

Implementation of Environmental Arrangement in The *Merdeka Curriculum* at The Halimatusadiah Paud Unit in Jambi City

Harlina, Nita Priyanti
Universitas Panca Sakti Bekasi

ABSTRACT

The arrangement of the play environment for early childhood can basically influence the way they learn and encourage to explore creativity since early stage. For That, the need for a management the good and conducive for children's play environments, one of which is by implementing the latest curriculum model, namely independent learning. This study aims to analyze the Implementation of Play Environment Arrangement in the Merdeka Curriculum in the Halimatusadiah PAUD Unit. The research method used is qualitative descriptive study. Subjects The research participants were 1 homeroom teacher and students at PAUD Halimatusadiah, as well as the head of the institution. education. Data Which collected by researcher through interview, observation and documentation. Results This study shows that there are various types of APE provided in schools for organizing activities. play Which different every the week, Good in form project or center play in the classroom. Media The learning used is APE loose parts and also the use of used goods and natural materials. Impact implementation This that is in implementation use arrangement environment Independent Study giving children the freedom to be able to create their own critical thinking skills in their work, without create atmosphere Study monotonous.

Keywords: *Environment Play, Tools Game Educative (APE), Independent Study.*

Corresponding author

Name: Harlina

Email: Linafahri@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003, it explains that the age of children at the PAUD (Early Childhood Education) level ranges from 0 to 6 years. This difference in age limits occurs because the age of 6 to 8 years is considered a transition period from children who are still dependent to being more independent. Based on these provisions, the age group of children at the PAUD level is in the range of 0 to 6 years.

This age range is in the *golden age*, which is the period when they begin to receive stimulation and get information from education both at school and in the environment where they socialize, both intentional and unintentional information. From

this period, the maturation of physical and psychological functions is formed which allows them to respond to the stimulation given (Nuraeni , 2020).

Teachers and parents must be able to utilize this period to guide, direct, and shape the character of early childhood, because at this time, what is recorded in the child's memory cannot be repeated. That is why this period is often considered an important time that will determine how the child's life will be in the future. (Hadisi, 2015; Uce, 2017).

Education provided for early childhood is an important factor in shaping their future quality as human beings, because at this time it is necessary to develop characters that are able to generate creative and innovative ideas that are in accordance with future developments. (Baiti, 2020; Siandila, et al., 2023; Wasehudin, 2023).

A good play environment, whatever it is that can be used to create a physical, comfortable, interesting, and planned atmosphere that makes them more independent, good at socializing, and able to do their own *problem solving* which encourages their creative side to emerge (HS, et al., 2023).

Providing a good environment for children should be a priority for parents and their educators, because the environment can be a means of learning for children. Children who have a good learning and playing environment can improve their *problem solving* , as well as stimulate children in thinking, which is a good environment that has a positive impact on children in solving their daily problems when they grow up later (Zein, et al., 2021).

With a diverse, safe and conducive play area to support children's creativity, it can make early childhood feel comfortable which makes them enthusiastic about learning (Baiti, 2020; Yuliantina & Boki, 2023). This is reinforced by research from HS and colleagues (2023) which explains that with the statement of the play environment, there is a significant increase in children's curiosity which makes them more enthusiastic, active, and the desire to explore and increase their creativity.

This process is not limited to one place, where the facilities provided to early childhood must have been examined and can be seen what their meaning is in helping their development, because the play environment is the main thing that has a significant influence on the learning process of early childhood. This needs to be supported by the curriculum, learning media, and school management so that this learning process can be carried out properly (Yenizar, 2020).

Early childhood education is important because educational development for early childhood can be started with a play-while-learning approach. In addition That, environment Also very influential for shape the child's personality, especially their playing environment. According to Law No. 23 of 2002 Regarding Child Protection, playing, recreation and rest are a child's basic needs. (Wiwik Pratiwi, 2017).

Playing is a primary need for children. Especially, in terms of reference in developing children's learning stages (Y Sarasehan, 2020). In today's era, the environment play Which applied Early Childhood Education experience various evolution in support activity Study Which follow the curriculum flow that develops over time. So that there are

differences that drip on implementation and also influence environment Study Which effective for child.

In general, the principles of a child's play environment include their developmental stage, safety, comfort, conducive and creative, and supports and pays attention to the characteristics of children. Furthermore, in terms of function And objective, environment physique must designed as interesting as Possible with consider reference teaching curriculum (God's guidance, 2014).

The Independent Learning Curriculum for PAUD has a perception of the goal of emphasizing fun play while learning, without burdening or making it difficult for children to be creative. In Independent Learning, children are also given the freedom to create or experiment with their surroundings to learn. Therefore, in supporting the implementation of learning while playing activities in an PAUD institution, competence is needed in paying attention to the arrangement of a good play environment for children.

PAUD Halimatusadiah is a private educational institution for education early childhood who recently implemented the Merdeka Belajar program at school. This PAUD is not only implementing the *Merdeka curriculum*, but also using a project-based learning approach that based on on *Reggio Emily* .

Based on this, it is necessary to re-inform about the arrangement of a good play environment for PAUD children. The researcher conducted a pre-observation of the study in August 2023 at PAUD Halimatusadiah, showing that teachers still lack competence in creating a learning atmosphere children's play/learning environment in a creative and diverse way, especially in utilizing the creation of or the use of APE (Educational Game Tools) in schools. In this case, environmental planning is also need to be a guideline for teachers in creating optimal play area environment spaces and ideal for children to explore their world. By making or utilizing objects or tools educational games for children, as well as used materials around. However, the learning principles carried out by The teachers at PAUD Halimatusadiah do not comply with the principles of the *Merdeka curriculum*, which is *Project Based. Learning* and inquiry. Where, usually teachers do not develop or create APE or even facilitate game tools to be used as interesting teaching materials. However, on the contrary, The teachers at PAUD Halimatusadiah only allow the children to play with the toys provided in various places. small activity centers in the classroom. Thus, making daily activities very monotonous and boring and does not pay attention to the needs of the child's developmental aspects. In addition, Many of the play equipment on the shelves and in the warehouse are rarely used by children, so that make tool game dusty And Lots experience damage in part small his physical.

This can be seen through research conducted by (Rosaria Tambunan et al., 2023) who explained that the learning environment for children at PAUD Halimatusadiah is still categorized not enough Good. School This has not implemented the *Merdeka curriculum* and the learning tools are still in the form of paper or worksheets; Then research by (Yuliantina & Boki, 2023) shows that research with the subject of PAUD Halimatusadiah has implemented an ideal play environment arrangement to meet the objectives of the free curriculum. Will However, the learning model used shows a lack of variation in

designing various activities. play for children, so that teachers are still motivated by the use of story books; and finally research by (Nadira, 2020) show lack of a number of security in facility APE Which in order in environment play child, for example on APE slide *outdoor* Which No there is sand safety below it.

Thus, it can be concluded regarding the results of the study that environmental planning Children's play in the early age range at PAUD Halimatusadiah which is the target of the research shows the impact of the implementation of the quality of the arrangement of the playing environment on the results of children's learning achievements. Both refer to the availability of facilities such as APE and the creative quality of teachers in teaching in class. For that reason, the novelty in this research is focuses on developing a play environment by utilizing the facilities provided and the stages activity play in the classroom. Difference Which look at on study previously is there is on focus the curriculum used, where in previous research the focus of the curriculum was on the 2013 curriculum, while this study uses the latest curriculum, namely Independent Learning. So, with the results The research that has been carried out is expected can help teachers as a reference for building creativity in developing environment play Which more Good Again in time front.

Based on the description above, the researcher is interested in further studying this research as an objective in considering and preparing what teachers need to organize the play environment in the *Merdeka Curriculum* at the Halimatusadiah PAUD unit in Jambi City.

For that reason, the novelty in this study is focused on developing a play environment by utilizing the facilities provided and the stages of play activities in the classroom. The difference that is highlighted in previous studies is in the focus of the curriculum used, where in previous studies the focus of the curriculum was on the 2013 curriculum, while this study uses the latest curriculum, namely Merdeka Belajar. Thus, with the results of the research that has been carried out, it is hoped that it can help teachers as a reference for building creativity in developing a better play environment in the future.

RESEARCH METHODS

The type of research used in this study is qualitative research. Qualitative research is a research method that uses the basis of positive pas philosophy which is used to study natural phenomena where the researcher is the key instrument in the research (Sugiyono 2013). Qualitative research is research that produces findings that cannot be studied using statistical data or qualitative methods. Qualitative research is research used to display community life, history, behavior, functionalization of social movements and kinship ties. This research is set at PAUD Halimatusadiah, Jambi City, Jalan Purnama RT 13 No. 48, Suka Karya Village, Kota Baru District, Jambi and the research time is in July 2024. This research is set at the PAUD Halimatusadiah unit, Jambi City, located at Jalan Purnama RT 13 No. 48, Suka Karya Village, Kota Baru District, Jambi. It was chosen because it has

complete facilities to apply the arrangement of the play environment in its school which is a suitable place to be the setting for the research location.

Primary data Primary data is data obtained by researchers directly in the field where researchers conduct research. Primary data sources are data from observations and interviews that have been conducted. Secondary data is obtained through document data or also from books, journals, websites, newspapers, research reports and others. The data collection technique used in this study is through observation and interview activities. However, the study will still review documents related to the research variables and carry out a documentation process for activities that occur in the observation and interview process. The instruments used in this study are observation and interviews to determine the effectiveness of the arrangement of the PAUD Halimatusadiah children's play environment in Jambi City. For this purpose, researchers have prepared an interview guide that is more focused and can collect data according to the expectations of this study. Interview guide which the researcher has made in accordance with the theory to be more valid for data collection. In this study, it will be analyzed descriptively qualitatively, where this method of analysis is the process of organizing measurements, grouping, coding, categorizing, interpreting and interpreting qualitative and quantitative data and information without calculation tools.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted by the researcher, there were findings such as showing that in arranging the play environment in the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* at PAUD Halimatusadiah, teachers still lack competence in creating a play atmosphere. children's play/learning environment in a creative and diverse way, especially in utilizing the creation of or the use of APE (Educational Game Tools) in schools. This is seen in the lack of utilization and creation of innovative and varied Educational Game Tools (APE). Teachers tend to use existing APE in a limited way, without developing or modifying the tools to better suit the needs of children's development. Some teachers also appear less skilled in integrating APE into learning that involves children's exploration and creativity, so that the learning play atmosphere becomes less varied .

In carrying out the arrangement of the independent learning play environment at PAUD Halimatusadiah, of course there are supporting and inhibiting factors that include the implementation of the activity, namely the supporting factors of the implications of this activity were obtained from interviews with local teachers. Several findings from interviews with teachers at PAUD Halimatusadiah indicate a lack of competence in creating a creative play/learning environment for children in the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum*:

1. Limitations in developing APE (Creative Educational Game Tools)

A number of teachers expressed that they had difficulty in creating or modifying APE that was appropriate to the characteristics of the children and the learning objectives.

Teachers tended to use existing APE without think of innovations or adjustments to stimulate children's creativity.

Teacher WD answered:

"We usually use existing play equipment, rarely make our own or try to modify it. I'm also confused about where to start to make more creative equipment."

2. Limited knowledge about the variety of play activities

Some teachers said that they felt under-trained in designing variations of play activities that stimulate various aspects of children's development. Most of the play activities carried out were still monotonous and poorly planned.

Teacher WD's answer stated that:

"Sometimes I feel confused to plan interesting and varied play activities. Usually the activities I provide are almost the same every day."

3. Lack of use of the surrounding environment for learning

Some teachers are not used to using the school environment as part of learning. They tend to do play activities in the classroom, even though the environment outside the school has a lot of potential to stimulate children's creativity and exploration.

Teacher WD's answer stated that:

"We haven't used the area outside the classroom much for play or learning activities. Maybe because we're not used to it or don't have enough ideas on how to use it."

4. Obstacles in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum which emphasizes creativity

Teachers also expressed that they felt they still did not fully understand the concept of the *Merdeka Curriculum* which emphasizes children's creativity and independence in playing and learning. Teachers felt they needed further training to be able to implement this curriculum well. Teacher WD stated:

"We know that the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes children's creativity, but I feel like we haven't received enough training or guidance on how to apply this in daily activities in the classroom."



Picture 1 : Interview Document with PAUD teacher Halimatusadiah

5. Minimal use of project-based or exploratory approaches

Teachers tend to use teacher-centered learning methods, with less opportunity for children to explore independently. Project-based activities or activities that challenge children's creativity have not been fully implemented.

Teacher WD said:

"We often give instructions and the children follow, rarely giving them the opportunity to explore or work on small projects on their own. Maybe because we don't know how to do it yet."

This statement reflects that teachers feel less confident or less knowledgeable about how to implement project-based learning methods. As a result, children lose the opportunity to engage in activities that allow them to think creatively, experiment, and take initiative in learning.

To overcome this problem, training is needed that focuses more on project-based learning methods, as well as mentoring so that teachers can design activities that challenge children to be actively involved in the learning process.

DISCUSSION

How to Arrange the Play Environment in the *Merdeka Curriculum* at the Halimatusadiah PAUD Unit

Based on the results of observations and research interviews with the AP school principal, it is known that PAUD Halimatusadiah has 5 play activity centers in its arrangement. with at least as many as tens tool game that is at the center **Art Center** Activities : This area provides a variety of art media, such as paint, paper, brushes, and other materials that allow children to express themselves creatively. Art activities help in the development of fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, and creative thinking skills. **Loose Part Center** : This center is equipped with a variety of loose part play tools, such as shells, seeds, buttons, large and small blocks, and plasticine. These tools allow children to engage in constructive play, hone their imagination, and problem-solving skills. Loose parts also encourage exploration and experimentation, which are important in play-based learning. As mentioned by Geetha B. Ramani and Emily N. Daubert (2019), play helps children explore their environment and fosters curiosity, which is an important foundation in the learning process. **Cooking Center** : This area is equipped with cooking equipment that is appropriate for the child's age, such as a toy kitchen, toy fruits and vegetables, and mini cooking utensils. This activity teaches children about basic math concepts (such as counting and measuring), as well as introduces healthy eating patterns. **Project Activity Center** : This center provides opportunities for children to collaborate on group projects, such as building structures or creating more complex works of art. These activities teach skills such as teamwork, communication, and time management, which are important in children's social and emotional development. **Role Play Activity Center** : The role play area provides costumes and props that allow children to pretend to be various professions, such as a doctor, teacher, or farmer. These activities not only help develop imagination but also build empathy and social understanding. The arrangement of this

environment is focused on optimizing the various play activities that children will do, with the aim of increasing thinking power, creativity, and emotional intelligence. A good play environment arrangement also takes into account the safety, comfort, and ease of access for children in exploring the various educational play tools available.

Below we can see a picture of the layout of the play environment of class B2 PAUD Halimatusadiah with class teacher WD as follows:



Picture 2 : Arrangement APE *Loose Part* in D in the Shelf

In the **Loose Part activity center** , there are various kinds of toys neatly stored on shelves, such as shells, seeds, buttons, large and small blocks, plasticine, and other objects that support creative exploration. The placement of these tools makes it easy for children to choose and use according to their wishes, which plays an important role in developing critical thinking skills and freedom of expression.



Picture 3 : APE Cuisine Arrangement in Center Corner Cooking Activities

In the picture above, you can see the teacher arranging the play environment in the cooking activity corner. There are play activities such as (pans, plates, toy fruit, etc.) vegetable toy, stove, knife And spoon fork toy, etc).



Picture 4 : APE Arrangement tool painting in Center Corner Activity Art

Next, in the arts activity corner, teacher WD prepared various kinds of dolls, various story books, various painting tools (crayons, markers, watercolors, brush, pencil color, etc.) Which There is in center art. And we can see the picture above is the result of children's free drawing work.



Picture 5 : APE Tool Arrangement Play Role And Need Project

Then, in the role-playing corner, there are also various role-playing tools and project activities that teacher WD prepares (cloth, clothes pegs, hangers, hats, sand). kinetic, types of balls, types of stitches, ronce tools, etc.), various forms of numbers and letters, print media, pictures of the alphabet and numbers, pictures of hijayah letters, angklung and drums, and so on. In This project environment refers to the utilization of APE in the surrounding area as learning material. For that reason, This activity is in accordance with the theory of the play environment as a cultural source of learning for children at school, which Where every element tool play own mark educative in inside (Andrianto, 2020).

Based on the results of observations in class B2 in the process of implementing the arrangement of the play environment based on the independent learning curriculum at PAUD Halimatusadiah, there are several stages carried out by PAUD WD teachers, including:

1. Learning Planning

Based on the results of the interview on Thursday, August 1, 2024 conducted by the researcher with the class teacher, Mrs. WD at PAUD Halimatusadiah, the following information was obtained:



Picture 6: Interview with Teacher

Before starting to organize the play environment at school, PAUD teacher Halimatusadiah WD first carried out learning planning. This involved preparing a Daily Learning Implementation Plan (RPPH) which was arranged in the form of a Semester Program Plan (Prosem) for each semester. Furthermore, this design was detailed into a Weekly Learning Implementation Plan (RPPM) and a Daily Learning Implementation Plan (RPPH) for each week. In the context of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, the concept of traditional RPP has been transformed into a teaching module that is creatively packaged by utilizing Educational Game Tools (APE) (Qurniawati, 2023). Thus, the purpose of this planning is to encourage teachers to create creative ideas using APE made by themselves or provided by the school, without relying on learning media in the form of worksheets (Shari et al., 2023).

Teacher WD arranges the play environment in the classroom. After the children go home, the teacher arranges the play environment for the next day.

2. Implementation of Learning in the Halimatusadiah Preschool Class

Based on the results of observations at PAUD Halimatusadiah, this school was founded with inspiration from the Reggio Emilia approach. However, the learning approach applied at the school does not fully follow the Reggio approach. The main focus of learning at PAUD Halimatusadiah lies in the use of APE in the process of children playing, without any significant effort to develop creative projects based on the surrounding environment. The following are some play activities carried out by children in class B2 PAUD Halimatusadiah through activities:



Picture 7: Child is Painting

Painting activities at the art center are usually carried out every day as part of the main activities at PAUD Halimatusadiah. In this activity, children are asked to create their own creations using various painting tools. At the art center, children are introduced to various Educational Play Tools (APE) such as crayons, colored pencils, watercolors, cardboard bases, and brushes. Through this activity, children learn about various colors, increase their interest in art, and practice drawing various shapes and many other things.



Picture 8: Child Making a Bag

Next, in this activity center, children will be asked to create creative projects using materials that have been provided, such as used goods, buttons, ropes, threads, and various types of colorful paper. Every week, children will create creations based on a predetermined theme. This activity follows the concept of experimental research, where each child produces unique creative knowledge according to their own uniqueness (Addini & Widyasari, 2022).



Picture 9: Children Playing with Blocks

At the Block and Loose Part Activity Center, children will be asked to arrange blocks and loose parts according to their creativity and imagination. They will create various shapes and structures based on a theme that has been determined each week.



Picture 10: Children Playing Role Play

In the cooking role play activity, children will be asked to make various dishes according to their imagination. Each week, there will be a different cooking theme, and children will demonstrate their cooking at the cooking center. This activity aims to introduce various typical Indonesian foods to children from an early age.

What are the supporting and inhibiting factors for arranging the play environment in implementing the *Merdeka Curriculum* in the Halimatusadiah early childhood education unit?

In carrying out the arrangement of the independent learning play environment at PAUD Halimatusadiah, of course there are supporting and inhibiting factors that include the implementation of the activity, namely the supporting factors from the implications of this activity obtained from interviews with WD teachers. According to the results of the study, it is known that learning activities using the arrangement of the play environment at PAUD Halimatusadiah have implemented the *Merdeka curriculum* with a focus on learning using educational game tools, not worksheets. This is in line with research conducted by Habibie Acar regarding during the learning process of children at school, that an educator must be able to create an innovative play environment to enhance experience. They must also know how important a good play environment is to increase the knowledge that children learn from their environment (Acar, 2014). Then there are also inhibiting factors that come from outside and inside, where the inhibiting factors from outside are usually, Several findings from interviews with teachers at PAUD Halimatusadiah which indicate a lack of competence in creating a creative play/learning environment for children in the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum*

1. Limitations in developing APE (Creative Educational Game Tools)

A number of teachers expressed that they had difficulty in creating or modifying APE that was appropriate to the characteristics of the children and the learning objectives. Teachers tended to use existing APE without think of innovations or adjustments to stimulate children's creativity.

Teacher WD answered:

"We usually use existing play equipment, rarely make our own or try to modify it. I'm also confused about where to start to make more creative equipment."

*From the answer of teacher WD, teachers in arranging the play environment in the classroom only use creative APE (Educational Play Tools) which is often caused by the lack of teacher knowledge and skills in designing and modifying tools that suit the needs of children. In this case, Teacher WD, felt confused about where to start when he wanted to create or change the existing APE. Teacher WD also admitted that they more often use APE that has been provided by the educational unit, without thinking about innovation or adjusting the tools to increase children's creativity. This shows that there are several limiting factors that influence the development of APE in schools, such as: **Educational Background** : Teachers who are not graduates of Early Childhood Education (PAUD), such as Teacher WD who has a BA in Islamic Religious Education, may not have a deep understanding of how to design a play environment that is appropriate for child development. This affects their ability to develop more creative APE and in accordance with learning objectives. **Lack of Training** : Teachers have never attended training or workshops related to arranging the play environment. This results in limited insight into the use of APE innovatively and how play tools can be integrated with child-centered learning activities. Without training, teachers tend to rely solely on the APE provided by the PAUD unit, which is often not varied and does not stimulate children's creativity. **Time and Resource Constraints** : Many teachers feel limited by time and resources in developing their own APE. Preparing creative APE that suits learning needs requires effort and creativity, as well as support from the school in terms of providing adequate materials and facilities. **Lack of Awareness of the Importance of Creative APE** : Teachers who are not used to making or modifying APE may be less aware of the positive impact of creative APE on the development of children's cognitive, social, and emotional aspects. This results in them tending to use standard and less innovative play equipment.*

It can be concluded that to overcome these limitations, it is highly recommended that teachers, such as Teacher WD, attend various trainings related to the arrangement of play environments and the development of APE. Training organized by the Education Office, the Cluster Activity Center (PKG), or organizational partners such as IGTKI and HIMPAUDI can provide teachers with new insights and practical skills in creating creative APEs that are beneficial for children's learning. With this increase in competence, teachers are expected to be more active in creating innovative play environments that support optimal child development.

2. Limited knowledge about the variety of play activities

Some teachers said that they felt under-trained in designing variations of play activities that stimulate various aspects of children's development. Most of the play activities carried out were still monotonous and poorly planned.

Teacher WD's answer stated that:

"Sometimes I feel confused to plan interesting and varied play activities. Usually the activities I provide are almost the same every day."

*From the answer of teacher WD, it reflects several limitations that teachers often face in designing play activities, including: **Lack of Understanding of the Importance of Activity Variation** : Teachers may not fully understand that variation in play activities is*

very important to support children's holistic development. Diverse activities can help children develop various abilities, from motor skills to critical and social thinking skills. **Lack of Training or Workshops** : Teachers who have never attended training or workshops related to creative play methods or the arrangement of learning activities often find it difficult to organize different play activities every day. Without this provision, teachers tend to repeat the same activities, which ultimately makes children quickly bored and do not get enough stimulation in various aspects of their development. **Limited Ideas and Sources of Inspiration** : Teachers who are not exposed to new sources of ideas or inspiration often find it difficult to plan innovative play activities. In fact, with a little modification or creativity, even simple activities can be very interesting and beneficial for children. Lack of access or information about sources of ideas can also hinder the development of teacher creativity in organizing variations in play activities. **Time and Workload Factors** : Many teachers face significant time pressure and workloads, making it difficult to design varied and interesting play activities. Due to limited time, teachers prefer to use methods or activities that they are familiar with and have proven successful, even though these activities tend to be monotonous.

It can be concluded that to overcome these limitations, teachers should attend training that focuses on developing variations in play activities. This training can be held by the Education Office, the Cluster Activity Center (PKG), or partner organizations such as IGTKI and HIMPAUDI. In addition, teachers are also advised to share good practices and experiences more often with fellow teachers, for example through discussion groups or educational communities. Thus, teachers can exchange ideas and inspiration on how to design interesting and varied play activities, and can be adjusted to the needs of children's development. In addition to training, teachers can also look for references from books, early childhood education journals, or online media that provide examples of varied play activities. With broader knowledge of creative play methods, teachers can improve their skills in designing more diverse, fun, and educational play activities, so that they can help optimize children's development in various aspects.

3. Lack of use of the surrounding environment for learning

Some teachers are not used to using the school environment as part of learning. They tend to do play activities in the classroom, even though the environment outside the school has a lot of potential to stimulate children's creativity and exploration.

Teacher WD's answer stated that:

"We haven't used the area outside the classroom much for play or learning activities. Maybe because we're not used to it or don't have enough ideas on how to use it."

From the answer of teacher WD , there are several factors that cause limited use of the surrounding environment for learning, namely: **Lack of Understanding of the Benefits of the Outdoor Environment** : Teachers may not be fully aware that the outdoor environment, such as parks, schoolyards, or open play areas, can be a rich source of learning. Outdoor activities not only improve physical fitness, but also encourage children to explore, interact with nature, and learn through direct experience. Children's involvement with the outdoor environment can stimulate their curiosity and provide a

more concrete learning context. **Lack of Ideas and Inspiration for Outdoor Activities** : As expressed by Teacher WD, one of the main reasons why outdoor activities are rarely carried out is because of the lack of ideas about how to utilize the area. Teachers may find it difficult to design activities that are in accordance with the objectives of outdoor learning. In fact, simple activities such as observing plants, role-playing in the open air, or conducting science experiments outdoors can be valuable learning experiences for children. **Habits Formed in the Classroom Environment** : Many teachers are accustomed to doing all learning activities in the classroom, which makes them less flexible in moving to the outdoor environment. This habit is formed because the classroom environment is often considered the only safe and comfortable place to learn. However, this restriction reduces the potential for children to explore the world around them and hinders their development of skills in various aspects. **Concerns about Safety and Supervision** : Teachers may be hesitant to take children outside the classroom due to concerns about safety and supervision. Young children need close supervision when they are outside the classroom, and this can be a logistical challenge for teachers who are unsure how to manage large groups of children in a more open and dynamic outdoor environment.

It can be concluded that to overcome this obstacle, teachers should start exploring ways to utilize the school environment as part of learning. Some steps that can be taken include: **Attending training or workshops on outdoor learning** : This training can provide practical ideas on how to use the school's outdoor environment to support learning. Training can also help teachers understand how to manage outdoor activities safely and effectively. **Integrating outdoor activities into lesson plans** : Teachers can plan several learning activities that involve the outdoor environment, such as observing nature, getting to know the school environment, or playing physical games that involve a lot of movement. With good planning, teachers can ensure that these activities are not only fun, but also support learning objectives. **Utilizing the surrounding environment as a natural learning tool** : For example, teachers can use the school garden to teach children about plant cycles or types of small animals. This activity does not require a lot of additional equipment and provides opportunities for children to learn through direct experience. **Holding local exploration activities** : In addition to the school yard, teachers can also utilize the wider environment, such as the area around the school, for exploration activities. For example, visiting a garden, city park, or even a local market to introduce children to real-life concepts, such as the environment, professions, or how society works. Thus, as skills and ideas in utilizing the outdoor environment for learning increase, teachers are expected to create more varied, fun, and educational activities, and help children develop broader skills with the world around them.

4. Obstacles in implementing the *Merdeka Curriculum* which emphasizes creativity

Teachers also expressed that they felt they still did not fully understand the concept of the *Merdeka Curriculum* which emphasizes children's creativity and independence in playing and learning. Teachers felt they needed further training to be able to implement this curriculum well. Teacher WD stated:



Picture 11: Interview Document with PAUD teacher Halimatusadiah

"We know that the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes children's creativity, but I feel like we haven't received enough training or guidance on how to apply this in daily activities in the classroom."

From the answers of teacher WD, it shows several main obstacles in the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, including: **Lack of Deep Understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum** : Although the *Merdeka Curriculum* emphasizes children's flexibility, creativity, and independence, many teachers still feel confused about how to translate these principles into real activities in the classroom. Teachers often face challenges in designing lesson plans that integrate creative play activities, especially if they are not yet accustomed to the more flexible and less structured approaches emphasized in this curriculum. **Lack of Training and Technical Guidance** : One of the biggest obstacles faced by teachers is the lack of training or technical guidance on how to implement the *Merdeka Curriculum*. Most teachers feel that they do not yet have sufficient skills to design activities that truly encourage children's creativity and independence. Without adequate training, teachers may tend to revert to more traditional and structured teaching methods, which can limit children's room to explore and innovate. **Habits of Structured Teaching Methods** : Many teachers are accustomed to more structured teaching methods, where learning activities are strictly regulated and children follow clear instructions from the teacher. In the *Merdeka Curriculum*, children are encouraged to be more independent, explore their own interests, and find creative solutions, which requires teachers to act more as facilitators than instructors. This shift in roles can be a big challenge for teachers who are not used to it. **Limited Resources and Time** : Teachers often find it difficult to find or provide the resources needed to support creative and independent learning. On the other hand, the pressure to complete learning targets within a certain time frame also makes teachers feel limited in providing enough space for children to be creative and explore.

It can be concluded that teachers can take the following steps: **Attending Training and Workshops on the Merdeka Curriculum** : Further training organized by the Ministry of Education, Education Offices, or partner organizations can help teachers gain a better understanding of how to implement this curriculum. Training that focuses on creative and project-based methods, as well as how to facilitate independent learning, will greatly assist teachers in developing approaches that are more in line with the principles

of the Merdeka Curriculum. **Sharing Good Practices with Fellow Teachers** : Teachers can share experiences and good practices related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum through discussion groups, teacher communities, or Cluster Activity Centers (PKG). Sharing ideas and experiences can help teachers gain inspiration on creative ways to apply this curriculum in their classrooms. **Using a Project-Based and Exploration Approach** : One way to implement the Merdeka Curriculum well is through a project-based approach, where children are given the opportunity to explore topics that interest them in depth. Teachers can provide space for children to be creative, for example through art projects, science experiments, or activities that involve problem solving. **Creating an Environment that Supports Creativity and Independence** : Teachers can create a more flexible and friendly learning environment for children to explore. For example, providing a free play corner or space for creative experiments that allows children to try new things with minimal intervention from the teacher. With better training support and the implementation of appropriate strategies, teachers are expected to be more confident in applying the Merdeka Curriculum that emphasizes children's creativity and independence, so that learning becomes more enjoyable and meaningful for students.

5. Minimal use of project-based or exploratory approaches

Teachers tend to use teacher-centered learning methods, with less opportunity for children to explore independently. Project-based activities or activities that challenge children's creativity have not been fully implemented.

Teacher WD said:

"We often give instructions and the children follow, rarely giving them the opportunity to explore or work on small projects on their own. Maybe because we don't know how to do it yet."

From the answers of this WD teacher in implementing a project-based or exploration learning approach, among others: **Lack of Knowledge about Project-Based Learning** : Teachers may not have enough understanding about how to design and manage project-based learning. This method is different from the traditional teacher-centered approach, because it requires children to be more active in learning, starting from planning projects, finding solutions, to completing assignments with little guidance from the teacher. This lack of knowledge makes teachers feel less confident in providing opportunities for children to explore. **Reliance on Structured Teaching Methods** : Teachers who are accustomed to teacher-centered teaching methods tend to feel more comfortable controlling the flow of learning. In the project-based method, the role of the teacher changes to a facilitator, which means that children are given more freedom and responsibility in the learning process. This shift in role can be a challenge for teachers who are not used to more flexible learning methods. **Concerns about Time and Effectiveness** : Teachers are often concerned that the project-based approach requires more time and preparation than traditional methods. In addition, they may doubt whether this method can meet learning targets effectively, especially in the context of structured learning and having a strict curriculum. **Lack of Training and Mentoring** : Many teachers have not

received adequate training or mentoring on how to design and implement project-based activities. Without adequate training, teachers find it difficult to initiate and facilitate activities that involve children's independent exploration and development of projects.

It can be concluded that there are several concrete steps that can help teachers implement project-based learning and exploration effectively: **Attending Project-Based Learning Training** : Teachers can attend training or workshops that focus on project-based learning methods. In this training, teachers will learn about how to design projects that are appropriate to children's abilities and interests, as well as how to facilitate a more independent and exploratory learning process. With this training, teachers will be more confident in guiding children to think critically and creatively through project-based activities. **Starting with Small Projects** : Teachers can start with small, simple projects to introduce the concept of project-based learning. For example, teachers can invite children to make art projects, observe plant growth, or build simple models. These projects do not require many resources but can actively involve children in the learning process, so that they learn through direct experience. **Involving Children in Planning and Exploration** : Teachers can encourage children to be involved in project planning, giving them the freedom to choose the themes or topics they want to explore. By giving children space to be creative, teachers can help foster a sense of responsibility and independence in children, as well as provide more meaningful learning experiences. **Integrating Projects with the Existing Curriculum** : Teachers can find ways to integrate projects with the existing curriculum, so that projects become part of ongoing learning. For example, when teaching the concept of nature, teachers can design projects that involve exploring the environment around the school. In this way, projects not only support creative learning but also enrich children's understanding of the curriculum material. **Encourage Collaboration and Discussion Between Students** : The project-based approach also provides opportunities for children to work in groups, collaborate, and discuss with each other. Through these interactions, they learn to work together, share ideas, and find solutions together. Teachers can encourage collaboration by dividing children into small groups and giving them projects that require team problem solving. With the right approach, teachers can implement project-based learning effectively, providing opportunities for children to explore, innovate, and develop critical thinking skills. This not only helps in developing children's creativity, but also increases their independence and ability to solve problems, which are important skills for their future.

In accordance with the initiation of several principles that The way to create a diverse play environment is as follows: (1) the teacher gives children a way to play different ways to obtain materials, process or understand ideas, and develop products; (2) create a learning environment that suits the child's interests, readiness, and learning profile so that each child can learn well and have the motivation to learn; (3) encourage children to think critically, creative, and independent; (4) an approach that uses several different resources to help children learn better; and (5) the variety of ways teachers can develop creative teaching in class (Yuliantina & Boki, 2023).

Table 13 : Observation Sheet for the Arrangement of the Play Environment at PAUD Halimatusadiah

No	Item Item	Scoring				Caption
		3	2	1	0	
1	Arrangement environment play in accordance with objective learning	v				
2	Designing Variety activity play Which containing about various activity Which relevant with objective learning	v				
3	Determine the tools and materials used accordingly children's needs, learning objectives, and project activities according to agreement and materials originate from environment local or around the child		v			
4	Arrange Variety activity play Which containing about settings room		v			
5	Understanding the environmental interests that It means environment become the most important part in supporting children's learning and development		v			
6	Encouraging children's participation means involving children in process election And provision tool and materials in play activities		v			
7	Organizing storage and access, which means organizing and storing tools and materials properly, will make it easier for children to access and enable them to... they For plan and set activity they Alone;		v			
8	Renew And complete tool and materials.		v			

Arrangement of the play environment at PAUD Halimatusadiah explained in form environment play Which free, differentiation, creative And build explore child. Facilities provided Also make diversity in form APE and also development talent child in center role play activities. The results of the work produced in the selection of various play environments for children realizing children's exploration in unlimited things. This condition is in line with research by (Bermudez et al., 2023), regarding the creative design of early childhood play environments to provide opportunities for children at school to receive and process information, ideas, understand concepts, or communicating learning by expressing it through children's work. So, This research provides many references and

positive benefits for a number of children's educational institutions. early age as a transition from the many previous curriculum implementations to Independent Learning. In Likewise, there are still some who implement the use of teaching media with printed materials. such as paper and books, even though to increase the potential for intelligence and its development stage, can through various type matter around child like in explore environment play child Alone.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of previous research and discussions, it can be concluded that the changes that done on environment play Independent Study in PAUD Halimatusadiah is heading towards on objective Curriculum Independence, which is a free and unbound playing environment. This school now concentrates on APE (Educational Game Tool) instead of using worksheets or paper as learning media. Furthermore, the APE used in this school emphasizes various types and models. One of the models The one used is *Loose part* , which focuses on project- *based learning* and allow student finish work Which in accordance with design learning Which has arranged in advance. In addition, learning in this school is not limited to one activity. Instead, The play environment is well designed around the classroom, with each activity center focusing on one interest. There are 5 children's activity centers provided at this school, namely the arts center, projects, cooking, loose part and role play. An example of environmental planning in one of these activity centers is the Activity Center Art Which only provide various tool art And and so on.

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