Kunci: Pembelajaran Kontekstual, Kemampuan Kognitif, Anak Usia dini

#### ABSTRACT

Cognitive abilities in early childhood are currently declining. This is supported by various factors, one of which is the lack of use of innovative learning that can develop various aspects of children's development, especially children's cognitive abilities. Learning that can be used to improve children's cognitive abilities is contextual learning. This study aims to determine the cognitive abilities of children in contextual learning at Al-Ittifaqiah Islamic Kindergarten Indralaya. This research is a descriptive qualitative type with data collectors namely observation, interviews, and documentation with research subjects aged 5-6 years in class B Maria al-Qibty Islamic Kindergarten al-Ittifaqiah Indralaya. While the data analysis used the Miles and Huberman approach. The results showed that children's cognitive abilities such as the increased ability to solve simple problems and understand science concepts and number concepts. Children who initially do not know colors and shapes, when contextual learning is carried out, begin to understand these colors and shapes.

Keywords: Contextual Learning, Cognitive Ability, Early Childhood

# **INTRODUCTION**

Early childhood is a child who experiences a very significant growth process (Nina Veronica, 2018). This is supported by several research results related to this growth and development. Like the results of research conducted by Mutiah Ulfa and Na'imah with the title of research on the role of the family in developing child development (Susilawati, 2020). The growth

and development of children are very significant. Starting from the child in the womb experiences good growth and development physically, brain development, and so on (Sholichah & Ayuningrum, 2020). When a child is born, this development increases with age. Children at this age are often referred to as the golden age or the golden phase of children (Fardiah et al., 2019). It means that there are things that are characteristic that occur at that age. Not only that, children aged 0 to 6 years are born with unique and distinctive potential (Suhendro & Syaefudin, 2020). This potential needs to be developed as well as possible (Wiwik Pratiwi, 2017). This is so that children can go through the processes that they will go through at a later age.

The potential of each child is different or not the same (Prawesti, 2020). Every child has different potential. Several influencing factors are the reason (Ibda, 2015). Such as heredity or genetic factors, environmental factors, or both factors (Rezieka et al., 2021). In addition, this potential or *fitrah* is mentioned in a hadith which has the following meaning: "*Every child born carries nature, so it is his parents who make him a Jew, Christian, or Zoroastrian*" (Satriyadi et al., 2022). From this hadits, it is clear that children have potential from birth (Smith, 2016). The family environment has a major influence on various aspects of child development, including cognitive abilities (Farida, 2018). There are various types of potential or nature. Some children carry mathematical logical potential, are intelligent in socializing, and so on (Andinisari, 2015). Some children are smart in expressing their imagination (Prawesti, 2020). This means that the potential of each child is unique and different from the others, as well as their cognitive abilities.

The cognitive abilities of each child are different. This cognitive ability itself is an individual effort or power in implementing cognition (Tatminingsih, 2019). According to Piaget, children's cognitive abilities are in the pre-operational phase (Syukron Al Mubarok & Amini, 2019). According to him, this cognitive ability is obtained through a scheme or experience (Eliza, 2018). This child's cognitive ability can be developed with a variety of experiences such as education (Loka, 2022). Education is important to be carried out and carried out by various parties, including family or parents (Dewi, 2017). Why? Because with education children will experience a good learning process. Starting from meeting other people or socializing with friends, the school environment, and the community (Ilham, 2020). This is certainly very good for the development of early childhood. In addition, education will also provide a good cognitive experience for children. Where will he learn various knowledge that he did not know before and so on.

This research was conducted with the aim of knowing children's cognitive abilities with the implementation of contextual learning in early childhood. As is well known, contextual learning is learning that relates learning material to real life (Darmayanti et al., 2018). So that this learning will provide direct experience to students, especially in early childhood. Contextual learning is also developed by constructivist philosophers. After that, it was developed again by Jean Piaget (Syukron Al Mubarok & Amini, 2019). Learning with this contextual approach is learning that provides direct experience to students (Rahmawati, 2018). This learning is very appropriate to be applied to early childhood because, during the period of growth and development of children, children are usually referred to as true reminders. This means that at that age the child has a very good memory or memory (Dharma et al., 2018). So that this contextual learning is the right learning given to children aged 0-6 years (Gading et al., 2019). As was found in the results of observations at the Islamic Kindergarten al-Ittifaqiah Indralaya.

The use of contextual learning is applied through the stages of opening, core, and closing activities. In this activity, the children looked enthusiastic about participating in learning. The

contextual learning used is applied to the theme of learning fruits. At the time of initial observation, there were still categories of cognitive abilities that had not yet developed. However, when learning is done contextually, children's cognitive abilities begin to develop properly. For this reason, researchers want to know more specifically about how and what are the implications of implementing contextual learning on the cognitive abilities of early childhood at the Islamic Kindergarten al-Ittifaqiah Indralaya.

#### METHODE

This research is descriptive qualitative research. The subjects of this study were class teachers and children aged 5-6 years in the Maria al-Qibty class of Al-Ittifaqiah Indralaya Islamic Kindergarten, Ogan Ilir, South Sumatra. The number of children in this class is 20 people with different potentials. This class was used as a subject in research for several reasons, such as the cognitive abilities of children who were still in the undeveloped category or still needed the teacher's help when answering teacher questions, doing assignments, and so on. So the children in this class became the subject of the research conducted.

Data collection techniques used are observation, interviews, and documentation. The observation technique is by observing various events that occur when the learning process takes place. The data observed in this study are data related to the learning process activities in Maria al-Qibty's class. Interview techniques were conducted to dig up detailed information related to children's cognitive abilities and applied contextual learning. This interview was conducted with the class teacher related to improving children's cognitive abilities in contextual learning. While the documentation was carried out to find information related to the school program or the profile of the school being studied, such as the names of the children in Maria al-Qibty's class, the number of children in al-Ittifaqiah Islamic Kindergarten, and so on. The data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman approach (Anggraini & Darma Putri, 2019). The analysis begins with data collection, data reduction, and concluding.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Data were obtained from interviews with the head of Al-Ittifaqiah Indralaya Islamic Kindergarten that this kindergarten operates every Monday to Friday. With time starting at 08.00 WIB to 11.00 WIB. The activities carried out are by the curriculum used, namely the 2013 curriculum. This kindergarten has 10 classes with 8 classes in class B and 2 classes in class A. Class B is children with an age range of 5-6 years, while class A is 3-4 years old. This kindergarten operates under the auspices of the al-Ittifaqiah Islamic Foundation and the Office of Education and Culture of Ogan Ilir. Learning begins at 08.00 WIB with activities lining up in front of each class. This activity is carried out to improve children's memorization such as memorizing short surahs, short hadiths, and daily prayers. In addition, this marching activity is also aimed at increasing children's vocabulary memorization in English and Arabic (Permatsari et al., 2019). This activity is carried out by connecting directly with the child's daily life (Aini & Relmasira, 2018). For example, the teacher asks a question to the child about the color of the fruit, then the teacher immediately gives examples of other colors that are the same as the color of the fruit. So that the child immediately understands the color of the fruit in question. After the marching activity was over, the children entered their respective classes guided by their class teacher.



Picture 1. March Front of the Class

Opening activities by existing procedures. Then the teacher does an apperception which aims to determine the child's development. After that, the teacher conveys the learning objectives and the material to be studied. In the opening activity of this contextual learning, the teacher invites children to tell stories about various kinds of fruit and their shapes. Then, the teacher invites the children to discuss the benefits of fruits. The final stage of contextual learning is the teacher introduces the activities and rules used when playing. This contextual learning is continued with the core stage. In the main activity, the teacher explains in detail related to the benefits of citrus fruits, and how to plant citrus fruits and invites children to group fruit in the shape of a circle. Then, the teacher invites the children to compare the colors of green and yellow fruits and count oranges according to their color. The final activity of this contextual learning is closing. In closing activities the teacher invites children to tidy up the tools that have been used, the teacher invites children to discuss feelings during playing activities, tells about advice, then informs them about activities that will be carried out tomorrow and the application of learning closing standards. After that, an evaluation of the learning that has been carried out is carried out.

The results of the observations were made starting at the opening of the existing SOP, namely by reading a prayer before studying and continuing to memorize what was previously memorized, such as short surahs, short hadiths, daily prayers, and so on. In this activity, the children were very enthusiastic about the lessons given by their class teacher. So that the class atmosphere becomes active. As the results of interviews with the class teacher regarding the activity of the children when the contextual learning was carried out were that "The children were very enthusiastic about participating in learning and showed a confident attitude towards the statements expressed by the children.". The class atmosphere at that time reflected contextual learning which was able to improve children's critical thinking abilities (Hendra, 2021). After that, the activity continued with the stimulation of the child's development of mastery of the day's name. This activity is carried out collectively or in groups by answering the teacher's questions and the teacher writing the name of the day on the blackboard (Loka, 2022). Not only that, but this

also happens when the teacher asks the date of that day. And simultaneously the children answered the teacher's question. After that go on to the core activities.

The core activities in kindergarten are carried out to improve various child development. The activity carried out is reading syllables in learning books or magazines (Hartanto et al., 2016). The activity is intended to determine the extent to which the child's language develops. In addition, reading Iqro' is also applied (Mustafa, 2016). This is in addition to developing children's cognitive and language, it also develops religious values in children (Hasanah & Munastiwi, 2019). As the results of observations made during the learning process take place, the teacher provides an explanation that relates the material to the child's life. For example, on the upright alif, the teacher explains several objects in real life that are similar to the alif, such as electric poles, pencils, tree trunks, and so on. Not only that, but in the cognitive development of children with science indicators, the teacher also explains the same thing, namely associating the material with the child's real life. From the results of observations made by the teacher when explaining the letter "O" to children. When the teacher explains the shape of the letter is similar to real life, such as the shape of an egg, pinkie fruit, orange fruit, and so on. So that children understand the learning material well (N Veronica, 2018). This is supported by the results of interviews with class teachers related to the implications of implementing learning using a contextual approach to learning. The teacher revealed that there was development in children, both from a cognitive side to other developments. This is in line with research conducted by Putu Mira Novita Sari, et al. that contextual learning can provide students with a calculating experience (P. M. N. Sari et al., 2020). So that this learning model is always applied. In addition, this contextual learning also has a positive influence on children's motivation and interest in learning (Eliza, 2018).



Picture 2. Reading Iqro'

In this core activity, the teacher also gives special assignments to children. The task on that day is to count the fruit on the plate. The fruit on the plate has a different size. Here the teacher

explains to the children about the fruit on the plate. Starting from the color, shape, and size of the fruit. In addition, the teacher also invites the children to count the fruit. The enthusiasm of children participating in learning is increasingly interesting (Ansori & Sari, 2020). Implementation of learning with this contextual model approach makes children more motivated to answer various teacher questions (Tatminingsih, 2019). In addition, through this learning, it is able to increase the activity of children while studying in class (Fayakun & Joko, 2015).

The results of observations at the time the research was were conducted, the teacher asked questions related to the color of the oranges in the teacher's hand. Then the children answered simultaneously "Orange". In addition, the teacher also gave questions related to the size of the fruit. "Which is bigger oranges and pinkies?" The children answered "Oranges". Not only that, but the teacher also gave questions related to the shape of oranges and pinkie fruits to the children. and in agreement, the children answered "Round or circle". The activities carried out to follow the syntax of contextual learning. In contextual learning, the teacher provides explanations related to learning material clearly and relates it to the child's daily life. So that the learning material taught is easily accepted by children. After the teacher gives questions about colors, shapes, and size comparisons, the teacher also gives questions outside of the learning material. "What is the shape of the number 0?" The children answered "Circle". This is done to find out whether the child's cognitive abilities have increased or not by using this contextual learning. And it can be concluded that it has good implications for children's cognitive abilities.



Picture 3. Counting of fruits

This closing activity begins by reflecting on the activities carried out that day (Hayati et al., 2019). Besides that, in this activity, the teacher gave several questions related to the child's feelings that day. Then the teacher explains the lesson that will be carried out the next day. In addition, the teacher also gives some important advice to children to respect and obey their parents and other adults. This activity was closed by praying after studying together. Cognitive abilities of early childhood through this contextual learning experience have a significant increase. Initially,

children's cognitive abilities still needed a lot of teacher's help or the category was not yet developed with a percentage of 17.64% BB, increasing to a developing category according to expectations with a percentage of 100%. Children begin to be able to count and recognize number symbols well, compare colors well, and recognize shapes well. As the results of interviews conducted related to improving children's cognitive abilities through this contextual learning. *"Children's cognitive abilities increase after applying contextual learning. Some things are obvious, such as starting to be independent in doing the tasks given, being able to compare the size of objects, the color of objects, and so on".* From this explanation, the implementation of contextual learning can improve the cognitive abilities of early childhood.

# CONCLUSION

The implementation of contextual learning in the Al-Ittifaqiah Indralaya Islamic Kindergarten was carried out well. The learning activities carried out began with opening activities, and core activities and ended with closing activities. Learning is done by linking learning material directly to children's daily lives. This is done so that children understand the learning material well. The implementation of this contextual learning has good implications for children's cognitive abilities. Not only that, but through contextual learning other aspects of child development also develop well. As for the increase in children's cognitive abilities from 17.64%, it has not yet developed to 100% developed according to expectations. So this contextual learning is alternative learning that can be applied by teachers or educators in educational institutions, especially early childhood.

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KINDERGARTEN: Journal of Islamic Early Childhood Education,

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