

## Curriculum Management to Improve Learning Quality in Early Childhood Education

**Baiq Masniati, Popon Widaningsih, Imamah**

Program Studi Magister Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, FKIP, Universitas Panca Sakti Bekasi

### ABSTRACT

The quality of learning in early childhood education is strongly influenced by appropriate curriculum management that aligns with children's developmental stages. Curriculum management is an essential factor in creating effective, structured, and meaningful learning processes. This study aims to analyze curriculum management in improving the quality of learning in early childhood education. The research employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. The research subjects included teachers and the principal at an early childhood education institution. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, while data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that curriculum management was implemented through three main stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning activities. Planning was carried out by preparing learning instruments adjusted to children's developmental needs. The implementation of learning was conducted flexibly and child-centered through a play-based learning approach. Evaluation was conducted continuously by emphasizing the overall developmental progress of children. The implementation of effective curriculum management contributed positively to improving the quality of learning in early childhood education.

**Keywords:** Curriculum Management, Learning Quality, Early Childhood Education, Preschool Education (PAUD)

#### **Corresponding author**

**Name:** Baiq Masniati

**Email:** baiqmasniati0@gmail.com

## INTRODUCTION

Curriculum management is a system of curriculum administration that is cooperative, comprehensive, systematic, and structured to achieve predetermined educational goals. Its implementation is closely related to the development of School-Based Management (SBM) and the School-Level Curriculum (KTSP), which emphasize autonomy and flexibility in educational management at the institutional level (Hidayati et al., 2021). Curriculum management plays an important role in ensuring that learning activities are conducted effectively and efficiently. Through proper management, educational components such as learning objectives, teaching materials, instructional methods, and assessment strategies can be integrated systematically to support optimal learning outcomes for students (Syahfitri et al., 2025). Therefore, effective curriculum management is considered one of the key factors influencing the quality of learning, particularly in early childhood education. The rapid development of science and technology has encouraged continuous changes in educational curricula to meet the

demands of contemporary society. Curriculum development is expected not only to remain relevant to present educational needs but also to prepare learners to face future challenges. In Indonesia, curriculum reform has undergone several stages, beginning with the Active Student Learning Curriculum (CBSA), followed by the Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK), the School-Level Curriculum (KTSP), Curriculum 2013, and most recently the Merdeka Curriculum (Susanti et al., 2022). The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes more flexible and diverse intraclass learning experiences, allowing students to deepen conceptual understanding and strengthen competencies according to their developmental needs. These changes indicate that curriculum development is a dynamic process requiring continuous adaptation within educational institutions.

Curriculum implementation in Early Childhood Education (ECE) presents unique challenges because young children have distinct developmental characteristics that differ from those of learners at other educational levels. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), early childhood refers to children from birth to eight years old who receive educational services in various settings, including childcare centers, preschools, kindergartens, and elementary schools (Thompson & Stanković-Ramirez, 2021). Hurlock also explains that early childhood is a developmental phase characterized by rapid physical, emotional, and cognitive growth that occurs gradually during the early years of life (Khadijah et al., 2021). These developmental characteristics require curriculum management practices that are flexible, child-centered, and appropriate to children's developmental stages. In Indonesia, early childhood education is regulated under Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which states that early childhood education is intended for children from birth to six years old. Education at this stage serves as the foundation for children's future development because children begin to develop social values, empathy, cooperation, and emotional understanding during these formative years (Shih, 2020). Therefore, the quality of learning in early childhood education institutions is strongly influenced by how the curriculum is planned, implemented, and evaluated according to children's developmental needs.

Despite the importance of curriculum management, several challenges remain in its implementation. One major issue is the centralized educational system, which often limits innovation and flexibility at the institutional level. Highly centralized curriculum policies may reduce teachers' opportunities to adapt learning activities to local contexts and children's individual needs. Previous studies have indicated that centralized curriculum systems tend to create rigid learning environments where students become passive recipients of information rather than active participants in the learning process (Sasmita et al., 2023). Such conditions may hinder the development of meaningful and engaging learning experiences in early childhood education settings.

Another challenge relates to teacher professionalism and participation in curriculum development. Although the number of teachers in educational institutions may be sufficient, many educators still face limitations in pedagogical competence and curriculum implementation skills. Teachers' involvement in curriculum planning and development is often restricted by limited institutional support, inadequate professional development opportunities, and lack of confidence in curriculum decision-making processes. These conditions may affect the effectiveness of curriculum implementation

and reduce the overall quality of learning in early childhood education institutions. Financial limitations also contribute to challenges in curriculum management. Educational funding is often insufficiently allocated for developing learning programs, instructional methods, and educational resources. Although national regulations mandate that at least 20% of the national and regional budget should be allocated to education, the implementation of these policies remains inconsistent in practice (Sasmita et al., 2023). Limited financial support may affect the availability of learning facilities, educational media, and teacher training programs needed to improve the quality of learning in early childhood education.

Several previous studies have examined curriculum management and learning quality in educational institutions. Research by Susanti et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of curriculum adaptation in responding to educational changes in Indonesia, while Shih (2020) highlighted the role of early childhood education in fostering children's social and emotional development. However, studies specifically focusing on how curriculum management practices contribute to improving learning quality in early childhood education institutions remain limited. Most previous studies discuss curriculum policy and implementation in general educational contexts without specifically examining planning, implementation, and evaluation processes in early childhood education settings. This gap indicates the need for further investigation regarding curriculum management practices in improving learning quality in early childhood education institutions.

Based on these issues, this study aims to analyze curriculum management in improving the quality of learning in early childhood education. The study focuses on three main aspects of curriculum management, namely planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning activities. Through this research, the study seeks to understand how curriculum management practices contribute to creating effective, child-centered, and meaningful learning experiences in early childhood education settings. This research contributes to the field of early childhood education by providing a comprehensive description of curriculum management practices in improving learning quality. The findings are expected to provide practical insights for teachers, school administrators, and educational policymakers regarding effective curriculum management strategies that align with children's developmental characteristics and educational needs. Additionally, this study may serve as a reference for future research related to curriculum management and learning quality in early childhood education institutions.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design to gain an in-depth understanding of curriculum management in improving the quality of learning in early childhood education. A qualitative descriptive approach was selected because it enables researchers to describe and interpret real conditions in educational settings comprehensively and contextually. The study focused on examining curriculum management practices, particularly in the areas of planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning activities in early childhood education institutions.

## **Subjects / Population and Sample**

The research was conducted at an Early Childhood Education (PAUD) institution. The subjects of the study consisted of the principal and teachers who were directly involved in curriculum management and the implementation of learning activities. These participants were selected because they play important roles in designing, implementing, and evaluating curriculum practices within the institution. The study focused on exploring their experiences, strategies, and roles in managing the curriculum to improve the quality of learning for young children.

## **Data Collection Procedure**

Data collection was conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation to obtain comprehensive and accurate information related to curriculum management practices. Observation was used to directly examine learning activities and classroom implementation processes within the institution. Interviews were conducted with the principal and teachers to gather in-depth information regarding curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation. Documentation techniques were also used to collect supporting data, including lesson plans, learning instruments, school documents, and other curriculum-related records. The combination of these techniques allowed the researcher to obtain detailed and contextual data regarding curriculum management in early childhood education.

## **Data Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was conducted by selecting, organizing, and simplifying relevant information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. The reduced data were then presented systematically in descriptive form to facilitate interpretation and understanding of the findings. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the patterns and relationships identified throughout the analysis process. Through these stages, the study produced a comprehensive description of curriculum management practices in improving the quality of learning in early childhood education institutions.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

### **RESULT**

#### **A. Learning Planning in Early Childhood Curriculum Management**

The results of the study showed that learning planning in early childhood curriculum management was conducted systematically through the preparation of learning instruments. Teachers prepared Weekly Learning Implementation Plans (RPPM) and Daily Learning Implementation Plans (RPPH) as guidelines for implementing learning activities. These learning instruments were developed based on the applicable curriculum and adjusted to children's characteristics and developmental stages. Learning planning also included the formulation of learning objectives, selection of learning materials, teaching methods, and instructional media to support effective learning activities.

Teachers designed learning activities using a learning-through-play approach to encourage children's active participation. The planned activities covered cognitive, social, emotional, and motor development aspects. Learning planning was directed

toward creating enjoyable learning experiences and providing opportunities for children to learn through direct experiences.

**Table 1. Components of Learning Planning in Early Childhood Education**

<b>Planning Components</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Learning instruments</b>	RPPM and RPPH
<b>Learning objectives</b>	Adjusted to children’s developmental stages
<b>Learning methods</b>	Play-based learning approach
<b>Learning media</b>	Educational media and learning tools
<b>Developmental aspects</b>	Cognitive, social, emotional, and motor

The findings also showed that teachers implemented flexible planning practices to accommodate children’s needs and classroom dynamics. Learning activities could be adjusted according to children’s interests and participation during classroom implementation.

**B. Learning Implementation in Early Childhood Curriculum Management**

The findings revealed that learning implementation in early childhood education was conducted flexibly and focused on children’s active participation. Classroom observations showed that learning activities began with opening activities such as praying, singing, and introductory discussions. Teachers created a warm and supportive classroom atmosphere before beginning the main learning activities. During the core learning activities, teachers implemented a play-based learning approach according to the previously prepared lesson plans. Children participated in various activities, including drawing, block building, role-playing, and exploratory activities. Teachers also allowed children to choose activities based on their interests during classroom learning.

Teachers acted as facilitators by guiding, stimulating, and supporting children during learning activities. The learning process involved active interaction between teachers and children. Teachers frequently asked simple questions to stimulate children’s thinking skills and participation. Various instructional media such as educational toys, pictures, and classroom objects were also used during learning activities.

**Table 2. Learning Activities Observed During Classroom Implementation**

<b>Learning Activities</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Opening activities</b>	Praying, singing, introductory discussion
<b>Core activities</b>	Drawing, block building, role play
<b>Learning approach</b>	Play-based learning
<b>Teacher’s role</b>	Facilitator and learning guide
<b>Learning media</b>	Educational toys, pictures, classroom objects

Observation results showed that children demonstrated active participation and enthusiasm during learning activities involving interactive media and direct engagement.

### C. Learning Evaluation in Early Childhood Curriculum Management

The results indicated that learning evaluation in early childhood education was conducted continuously throughout the learning process. Based on classroom observations, teachers carried out assessments not only at the end of learning activities but also during the implementation process through direct observation of children's participation and behavior.

Teachers recorded children's development in several aspects, including social interaction, participation in activities, communication skills, and task completion. Evaluation data were documented as part of children's developmental records and used to monitor learning progress.

**Table 3. Aspects Evaluated in Early Childhood Learning**

<b>Evaluation Aspects</b>	<b>Observation Focus</b>
<b>Social interaction</b>	Interaction with peers and teachers
<b>Participation</b>	Involvement in learning activities
<b>Communication skills</b>	Ability to express ideas and respond
<b>Task completion</b>	Ability to complete assigned activities
<b>Emotional development</b>	Emotional responses during activities

The findings also showed that evaluation results were used by teachers as references for future learning planning. Evaluation activities were integrated with curriculum planning and implementation processes within classroom learning management.

## DISCUSSION

### Interpretation of Findings

The findings of this study indicate that curriculum management in early childhood education was implemented through three interconnected stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning activities. The preparation of learning instruments such as RPPM and RPPH demonstrates that curriculum planning was conducted systematically and adjusted to children's developmental characteristics. This is important because early childhood learning requires structured planning that supports children's cognitive, social, emotional, and motor development simultaneously.

The implementation of learning activities through a play-based and child-centered approach reflects the application of flexible curriculum management practices. Children were actively involved in classroom activities and were given opportunities to explore learning experiences according to their interests. This finding suggests that curriculum implementation in early childhood education does not merely focus on academic achievement but also emphasizes meaningful learning experiences and active participation. The continuous evaluation process conducted by teachers also indicates that assessment in early childhood education emphasizes developmental processes rather than final outcomes. Observation-based evaluation allows teachers to monitor children's development comprehensively and use the results to improve future learning planning.

### **Relationship to Previous Studies**

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research emphasizing the importance of systematic curriculum planning in improving learning quality in early childhood education. Zahra et al. (2024) stated that learning planning should integrate learning objectives, materials, methods, media, and evaluation to support effective learning implementation. Similarly, Latifah and Linggardini (2023) explained that flexible curriculum planning allows teachers to adapt learning activities according to children's needs and classroom conditions. The results also support previous studies regarding child-centered learning approaches. Keary et al. (2024) argued that curriculum implementation should not only focus on written curriculum documents but also on meaningful learning experiences created through teacher-child interaction. In addition, Chewe et al. (2023) emphasized that integrated learning activities can support children's cognitive, social, emotional, and motor development simultaneously.

The findings related to evaluation practices are in line with Puspitasari and Muadin (2023), who explained that assessment in early childhood education should be authentic, continuous, and focused on children's developmental processes. Continuous observation-based assessment enables teachers to understand children's growth more comprehensively within real learning contexts.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Several limitations should be considered in this study. First, the research was conducted in only one early childhood education institution, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings. Second, the study involved a limited number of participants consisting of the principal and teachers within the institution. Third, the study focused primarily on curriculum management practices without examining children's learning outcomes quantitatively. In addition, the data collection process relied heavily on observations and interviews, which may contain subjective interpretations from participants and researchers. Time limitations during the research process may also have affected the depth of classroom observations and data collection.

### **Implications for Practice and Future Research**

The findings of this study provide practical implications for early childhood education institutions in implementing effective curriculum management practices. Educational institutions may strengthen curriculum planning through the preparation of structured and flexible learning instruments adjusted to children's developmental needs. Teachers may also continue implementing child-centered and play-based learning approaches to create meaningful learning experiences for young children.

For future research, studies involving larger samples and multiple early childhood education institutions are recommended to obtain broader findings regarding curriculum management practices. Further research may also investigate the relationship between curriculum management and children's developmental outcomes quantitatively. In addition, future studies could explore the integration of digital learning technologies and innovative curriculum strategies in improving learning quality in early childhood education.

## CONCLUSION

Curriculum management in early childhood education is implemented through interconnected stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning activities. Learning planning is conducted systematically through the preparation of learning instruments adjusted to children's developmental needs. The implementation of learning activities is carried out flexibly and in a child-centered manner through a play-based learning approach, while evaluation is conducted continuously by emphasizing children's overall developmental processes. The implementation of curriculum management demonstrates a contribution to improving the quality of learning in early childhood education. Based on these findings, teachers are expected to continuously improve their competencies in managing creative learning activities that are appropriate to children's developmental stages. Educational institutions should also provide support through professional training programs and adequate learning facilities to enhance curriculum implementation. Furthermore, future researchers are encouraged to investigate other factors that may influence the effectiveness of curriculum management in improving the quality of learning in early childhood education settings.

## REFERENCES

- Biyanto, A., Aprilia, A., Putri, P., & Wahyuningsih, T. (2026). Implementasi Perencanaan Pembelajaran Anak Usia Dini Berbasis Kurikulum Merdeka Dengan Pendekatan Tematik Dan Steam. *Murhum : Jurnal Pendidikan AnakUsiaDini*,7(1), 236–245. <https://doi.org/10.37985/Murhum.V7i1.1503>
- Chewe, B. M., Nyimbili, F., & Mwinsa, G. M. (2023). Teachers ' Perceptions And Strategies On The Integrated Early Childhood Education Curriculum In Serenje District Of Zambia. *European Journal Of Contemporary Education And E-Learning*, 1(3), 39–48.
- Hidayati, W., Syaefudin, & Muslimah, U. (2021). Manajemen Kurikulum Dan Program Pendidikan Konsep Dan Strategi Pengembangan. *Semesta Aksara*.
- Keary, A., Garvis, S., Zheng, H., & Walsh, L. (2024). Teacher Planning And Curriculum Frameworks : A Case Study Of Ecec Practice In Australia. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 52(8), 2053–2064.
- Khadijah, Arlina, & Addaudy, M. J. (2021). The Effect Of Edutainment Learning Model On Early Childhood Socio-Emotional Development. *Jurnal Pendidikan Usia Dini*, 15(2).
- Latifah, L. S., & Linggardini, K. (2023). Pengaruh Permainan Edukatif Domino Card Terhadap Pengetahuan Anak Usia Sekolah Dasar Tentang Manajemen Kebersihan Diri Saat Menstruasi. *Journal Of Nursing Practice And Education*, 4(1), 52–59.
- Puspitasari, T. E., & Muadin, A. (2023). Implementation Of Project Based Learning In Improving Early Childhood Interpersonal Intelligence. *Itqan: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Kependidikan*, 14(1), 41–52.
- Sasmita, S. K., Sodikoh, F., Fadillah, F., Amin, N., & Taslimah, A. (2023). Problem Dan Produk Pengembangan Kurikulum. *Jurnal Of Citizenship Values*, 1(1), 26–30.

- Shih, Y. (2020). Life Education For Young Children In Taiwanese Preschools : Meaning , Aspects And Teaching Methods. *Universal Journal Of Educational Research* 8(4):, 8(4), 1246–1251. <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2020.080415>
- Susanti, L., Hamzah, A., Kristen, P. A., Tinggi, S., Agama, P., & Stipak, K. (2022). Pentingnya Pengembangan Kurikulum Paud Berbasis Soft Skills Dan Local Wisdom Di Era Merdeka Belajar. *Proceedings Series Of Educational Studies*, 357–364.
- Syahfitri, R. A., Rahma, Q. A., & Dedik. (2025). Manajemen Kurikulum. *Jurnal Manajemen Dan Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 3(4), 403–416.
- Thompson, J., & Stanković-Ramirez, Z. (2021). What Early Childhood Educators Know About Developmentally Appropriate Practice. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 103.
- Waluyo, E., Mukminin, A., Kisworo, B., Pramesti, A. A., Solieah, U., & Expor, A. (2024). Penguatan Manajemen Kurikulum Paud Berkualitas Pasca Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka. *Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat Nusantara (Jpkmn)*, 5(4), 4638–4644.
- Zahra, S. N., Nirwan, S., & Resdiana, W. (2024). Sistem Perencanaan Pembelajaran Anak Usia Dini Menggunakan Educational Design Research ( Edr ) Dengan Model Mckenney & Reeves Pada Paud Citra 13 Early Childhood Learning Planning System Using Educational Design Research ( Edr ) With The Mckenney & Reeves. *Jurnal Kecerdasan Buatan Dan Teknologi Informasi*, 3(3), 107–114.
- Zama, C. (2022). Early Childhood Care And Education Teachers ' Experiences Of Integrating The Activities Of The National Curriculum Framework Into Themes. *South African Journal Of Childhood Education*, 12(1), 1–10.