

## **Developing an Understanding of the Transition Period and Stimulating Children's Readiness to Enter Elementary School among Preschool Teachers in Purwakarta Regency**

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### **ABSTRAK**

Pemahaman guru prasekolah terhadap masa transisi dan kesiapan anak memasuki sekolah dasar merupakan hal yang mendasar dalam menentukan tindakan guru dalam menciptakan proses dan keluaran pembelajaran yang berkualitas. Namun sebagian besar guru prasekolah di Kabupaten Purwakarta belum memiliki pemahaman yang utuh mengenai kesiapan sekolah sehingga stimulasi pembelajaran yang diberikan tidak mengacu pada kompetensi anak pada masa transisi. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengembangkan pemahaman guru prasekolah tentang masa transisi dan kesiapan anak memasuki sekolah dasar. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan pendekatan *Participatory Action Research* (PAR). Diawali dengan melakukan analisis kondisi terhadap 30 guru prasekolah di Kabupaten Purwakarta, dan dilanjutkan dengan memberikan penguatan melalui sistem pelatihan guru. Data dikumpulkan dengan kuesioner. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa setelah diberikan pelatihan, terjadi peningkatan pemahaman guru prasekolah mengenai masa transisi dan kesiapan sekolah. Guru memahami bahwa kesiapan seorang anak ditentukan oleh kematangan usia serta hal-hal yang berkaitan dengan tingkat perkembangan anak meliputi perkembangan kognitif, fisik-sensorimotor, perkembangan sosial-emosional, dan sikap belajar. Guru juga memahami bahwa kesiapan keluarga dalam memberikan dukungan, stimulasi dan sikap melalui pengasuhan yang menyenangkan, serta kesiapan sekolah dalam hal kompetensi guru, program kegiatan, dan sarana prasarana memberikan pengaruh besar dalam membentuk kesiapan sekolah anak. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat menjadi rujukan dalam menyusun program masa transisi dan kesiapan sekolah anak.

**Kata kunci** : Kesiapan, transisi sekolah, pemahaman guru

### **ABSTRACT**

*Preschool teacher's understanding of the transition period and children's readiness to enter elementary school is fundamental in determining teacher actions in creating quality learning processes and outputs. However, the majority of preschool teachers in Purwakarta Regency do not have a complete understanding of school readiness so that the learning stimulation provided does not refer to children's competencies during the transition period. The purpose of this research is to develop preschool teachers' understanding of the transition period and children's readiness to enter elementary school. The research was conducted by using Participatory Action Research (PAR) approaches. Starting with analyzing the conditions of 30 preschool teachers in Purwakarta Regency, and continuing with providing reinforcement through the teacher training system. Data was collected by questionnaire. The results showed that after being given training, there was an increase in teachers' understanding of the transition period and school readiness. Teachers understand that a child's readiness is determined by age maturity as well as matters related to the child's level of development including cognitive, physical-sensorimotor development, social-emotional development, and learning attitudes. Teachers also understand that family readiness in providing support, stimulation and attitudes through pleasant care, as well as school readiness in terms of teacher competency, activity programs and infrastructure have a big influence in shaping children's school readiness. It is hoped that this research can be a reference in preparing programs for the transition period and children's school readiness.*

**Keywords:** *Readiness, school transition, teacher understanding*

## INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, school readiness refers to a child's readiness to enter elementary school (SD). Expert opinions about children's school age are very diverse. In national policy, the standard for accepting new students (PPDB) to elementary school is regulated in the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation (Permendikbud) Number 17 of 2017 article 5. The Minister of Education and Culture Regulation states that new students who are 7 year old must be accepted. And children under 6 years old for children who have special intelligence or have a readiness to learn as proven by written recommendations from professional psychologists (Kemendikbud, 2017).

This Ministerial Regulation needs to be understood by all multidisciplinary, especially teachers. Teachers have a big role in preparing children's transition to elementary school. In Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the Education System, early childhood education is a training effort aimed at children from birth to six years of age which is carried out through providing educational stimuli to help physical and spiritual growth and development so that children are ready to enter further education.

Children who are ready for school will have better adaptability in elementary school. Children who are ready will have social skills, health and the ability to participate in school activities. On the other hand, children who are not ready will experience disappointment when placed in an academic environment. The child will withdraw, behave indifferently and show physical symptoms or difficulty completing assignments at school. Children are also more vulnerable to academic, behavioral and emotional problems (Faqumala & Pranoto, 2020).

Rifani's research (2022) explains several examples of the long-term impact of someone who has a history of entering elementary school early having problems in aspects of socio-emotional competence such as feeling uncomfortable in socializing with peers, fear, worry, lack of self-confidence, negative feelings towards oneself, and sibling rivalry. They also experience negative things such as being bullied, negative emotions, academic problems, obstacles in adjusting, lack of self-confidence, and self-help.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) launched the 24th episode of Merdeka Belajar with the theme of the Fun Transition Movement from Early Childhood Education to Primary School . This government policy aims to encourage the entire community to better understand the importance of forming basic abilities as a basis for learning through PAUD services. The early grade PAUD-SD transition is expected to focus on aspects that influence and mature children's growth and development, not just focus on cognitive abilities. Therefore, the transition period is an important stage for children to strengthen children's basic abilities in order to protect children's rights in growing, developing and being respected in the school and residential environment (D.P. Lestari, 2023).

However, in reality, many people still have misconceptions about learning for early childhood. One of the misconceptions is that early childhood education (PAUD) focuses on reading, writing and arithmetic. Likewise, the perception of entering the beginning of elementary school (SD) is full of cognitive content, followed by demands for the ability to read, write and count or what is often known as calistung in early grade 1 (one). This calistung ability is considered not to hinder the teaching and learning process. The elementary school management responded to this by carrying out calistung tests when accepting new students, which was also responded by the PAUD management so that the teachers provide teaching oriented towards reading, writing and arithmetic skills. In this condition, PAUD teachers and early grade elementary school teachers feel they are the ones most responsible so that their implementation of learning focuses on calistung learning without taking time to pay attention to the developmental stages and needs of early childhood, Susilahati Susilahati, et al (2023).

Syarfina, Elindra Yetti, & Lara Fridani (2018) in their research explained that teachers understand children's school readiness to enter elementary school based on age, independence and academic abilities (writing, reading and arithmetic). This fact shows that the majority of beginning teachers do not fully understand school readiness. Therefore, it is important to determine ways or strategies to increase teachers' understanding of the transition period and school readiness.

This research will find out more about efforts that can be made to develop preschool teachers' understanding of children's school readiness through a teacher training system. Understanding comes from the word understand. In Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, understand means to understand. Sudaryono (2013) said: "Understanding is a person's ability to grasp the meaning and meaning of the material being studied, which is expressed by explaining the main content of a reading or changing data presented in a certain form to another form." If understanding is a measure of a person's ability to comprehend or understand the activities they are carrying out, then in school readiness, teachers must understand or understand the concept and implementation of school readiness.

In Bloom's taxonomy, understanding is classified in the second level of cognitive domain. Understanding is at a higher level than knowledge. This means that understanding is not just knowing, but also wanting teachers to be able to utilize or apply what they have understood regarding school readiness.

Willingness is the overall condition of a person or individual to convey and disseminate an activity where this attitude contains the mentality, skills and attitudes that must be possessed and prepared while carrying out certain activities. Regarding a child's readiness to enter elementary school, it means that the child has maturity and the child also has a readiness to learn based on physical, mental, cognitive, social-emotional conditions and the skills that the child has in kindergarten as preparation for entering the next level of education (Faqumala & Pranoto, 2020).

Same as Soydan's opinion, (2017) preparing children to enter elementary school requires several domains including cognitive development, good social skills, physical motor skills and the skills that children have to be fluent in elementary school.

The National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) states that children's educational readiness includes 5 dimensions, namely 1). Physical health and motor development, 2). Social and emotional development, 3). Language development, 4). Approach to learning, 5). Cognitive and general knowledge (Kagan, Moore, & Bredekamp, 1998). These five dimensions have a very close relationship with each other and are influenced by various factors.

National School Readiness Indicators Initiative (NSRII, 2008) with conference teams from 17 states explains that school readiness takes into account the factors: ready families , ready communities, and ready schools.

This research uses a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. The PAR approach is a research model that seeks something to connect the research process to the process of social change. PAR involves conducting research to define a problem and applying the information into action as a solution to the defined problem. (Irna Kania & Dede Supendi, 2024). Starting with observation looking at the problem regarding the teacher's understanding of the child's readiness to learn, interpreting and analyzing it, then action is taken to address the problem.

This research was conducted in Purwakarta Regency, which is located in West Java Province. The subjects in this research were 32 teachers who taught in Raudhatul Athfal (RA) and Kindergartens (TK) spread across Purwakarta Regency.

Data was collected using a questionnaire and explained descriptively. The questions in the questionnaire are presented with open essay questions to find out (1) teachers' general understanding of the transition period and school readiness, (2) basic skills that children need to have in terms of school readiness, (3) factors that can influence children's school readiness and stimulation that needs to be done to support children's school readiness, (4) how teachers assess children's school readiness.

Open questions provide more in-depth information about the research subject (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005 in Pekdogan, 2017). After receiving answers from respondents, the data was analyzed descriptively. The goal of descriptive analysis is to reform the data in an understandable way. In the data analysis process, researchers coded teacher answers with opinions.

## **DISCUSSION**

Teacher Training System with the theme "Are Children Ready to Enter School?" This was considered positive because there was an increase in preschool teachers' understanding between before and after the training material was delivered. The results of the 5 question questionnaire are as follows:

In relation to question number 1 regarding "what is meant by the transition period and school readiness" it is designed to see teachers' general understanding of the meaning of the transition period and school readiness.

Before training was provided, the transition period was understood by most teachers as the period of moving from kindergarten to elementary school. Meanwhile, school readiness is understood differently by each teacher. Some are of the view that school readiness is a child's readiness to go to school in terms of age and ability to recognize letters and numbers, write and count. Pendapat guru tersebut diantaranya:

*"The transition period is the move from kindergarten to elementary school, and school readiness is children who are ready to go to elementary school, namely children who are old enough and can already read, write and count."*

*"As I understand it, the transition period is when children are going to elementary school. Meanwhile, school readiness means that children are ready to enter elementary school based on their age and know numbers and letters."*

However, there are also teachers who believe that school readiness means that children already have abilities in 6 aspects of development (cognitive, language, social emotional, physical motor, moral religious values, and art).

*"Children's school readiness is a condition where the child is mentally ready, of sufficient age, and has achieved 6 aspects of development well."*

*"School readiness is a child who is good in cognitive, language, physical, social and emotional aspects."*

On the other hand, there are also teachers who consider school readiness to be a child's ability when they have independence, self-confidence, responsibility, courage, as well as the ability to communicate and adapt. similar to the teacher's opinion:

*"What I understand about readiness children's school are children who are independent, responsible and have social emotional skills."*

*"School readiness is a child who is ready to take part in elementary school activities because he has courage, self-confidence, the ability to adapt and communicate."*

After teachers received the training materials, most teachers had an understanding of the concept of transition and school readiness. That the transition

period is a transition period from kindergarten to elementary school, and school readiness is towards a condition where children are ready because they have the basic skills needed to be able to successfully participate in activities in the learning program at elementary school, such as skills in developmental aspects and attitudes towards learning.

Question number 2 about "basic skills that children must have to be ready for school" was designed to find out the extent to which teachers understand the basic skills standards of children when starting school. The findings show that before training is given, there is a classification of skills that the teacher focuses on, namely academic/ cognitive skills, skills in terms of developmental aspects, and skills in terms of character aspects as follows:

Basic skills that children must have to be ready for school:

- a. Skills include the academic ability to read, write and calculate.
- b. Skills in terms of developmental aspects include physical motor, social emotional, language, cognitive and moral religious values.
- c. Skills in the character aspect include independence, self-confidence, responsibility, courage, as well as the ability to communicate and adapt.

However, after receiving training materials, most teachers understand that the basic skills that children must have to be ready for school are cognitive, physical motor, social emotional, language and other basic skills for learning/learning attitudes.

Question number 3 regarding "factors that can influence children's school readiness and the stimulation that needs to be carried out to support children's school readiness" is designed to determine teachers' understanding of what factors can influence children's school readiness as well as understanding in choosing activities, methods and teaching materials for building children's school readiness.

The results before the training showed that the majority of teachers were of the opinion that the factor that supports children's readiness is the stimulation provided at school including learning activities through play, knowledge of reading and writing arithmetic through indoor and outdoor activities, as well as additional lessons for reading and writing arithmetic. The choice of activities is based on the teacher's answers such as:

*"Factors that support children's readiness are stimulation at school, such as learning activities that I provide through fun games."*

*"Teachers have a role in preparing children. I provide reading and writing arithmetic material through games"*

*"The factor that influences a child's readiness is learning at school. There are additional lessons for reading and writing arithmetic for group B children.*

There are several teachers who believe that children's readiness is built through stimulation in 6 aspects of development, including aspects of character that are built through habituation.

*"The school curriculum is a support for children's readiness. We build children's readiness through curriculum programs in 6 aspects of development such as cognitive, physical motor, language, and others. As well as teaching children about independence, good manners, discipline through habituation."*

*"How to prepare children through learning in a central model stimulates 6 aspects of development, as well as developing self-confidence, responsibility, adaptation and communication."*

However, there are also teachers who believe that children's readiness is influenced by family factors.

*"Family has an important role in preparing children to enter school"*

*"Children's school readiness can train parents at home, such as independence, courage and ability to communicate."*

After training, teachers have a complete understanding of the factors that support children's readiness, namely school readiness in preparing stimulation programs for basic skills and habituation as well as family readiness in providing care and assistance that stimulates every aspect of children's development and builds an attitude of love learning.

Question number 4 about "how to assess children's school readiness" was designed to determine teachers' understanding in assessing children who are ready for school. Results before the training showed that some teachers assessed children who were ready for school by observing academic abilities such as reading and writing and arithmetic. Apart from academic ability, other teachers assess school

readiness through observation of 6 aspects of development, character, and taking into account the child's age. As stated by the teacher:

*"Assessing readiness based on age. Children who are 7 years old are considered ready to enter elementary school."*

*"Assessment for children's readiness is seen from cognitive, motor, social emotional and language aspects."*

*"I carry out an assessment by observing the ability to read, write, count"*

*"I saw the extent of independence and responsibility for completing tasks."*

*"I evaluate whether the child is mentally ready and can adapt and communicate."*

*"We are usually assisted by psychologists in assessing children's school readiness."*

After attending the training, teachers have an understanding that school readiness can be assessed by teachers through authentic assessments of aspects of child development (cognitive, physical motor, social emotional, language) and skills in supporting learning activities/love of learning.

From the results presented regarding teachers' understanding of the four things that are indicators, teachers' understanding of the transition period and school readiness focuses more on children's readiness to take part in elementary school learning from academic or cognitive aspects such as reading, writing and arithmetic. Apart from that, teachers also prioritize school readiness based on the age factor. After attending the training, teachers have a new understanding that readiness is not only determined by age and academic ability, but also readiness in all aspects of development and learning attitudes.

In (Kemendikbud, 2020) it is stated that school readiness is a child's ability to manage himself in terms of knowledge, skills and social-emotional, which is the result of the child's continuous interaction with various experiences in the environment where the child grows and develops so that he can adapt to the challenges of learning at the next level.

For the areas of skills that must be possessed before starting school, teachers already have an understanding of independence, self-confidence, responsibility, adaptation and communication as well as daily skills in every aspect of development. With training, there is a new, more complete understanding that apart

from cognitive, language, physical-motor and social-emotional abilities, learning skills are also an important aspect to prepare.

In UNICEF (2012) it is stated that children who are ready for school have basic knowledge and skills in various aspects of development that enable children to learn successfully at the next level of school. From the child's perspective, school readiness is a concept that includes various dimensions because it includes aspects of physical health and development, cognitive abilities, social emotional abilities, language skills, motivation and work attitudes which in this case are referred to as learning attitudes (National Education Goals Panel, 1991; Britto, 2012).

Furthermore, in building school readiness, teachers understand that there are 2 factors that support children's readiness, namely: 1) school readiness includes good quality stimulation in teacher qualifications, teaching programs and supporting facilities, 2) family readiness in providing care and assistance in stimulating aspects of all child development and building an attitude of learning/love of learning. Before receiving training, teachers have an understanding that children's readiness only depends on the stimulation provided at school. Teachers have prioritized games even though they are still limited in creating creative games. Teachers provide reading, writing and arithmetic instruction through fun games or through additional guidance. Only a few teachers think that the family has an important role in developing children's school readiness.

The family, especially parents, as the people closest to the child have a big influence on all dimensions of school readiness. In addition, family involvement and the learning environment are more significant determinants of a child's school readiness. According to the ecological approach of Bronfenbrenner (1979), a child grows in the environment that surrounds him and that environment will influence his development. In this case, a very significant environment for a child at this age is the family, school, and surrounding community.

The National Institute of Child and Human Development (2002) states that family readiness in supporting children's educational readiness includes parental warmth and sensitivity, (b) support to foster children's autonomy, and (c) active participation in learning. Meanwhile, school readiness includes sufficient availability of important support that children need, as well as quality teaching and

learning. This can be seen from the adequacy of time devoted to studying in class, the provision of learning materials such as books and learning aids, and effective teaching, pedagogical practices, and teacher competence. All of this can be planned in a curriculum that is implicitly or explicitly aimed at training children's readiness (Director General of PAUD, 2020).

Regarding the methods used by teachers in assessing children's level of school readiness, initially most teachers only observed academic abilities (reading, writing and arithmetic) and used age as the main indicator for assessing children's readiness. Through the training provided, it has been shown that there has been an increase in understanding, namely teachers assessing children's school readiness by looking at the process and final conditions of aspects of children's development and learning attitudes which are the accumulation of various learning activity processes both in the school environment and in the family environment.

Assessment can be carried out by observing aspects of a child's readiness which include: 1) physical and sensory motor development which includes gross motor skills and fine motor skills; 2) cognitive development includes language, problem solving abilities, logistical thinking and symbolic thinking; 3) social emotional development; and 4) A learning attitude that includes curiosity, task completion, focused attention, and enthusiasm for achievement (Director General of PAUD, 2020).

## **CONCLUSION**

By knowing that there is an increase in the understanding of teachers who are trained in understanding the transition period and school readiness, it can be understood the importance of providing a teacher training system regarding school readiness. The focus on school readiness is not only child-centered and assessing children's readiness, but can also optimize the role of teachers and parents in building children's readiness. It is hoped that this research can provide awareness to educators to increase their insight and competence regarding school readiness and provide input to policy holders to pay more attention to the quality and professionalism of teachers.

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