

Problems of Students in the Early Childhood to Elementary School Transition Period

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the difficulties of children who are in the early stages of elementary school and the efforts made by teachers to overcome them. Factors that cause difficulties for children who are in the transition period of ECE SD are internal and external factors, including the lack of synchronization of the SD and ECE curriculum. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with a phenomenological approach. In this study, the instrument used was an interview guide. And the analysis used descriptive analysis. The results of this study indicate that children's learning difficulties were found in the aspects of reading, writing and arithmetic, social, emotional, psychological, and physical-motor. This will have an impact on children so that children will have difficulty learning at the elementary school level. Based on the findings, the efforts made by teachers are 1) collaborating and communicating with parents, 2) helping to direct children both in academics and socializing, 3) using differentiated learning by dividing into three groups according to their respective levels, 4) habituation, 5) activating the class with ice breaking, 6) providing free activities, 7) providing advice, and 8) establishing cooperation with other teachers. The teacher hopes that after these efforts are made, children can become more independent and can adjust to elementary school.

Keywords: *Learning Problems, Transition, Pre-School, Elementary School*

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INTRODUCTION

The problems faced by children in the transition period from Early Childhood Education (ECE) to Elementary School (SD) show a worrying increasing trend. The transition period that should be a natural and fun process has actually become a challenging moment for some children. Many children have difficulty adapting to changing learning environments, more formal learning methods, and higher academic demands. This condition is exacerbated by the lack of understanding and readiness from various parties, both from ECE institutions, elementary schools, and parents, in accompanying children through this important phase. As a result, not a few children experience stress, lose motivation to learn, and even experience a decrease in confidence at the beginning of elementary school.

The National Joint Committee for Learning Disabilities (Mulyono, 2003) The definition of learning difficulties is learning difficulties that refer to a group of difficulties that are manifested in the form of real difficulties in the proficiency and use of the ability to listen, converse, read, write, reason, or ability in the field of mathematics study. Although learning difficulties may occur in conjunction with other disruptive conditions (e.g., sensory impairment, social and emotional barriers) or environmental influences such as cultural differences, inappropriate learning, and psychogenic factors, these barriers are not direct causes or influences. (Muhaiba, Aisy, Imaniyah, Sari, & Agustina, 2020).

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is an important period in child development. In early childhood education, children experience a learning process that is oriented towards play and exploration (Khalawati & Hariyanti, 2023). Early childhood learning is interconnected and interdependent on all aspects of development (Mwangi, 2016). The purpose of early childhood education is to guide children in developing their potential, supervise children's behavior, provide fun experiences, build children's foundational abilities and develop the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and social intelligence of students in the golden age of their growth in an educational and fun play environment (Wulansuci, 2021). Skills needed in development such as personal awareness, emotional development, building socialization, communication development, motor skills development and cognitive development (Hasanah, 2016).

When children reach the minimum age to enter elementary school, they will face major changes in the learning environment and academic demands. The transition from ECE to elementary school is a crucial moment that requires careful preparation, because children will face significant changes. The transition to elementary school brings great changes for children, children will face a more independent and more complex environment. The importance of preparing children in the transition from ECE to elementary school is because ECE is the foundation of the basic education level, which requires continuous social-emotional, language, motor and cognitive stimulation until learning activities in the next phase. In addition, this will affect the success, welfare, engagement, and positive attitude towards learning that has been built since early childhood education. The transition process requires involvement, cooperation and communication between children, families, schools, and the community which is an important factor in promoting and supporting school readiness and a positive transition to school (Musfita, 2019).

The transition to elementary school can be a stressful moment for children, especially for those who are not emotionally prepared for the change. Good preparation can help children recognize the school environment, understand new rules, and develop independence in self-management and academic tasks. Studies show that children who have prepared well tend to adjust more easily to new environments and have better independence at school (Jones, M., 2018). This is because it is closely related to the children's environment, especially in early childhood education. Proper preparation helps reduce stress and anxiety that may arise, so that children can be more confident and focused in the teaching and learning process in elementary school. Research also shows that the emotional support provided by parents and teachers in preparation for transition contributes to a decrease in anxiety levels in children (Smith, J., 2020).

Careful preparation in the transition from ECE to elementary school helps increase children's motivation to learn. Children who feel more prepared and motivated will be more actively participating in learning in elementary school, increasing their chances of academic success and cognitive development. Research shows that high motivation to learn in early elementary school is associated with better academic achievement later in life (Brown, L., 2021).

The success of children's transition from ECE to elementary school is inseparable from the role of parents and educators. The role of parents and educators in child mentoring includes: being a facilitator, namely providing the facilities and infrastructure needed by children to learn; accompanying children in learning from their immediate environment; and motivate children by showing support to them because children are eager to learn (Cahyati & Kusumah, 2020). The family is also the most extensive context and has a very close influence on socialization (Wu, J. C.-L., & Chiang, 2015). Interaction between parents and children also plays an important role. Parental interaction is the process of communication and relationships between parents and children. It also involves various aspects, including verbal and nonverbal communication, behavior, and emotions (Sari, Novitawati, & Sulaiman, 2024).

Other factors in addition to academic and family success, transition is also closely related to well-being at school, engagement in learning, and identity as a student. One of them is that children must develop a sense of belonging in their school environment. The importance of social-emotional in providing a strong foundation, where children can explore and become

active learners at the elementary level (Bulkeley & Fabian, 2006). So that the sense of belonging is not only with the success of the school, but also with success in the future. Feeling a match in learning at school is important in the transition.

Early childhood education focuses on child development and fun learning, while elementary education focuses clearly on the subject area, especially on literacy and mathematics goals (Peters, 2010). However, often this transition issue has not been fully realized by parents and the ECE and elementary school environment. The Ministry of Education and Culture, Research and Technology initiated a policy in the Independent Curriculum episode 24 on "A pleasant transition from early childhood to elementary school". The transition from ECE to elementary school is a movement that wants to ensure that every child, regardless of their point of departure, has the right to be fostered in their foundational abilities (Susilahati, Nurmalia, Widiawati, Laksana, & Maliadani, 2023). The purpose of the policy is to eliminate the calistung test in the process of accepting new students in elementary school, conducting introductory activities to students in the first 2 weeks and implementing learning that strengthens 6 (six) foundation skills in early childhood education or elementary school.

In their development, children also undergo transitions, such as in terms of social-emotional development. Children will be required to be more responsible in completing tasks without the help of adults (teachers and parents), their social environment will be wider so that they must develop good communication skills in terms of language, require hand muscle strength and eye coordination as well as a more mature thought process (Pagarwati, Prasojo, Sugito, & Rohman, 2021). For this reason, it is necessary to have a supportive environment in careful preparation for children to face this period. The abilities that need to be strengthened for the transition period in children are children's social and emotional abilities, physical motor skills, as well as numeracy and literacy skills. The foundational skills that children must have before entering the transition period are 1) knowing religious and ethical values, 2) adequate social and language skills to interact healthily with peers and other individuals, 3) sufficient emotional maturity to carry out activities in the learning environment, and 4) Meaning of positive learning (Ministry of Education, Culture, 2022). Children aged 5-6 years who are at the beginning of school will have difficulty learning because of their unpreparedness for school and are at risk of learning difficulties, displaying anti-social behavior, and being able to avoid the school environment out of fear (Deliviana, 2017). Another study said that there are still many children who immediately enter the 1st grade of elementary school, so they do not get the foundation phase that is their right.

Based on the description above, it is important to know the preparation for the transition period for children from ECE to elementary school from various perspectives and what difficulties children face during the transition period. Learning difficulties are a condition/condition where students or students cannot learn reasonably because they are caused by several things such as threats, obstacles or interruptions in learning (Djamarah, 2011). There are two factors that cause a student to have learning difficulties, the first is an internal factor, which is from within the student, and the second is an external factor, namely from outside the student (Dalyono, 2012). Furthermore, there are four factors that cause learning difficulties, including factors from the students themselves, factors from the school environment, factors from the family environment and factors from the community environment (Hamalik, 2014). The results of this research are expected to be a reference material for school institutions and stakeholders to support children's abilities and development, as well as improve transition programs.

METHOD

This study uses a type of qualitative approach with a phenomenological approach. This research aims to describe and explain and reveal children's problems in the early school period in elementary school (SD) as part of the transition from early childhood to elementary school. Then the results are described to obtain the findings. (Machmud, 2016) This research seeks to

describe and explain the problems of children in the early transition period of elementary school. The determination of the informant in this study was a grade 1 elementary school teacher in the city of Banjarmasin. The instrument in this study uses interview guidelines. Then, the data obtained is analyzed using descriptive analysis to narrate the results of the research.

Briefly and clearly describe the results obtained and are complemented by a discussion that discusses the results that have been obtained with the supporting theories used.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study shows the results as shown below:

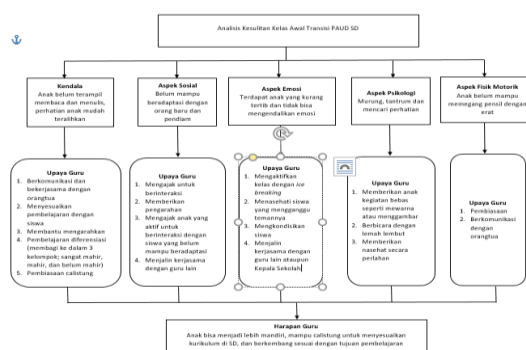


Figure 1. Research Findings

Based on the findings of existing research by data collection, it was found that the learning difficulties of early grade students of public elementary schools are divided into several categories and relatively similar causes.

The obstacle faced by teachers is that there are still many students who are not skilled in reading and writing but children have reached the phase of knowing letters. In addition, because the study hours alternate (*Shift*) overwhelming teachers. Some students are not skilled in reading and writing in early grade in elementary school due to the lack of synchronization of learning between ECE and elementary school which does not require calistung at the ECE level but on the one hand children are able to recognize letters. In fact, students who obtained calistung material during kindergarten actually had lower Mathematics scores than students who did not obtain calistung material during kindergarten (Saniy, 2014). Early childhood education that emphasizes too much on the academic aspect will have a destructive impact on children's development and learning achievement. The ECE curriculum should not force children to be able to calistung, because ECE focuses more on preparing children to enter elementary school (Hidayat, 2023). However, it does not mean that calistung should not be taught at the ECE level. ECE can introduce pre-reading, premathematics and pre-writing activities to students and educators need to pay close attention to the teaching methods both at the ECE and early grade elementary school levels.

Another finding is that there are some children who are still unable to hold stationery properly. Hasty and forced calistung learning will make children rebel, boredom and unpreparedness for children to enter elementary school. Early childhood education institutions that implement calistung learning should consider the principles of early childhood learning, namely through play media. So learning calistung is just introducing letters and numbers with simple concepts and gradually, through fun play and learning for children.

The effort that early grade teachers use to overcome problems in children who are not able to calistung or hold stationery correctly is to help direct students, dividing students into 3 groups, namely, very proficient in writing, proficient in writing and not yet proficient in writing, guidance and communication with parents.

Based on the findings on the adaptation aspect, the teacher stated that there are some children who are still unable to adapt. The efforts made by teachers are to help direct children,

invite children to socialize and interact, as well as invite more active children to invite the child to play.

Based on the findings of the emotional aspect, the teacher stated that there are still some children who are not orderly in class, or are not able to control emotions, such as hitting and kicking the table. The efforts that teachers make are to provide *ice breaking*, help direct and advise students and condition students. The teacher's findings were that there were children who looked depressed due to family factors and sought the attention of the class. The efforts that teachers make are 1) providing free activities such as coloring, drawing, 2) teachers speak softer to students who are depressed, and 3) advising slowly. This pattern of behavior can train children so that the child has self-readiness to enter elementary school. When children show behavior that is independent of others and is able to help others without being asked, it shows that the child's social behavior has a direct effect on the child's readiness to enter school. Children who show positive social behavior will be responsible for themselves and know the consequences they will receive from what they do (Rukayah, Rachman, Novitawati, 2024)

Teachers' Efforts in Overcoming Early Grade Students' Problems

The role of teachers in learning is very important (Norlatifah & Novitawati, 2022). The role of teachers is not only limited to being a model or role model for the students being taught, but also as a learning manager. Teachers as designers and class creators can design various activities (Hayati, 2022). The role of teachers and educators is to stimulate, and direct children according to their development (Zain, Jubaidah, & Hayati, 2024). In order for effective and efficient learning to be formed, teachers must create and manage a good learning atmosphere and learning strategy (Ariana & Novitawati, 2023). Based on the findings, in overcoming the problems of early grade students, teachers in addition to overcoming them directly, teachers also collaborate with other teachers. The efforts that teachers make are to collaborate with other teachers, provide accompanying teachers to accompany students with special needs, and make interesting learning tools. In addition, teachers also communicate and cooperate with parents so that student development is achieved according to expectations. If parents are not involved, then it is very difficult for teachers to communicate and cooperate (Mufidah & Hayati, 2023). Parents should always be ready to support their children and provide the emotional support they need. They should talk to their children about their experiences in elementary school and help them resolve any issues that may arise. (3) Open and transparent communication between schools and families can help children feel safer and more comfortable during the transition period (Pebriani, Handayani, 2024).

A very decisive component in the implementation of a learning strategy is the teacher (Saniy, 2014). The learning process depends on the learning methods and approaches used. Brain characteristics in the preoperational stage (2-7 years) can only receive concrete and empirical stimuli, such as play. In early childhood education, if abstract stimuli are not in accordance with the development of the child's brain, it will damage the child's brain (Suyadi, 2018). So parents and teachers must use methods that are fun and able to stimulate all the five senses of children. To use a method that is fun and able to stimulate all five senses, children can use a multi-sensory approach. Multi-sensory is a learning model that optimizes all five senses of children. The five senses involved are visual (sight), auditory (hearing), kinesthetic (movement), and tactile (touch). The multisensory method can arouse new desires and interests, arouse motivation, provide stimulation for learning activities, and even bring psychological influence on students which ultimately increases students' concentration to learn and understand lessons (Komalasari, 2015).

Students who have learning difficulties are influenced by internal factors and external factors. Internal factors such as students are in an unhealthy condition, physical disabilities, intelligence that children have, children's talents and interests, motivation and mental health experienced by children. External factors such as family factors, the family is the first place for children to learn. People's parenting greatly affects children's mental development. Parents who are indifferent, do not pay attention to the learning progress of their children, authoritarian and harsh parents will cause an unhealthy mentality in children because children really need guidance from their parents. Economic factors also play a very important

role in children's development, a lack or poor economy will make children lack good tools, lack of costs used, and do not have a good place to study. These shortcomings will hinder children in their learning process (Muhaiba et al., 2020). The community and family environment are also factors in achieving learning success. In addition to the above efforts, teachers also need to receive training in handling elementary school early grade students, classroom management training, and handling students with special needs. The teacher's hope is that after this effort is made, children can become more independent and can adjust in elementary school.

CONCLUSIONS

The problems faced by teachers of ECE students transitioning to elementary school are divided into several aspects: literacy and numeracy (calistung), social, emotional, psychological, and physical-motor aspects. These challenges can impact students, causing difficulties in learning at the upper elementary school level. The efforts made by teachers include: 1) cooperating and communicating with parents, 2) helping to guide children both academically and socially, 3) using differentiated learning by dividing students into three groups based on their respective levels, 4) implementing habituation, 5) activating classes with ice-breaking activities, 6) providing free activities, and 7) offering guidance and advice. The teacher's hope is that, through these efforts, children will become more independent and better able to adapt to elementary school.

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