



Examining Educators' Proficiency in Recognizing Learning Preferences of Young Learners to Facilitate Tailored Instruction in Early Childhood Education

Mailatul Muyassaroh, Hilda Pradina Faradiba, Aditya Syaiful Duhri

Email: mailatulmuyassaroh@gmail.com

Abstract: *This research investigates educators' ability to identify young children's learning preferences to facilitate personalized learning in early childhood education. Through this study, we explore the extent to which educators can recognize diverse learning styles and implement learning strategies that suit children's individual needs. This case study focuses on the implementation of an independent curriculum at Unesa 1 Labschool Kindergarten as a framework for analyzing educators' efforts to support differentiated learning for each child.*

Keywords: *Educators, Learning Preferences, Early Childhood, Customized Learning, Independent Curriculum*

INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education provides opportunities for children to develop their personality and potential to the maximum. Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten is an Early Childhood Education (PAUD) institution that accepts students with various characteristics, both regular and Special Needs Children (ABK) or what is known as an inclusion school. Anyone can become a student at Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten, there are no special requirements imposed on prospective students, including distance from residence, so parents who have ABK have a great opportunity to send their children to school. In essence, all children have the same opportunity to go to school to obtain education and teaching.

Inclusive school services include children with special needs together with children their age in regular schools. Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten does not differentiate classes between normal students and students with special needs, both teachers and their responsibilities are the same as those of other normal children. At the beginning of school entry, a *screening* /identification and assessment is carried out in advance regarding the condition, characteristics of the child, and the child's initial abilities, which will later be used as a basis for creating a learning program that is tailored to the child's abilities.

Therefore, schools must be able to make adjustments in terms of curriculum, facilities and infrastructure, learning systems, and assessment systems. In determining the material and flow of learning implementation, student characteristics, interests and abilities are needed to achieve learning objectives effectively. One way is to identify children's learning styles, where each child has their own way of receiving learning. Learning style refers to the child's preferred way of learning. Children with special needs have the same learning styles as other normal children, namely visual, auditory and kinesthetic. The unique

characteristics of each child's learning style at this institution need to be identified first so that it can be facilitated according to the child's needs so that in the future the child will be successful in the learning process. By adapting learning for various learning styles in one class, this includes organizing differentiated learning according to the four aspects of differentiated learning, namely content, process, product and differentiated learning environment.

The role of the teacher in this case is very important, because it is related to the learning process where the teacher is a designer, facilitator and mediator who accommodates and serves all children's needs. Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten teachers have guidelines by attending seminars on organizing differentiated learning which are used to organize learning according to children's characteristics, abilities and interests. The presence of students with special needs backgrounds does not make teachers at Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten differentiate between normal children and special needs children. ABK are still given the same learning materials as regular children, but are given more assistance and learning reinforcement.

In learning process activities, the curriculum is really needed as a guide for setting targets for the teaching and learning process. The curriculum used by Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten is an independent curriculum, where there is differentiated learning whose focus is concern for students in paying attention to children's strengths and needs. Differentiated learning is a learning profile that accommodates children's learning needs, requiring teachers to pay attention and provide action to meet children's special needs, thereby enabling teachers to see learning from various perspectives. The Unesa 1 Labschool Kindergarten teacher has attended a seminar on implementing an independent curriculum and differentiated learning.

Regulation Number 33 of 2022 explains that the aim of Learning Achievements in PAUD (TK/RA/BA, KB, SPS, TPA) in the independent curriculum is to provide direction that is appropriate to the child's developmental age in all aspects of child development (religious, moral, physical values). motoric, emotional-social, language, and cognitive). Education is an effort to improve and advance the nation (Rakhmawati, 2016) . In education, the learning process has a very important role because it increases knowledge, skills and self-concept. PAUD learning (TK/RA/BA, KB, SPS, TPA) has the characteristic that each child is seen as unique and has their own potential (strengths/strengths) making it possible to develop further through a carefully designed environment where stimulation

play is provided and learning is provided by educators, and takes into account the child's age, stage of development, interests and needs.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in Susanto (2017) states that early childhood or "early childhood" is a child in the age range of zero to eight years. According to Bachruddin Musthafa (2002), early childhood is children in the age range of one to five years. In contrast, the Subdirectorate of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) limits the meaning of the term early childhood to children aged 0-6 years, namely until children complete kindergarten. This shows that children who are still under parental supervision, children in playgroups (KB/PG), and those in Kindergarten (TK), are within the scope of the definition of early childhood.

The preschool period according to Yahman & Rakhmawati, (2019), Shihab (2017) is a very important period in a child's education. The age range of 0-6 years is often referred to as the golden period of child development, the child's brain is able to absorb up to 80% of information, because it experiences a rapid development and growth process. During this age range, children begin to form aspects of their development starting from cognitive, language, physical-motor, social-emotional, moral, independence and artistic aspects within the child. Khairi (2018) explains that every child is born with different potential and abilities: children have their own strengths, talents and interests. Rolina (2022), Fitri & Imansari (2020) said that early childhood children have unique characters with different abilities and learning styles. Children should be stimulated according to their character and learning style, so that children can grow and develop according to their development. So at this time it is important for teachers to provide the right stimulus for children so that their learning and development can develop rapidly. According to Khasanah et al., (2014), if early childhood learning is adapted to the needs of early childhood, the learning will be meaningful and children can easily accept the learning material.

In differentiated learning, teachers teach material by considering the level of readiness, interests and learning styles of students so that learning goals can be achieved optimally by children. So, in implementing differentiated learning in this independent curriculum, teachers should be able to know the learning styles of their students. According to Ahmad (2020) Learning style is the method that a person or individual tends to use in carrying out thinking activities, absorbing information, processing or processing and understanding new information and remembering it in memory as a form of obtaining information from knowledge, skills or actions in obtaining that information through learning experiences. Dina et al., (2022) stated that learning style is the way students use to receive,

absorb and process the lesson material given by the teacher. If teachers are able to create learning that is varied and appropriate to students' learning styles , it can have a positive impact that will increase students' learning outcomes and make it easier for them to understand the lesson material given by the teacher .

The results of research conducted by Dewantara (2020) show that in fact teachers do not take into account children's interests and learning styles in selecting and using learning materials, both in face-to-face and online learning. Basically, teachers know that children have many different learning styles. However, in particular, they do not understand the differences in terms, concepts and children's learning styles. Therefore, this will be an obstacle for teachers in encouraging their creativity in selecting and using learning materials that suit children's needs. Without a deep understanding of the concept of different learning styles, teachers tend not to proactively identify children's learning needs.

From the explanation above, it can be seen that it is very important to know children's learning styles when implementing differentiated learning. By being able to identify children's learning styles, teachers will be able to help children receive learning material by designing the learning process and choosing learning strategies including materials, methods and media that are effective for all children according to the child's learning style. The impact that will be obtained is that children can easily understand the material or knowledge information provided by the teacher so that a series of learning objectives can be achieved so that children's learning outcomes will increase.

This is reinforced by the opinion of Mufidah, (2017) that if we as educators are able to recognize learning styles, then we can manage learning under what conditions, where, when, and how to learn well and effectively. So it is important for teachers to recognize the learning style of each student so that they can choose the media or learning methods that will be used in the learning process so that the learning material provided can be maximally accepted by students and produce quality learning.

This research was conducted at the driving school with these considerations in mind, because teachers from the driving school, especially teachers at Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten , had received material and seminars regarding the application of differentiated learning so that teachers at Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten should have the ability to identify children's learning styles first. first and be able to implement differentiated learning , namely by providing learning that has been adapted to learning styles, as well as children's interests and abilities, such as being able to design learning tools, choose learning strategies , choose learning methods and appropriate learning media .

So this research was carried out at the driving school at Kindergarten Labschool Unesa 1. With the research data, it is hoped that it can become a reference for teachers so they can theoretically identify their children's learning styles.

For this reason, the researchers intend to conduct a research study with the title " Teachers' Ability to Identify Children's Learning Styles as Support." Differentiated Learning in Early Childhood (Case Study of the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Kindergarten *Labschool* Unesa 1 ").

A. Research focus

The focus of this research is related to differentiated learning and the learning styles of Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten children . To obtain accurate and precise information, this research was formulated in the form of research questions as follows:

1. What is the learning style of children at Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten?
2. What is the teacher's knowledge in understanding children's learning styles?
3. How do teachers handle the various learning styles of children?
4. What are the teacher's skills in facilitating various children's learning styles?

B. Research purposes

The aims of this research are:

1. Describe children's learning styles at Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten
2. Describe the teacher's knowledge in understanding children's learning styles
3. Describe how teachers handle various learning styles of children
4. Describe the teacher's skills in facilitating various children's learning styles

METHOD

Based on the problems studied, this research is field research, so the researcher uses qualitative research. (Moleong, 2018) explains that qualitative research is research that is intended to understand phenomena about what is experienced by research subjects, for example behavior, perceptions, motivations, actions, etc. holistically by describing them in the form of words and language in the context. specifically natural ones by utilizing various natural methods. The research design used is a case study. Case study research is qualitative research. Case study research is qualitative research, meaning a form of research (inquiry) or study of a problem that has a special nature which can be carried out through qualitative or quantitative approaches and has as its target subject individuals (individuals) or groups, up to society. (Gunawan, 2013).

This research was carried out at the Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten. This research location was based because it needed a school that had implemented the use of an independent curriculum which was given the mandate to become a driving school, and the Unesa 1 Labschool Kindergarten had been validated and selected as a driving school by the government. The data collection technique used is data triangulation by conducting observations, interviews and documentation of the teacher's ability to identify children's learning styles to support differentiated learning in early childhood. The instrument used is a structured interview so that the researcher has prepared several questions in accordance with the research focus. The data analysis used uses the Milles & Huberman (2010) analysis technique where activities in data analysis include data reduction, data display, as well as conclusion drawing and *verification*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the findings in the field that researchers obtained while conducting research at *Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten* with the title "Analysis of Teachers' Ability to Identify Children's Learning Styles as Supporting Differentiated Learning (Case Study of Independent Curriculum Implementation at *Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten*)". The researcher obtained data through a series of research methods of observation, interviews, and documentation and then analyzed the data found as a result of the research in line with the focus of the research being studied. The research results and discussion are as follows :

1. Children's Learning Styles at Labschool Unesa Kindergarten 1

As is known, learning style is a way that a person, child/individual uses to receive and process information and knowledge. A person's ability to receive information definitely varies. Therefore, sometimes someone has to use different methods in order to receive and understand the same information. In relation to teachers, they must identify children, namely to modify school assignments, learning methods or other related services, which are aimed at developing their potential or capacity to the maximum. Based on findings in the field, the teacher carries out initial identification in the form of an assessment using tests provided by the school when the child first enters school, then continues with the teacher carrying out his own observations of the children during the learning process by observing each child. This is in accordance with the opinion of Dina et al., (2022) in the activity of understanding children's characteristics to facilitate a diversity of learning styles, namely that the teacher first observes the characteristics of each child, whether in terms of attitudes,

behavior, abilities of the child, especially the child's learning style. During the learning process, the teacher observes how the children carry out learning activities, starting from the process of doing and understanding the tasks given.

After identifying students, it was found that there were several learning styles, especially those possessed by children, namely visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning styles. In line with DePorter & Hernacki (2013) there are three styles of learning in individuals, namely visual, auditory and kinesthetic. Based on the findings at Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten, children with a visual learning style are interested and learn easily through something related to pictures and real objects or the sense of sight, then children with an auditory learning style learn by using the sense of hearing, and children with an auditory learning style kinesthetics like to use physical motor skills and do lots of movements. However, based on the results of field research at Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten, the learning style that students tend to have is visual, this is proven by the frequent use of projectors and the use of real objects and learning media which enable children to focus and understand the material during the learning process. According to Desni et al., (2019), children with a visual learning style will usually be happier and more enthusiastic about learning by seeing the media provided by the teacher, notebooks and coloring books.

2. Teacher Knowledge in Understanding Children's Learning Styles

Optimal learning situations require a combination of all teaching strategies taking into account learning styles to obtain children's academic excellence. This combination will enable children to improve their cognitive skills to increase their maximum potential and become successful in their future lives. It is important to continue to understand learning styles because when a teacher continues to learn about the diversity of his students, he will be able to create professional, efficient and effective learning.

Based on the results of research in the field in the form of interviews, observations and documentation regarding teachers' knowledge in understanding children's learning styles at Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten. Researchers found that teachers have the ability to understand children's learning styles, both in terms of differences and characteristics of each learning style. According to research results, understanding children's learning styles has the function of providing learning that suits children's interests, needs and abilities so that teachers are able to choose and have appropriate learning strategies to facilitate children's various learning styles, so that

learning goals can be achieved. This is in line with the opinion of Dina et al., (2022) that if teachers are able to create varied learning that suits children's learning styles, it can have a positive impact that will increase children's learning outcomes and make it easier for children to understand the lesson material given by the teacher .

After the teacher understands the child's learning style, the teacher chooses learning strategies. A learning strategy is a tactic/method used by teachers with their students to optimize the teaching and learning process activities in class in accordance with the learning material so that learning objectives can be achieved effectively and efficiently. Based on the results of research in the field, it was found that the learning strategy used by teachers at Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten was by using various learning media to support the learning process which had been adapted to each child's learning style , and varying both the media and learning activities . This is in line with the opinion of Ningsih & Fitri (2023) which states that learning strategies are educators' efforts to apply various learning methods to achieve the desired goals. For example, by using various learning media to support the learning process , also by carrying out plant relay activities, going around the school environment, and providing project-based activities by making chocolate bananas .

The use of learning media is adjusted to the needs of each student and each student's learning style. If the child has a visual learning style, the teacher will provide a projector and concrete objects needed for learning . For children with an auditory learning style, the teacher facilitates the child to tell stories and provides explanations of learning material and uses the storytelling method. For children with a kinesthetic learning style, teachers use a lot of movement in their learning activities. Teachers have a handle on adapting children's needs in the teaching and learning process as evidenced by the preparation of learning plans or teaching modules. This is reinforced by the opinion of Mufidah, (2017) If we know learning styles then we can manage learning under what conditions, where, when and how to provide correct and effective learning. Based on the results of observations to measure how effective the learning strategy used by the teacher is, the teacher reviews the learning by asking several questions related to the learning material and conducting a question and answer session, then provides understanding back to the children and the children respond positively.

3. Teacher Attitudes in Facing Differences in Learning Styles and Inclusivity

Teachers pay attention to learning styles and inclusiveness by carrying out initial assessments for both regular and ABK children in order to provide learning that

suits the children's needs. And teachers make efforts to request report results from parents of children with special needs which teachers then use as a guide to providing appropriate services according to the child's characteristics, needs and abilities. Also applies to regular students, aimed at developing children's potential or capacity to the maximum. It is very important to identify children with special needs as early as possible. If it has been identified, you must immediately make a decision to develop a learning strategy to meet the needs and help the child's individual development (Thompson, 2010).

Teachers provide motivation and stimulate children's interest in learning with various learning styles, namely providing *support* through giving *rewards* or awards given to children after the child succeeds in learning and performs an achievement. Apart from that, the teacher also provides a starting point before learning by discussing, then doing *ice breaking* or singing and doing physical activities so as to foster children's enthusiasm to take part in the next learning process . According to Pujiharti (2017), teachers ' efforts to foster children's learning motivation as a source of inspiration are as follows: by carrying out learning activities while singing, learning while playing, using learning materials and fun color schemes in classroom learning .

ABK now have the right to attend general education with normal/regular students, so schools that provide education for ABK are called inclusive schools. Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten is an inclusive school, where there is one child with special needs in Group A1 with Down Syndrome (DS), and in Group A2 with Autism. Based on the results of research in the field, if there are children with special needs who do not have an accompanying teacher, the teacher must provide intense supervision and provide assistance to the child. In contrast to classes where there is an accompanying teacher, the teacher does not need to pay intense attention. . During The learning process at school, teachers also do not differentiate between regular children and special students, teachers provide the same things to children, such as providing materials and attention to children. However, in giving assignments, concessions are given according to the child's needs. Every child with special needs also needs it special services that have been adapted to their abilities and characteristics (Amanulla, 2022).

4. Teacher Skills in Facilitating Various Children's Learning Styles

Skills are needed to facilitate children's learning styles, so that teachers do not make mistakes in choosing learning strategies or methods. Teachers at Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten have skills in facilitating learning styles . Based on the results of

research in the field, to facilitate this visual learning style, teachers often use projectors, then show directly various kinds of toga plants, shows the real shape of television and radio, as well as the real shape of a banana . Based on this conclusion, it can be linked to theory (Pangesti, 2018) Children with a visual learning style can easily absorb information in the form of illustrations, diagrams, videos, posters, animations, colors, symbols and graphics.

Based on the results of research in the field, to facilitate this auditory learning style, teachers at Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten use sounds such as singing and do lots of repetition of learning material , then invite children to discuss their learning experiences such as questions and answers and allow children to express their desires. them to tell stories. Children with an auditory learning style often follow instructions well, focusing more on music or movement in the background, and repeating things over and over to make sure they understand the information (Pangesti, 2018).

To facilitate the kinesthetic learning style, teachers at Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten empower children's physical motor skills and organize project-based learning, such as inviting children to make chocolate bananas, carrying out a banana relay , and exploring the school environment to see ancient and modern television . This is in line with the theory expressed by Saputri (2019) as well as to familiarize children with the kinesthetic learning style, use simulations or direct learning in the form of practice. Children with a kinesthetic learning style will certainly be interested in this kind of teaching and learning model.

Differentiated learning is learning that pays attention to children's needs in learning activities. Teachers pay attention to the unique characteristics of different children so that one child is not treated the same as another child with different characteristics. In implementing differentiated learning today , teachers must take appropriate steps to address the differences in children's characteristics. Based on the results of research in the field, teachers at Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten already understand how to implement differentiated learning, namely by varying learning so that it can meet children's learning needs, especially facilitating various learning styles that have been adapted to children's interests, abilities and needs. For example, teachers provide various services to facilitate children's learning styles, teachers also provide freedom by allowing children to choose according to their own interests , such as asking children to draw, they can draw modern televisions or ancient televisions, this is also

proven by the existence of learning materials such as *loose parts* used to make mosaics . This is in line with the theory of Ade Sintia Wulandari (2022) that differentiated learning is a teacher's effort to adapt learning activities in the classroom to meet children's learning needs in relation to children's readiness to receive new material, which suits their interests and academic profile .

CONCLUSIONS

AND

SUGGESTIONS

A. Conclusion

1. Teachers at Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten identify their students through initial assessments and during the learning process. The learning styles found were visual, auditory and kinesthetic. The learning style that children at Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten tend to have is a visual learning style.
2. Teacher at Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten have knowledge about children's learning styles theoretically, it can be seen from the group A and B class teachers who both have an understanding of various children's learning styles so that learning goals can be achieved supported by the use of various learning media, then choosing the right learning strategy according to the reference in facilitating every child's learning style.
3. The attention given by teachers at the Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten to various children's learning styles and inclusiveness, in organizing learning, namely by teachers not differentiating between regular children and children with special needs, in providing learning adapted to the child's abilities and interests, and not being pushy. child. ABK are given leeway in completing assignments given by the teacher and are provided with assistance. Motivation provided by teachers to build children's interest in learning is given in the form of *support* and *rewards*.
4. Teachers at Labschool Unesa 1 Kindergarten are able to facilitate learning styles according to children's needs. To facilitate the visual learning style, teachers often use projectors, showing directly various kinds of toga plants, shows the real form of television and radio, as well as bananas . Facilitate the teacher's auditory learning style by using sounds , singing and doing lots of repetition , inviting children to discuss, ask questions and allow children to express their desire to tell stories . Facilitate a kinesthetic learning style by empowering children's physical motor skills, organizing project-based learning, by inviting children to make chocolate bananas, carry out banana relays , and explore the school environment. Teachers are

able to organize differentiated learning because teachers organize learning based on children's interests, abilities and characteristics.

B. Research Limitations

Several limitations in this research include:

1. When the data collection process uses structured interview techniques, the answers obtained cannot be explored more deeply because you cannot add additional questions to get more detailed answers.
2. When collecting data from the research focus on children's learning styles, researchers did not include tests that could clearly ascertain what the learning styles of each child in the class were.

C. Suggestion

After conducting observations entitled the teacher's ability to identify children's learning styles as a support for learning (Case Study of Independent Curriculum Implementation in Labschool Kindergarten Unesa 1), put forward the following suggestions:

1. It is hoped that this research can be used as input or information for teachers to increase knowledge in implementing differentiated learning in early childhood in terms of children's learning styles.
2. It is hoped that future researchers will be able to examine the ability of teachers to carry out differentiated learning using supporting aspects other than learning styles. So that different and new research results can be found that can add insight into the world of further research.
3. So that in the future, if there are researchers who will next research the same topic, they can carry out tests regarding the learning styles of each child first.

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