

Research Article

# Implementation of Beginning Reading Activities at Bebandem State Kindergarten, Karangasem Regency, Bali Province

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**Abstract:** This study aims to describe the implementation of early reading activities at Bebandem State Kindergarten, Karangasem Regency, Bali District for Group B, children aged 5-6 years. The focus of this research is on the planning, implementation, evaluation, supporting factors, and inhibiting factors of early reading activities. This study employs a qualitative approach and descriptive research type. Data collection techniques include interviews, observations, and documentation. Data are analyzed qualitatively using the Miles and Huberman model, which involves data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The validity of the research data was re-evaluated using source triangulation and method triangulation. The results show that: 1) The planning of early reading learning activities at Bebandem State Kindergarten begins with a socialization activity through In-House Training (IHT), building a shared commitment where teachers are invited to prepare a lesson plan or teaching module that meets the needs of the students. 2) The implementation of learning uses picture and letter card games, where children are invited to play cards according to the current theme; 3) The evaluation of early reading activities at Bebandem State Kindergarten is conducted through observation, assessing the implementation of learning activities, and identifying actions to improve any shortcomings in the learning activities carried out. 4) The supporting factors of early reading learning activities at Bebandem State Kindergarten include guidance from parents and families in early reading activities. 5) The inhibiting factors in the implementation of learning include both internal and external factors. Internal factors include intelligence, interest, talent, and motivation, while external factors include family environment, school environment, and community environment.

**Keywords:** Early Reading Activities; Children; Qualitative.

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## 1. Introduction

Early childhood, especially in the age range of 4–6 years, is in a very rapid developmental phase and is sensitive to various educational stimuli. At this stage, children begin to actively get to know the world around them and absorb information from the environment through a fun learning experience. Therefore, learning approaches in early childhood must be designed effectively and appropriate to their cognitive, social-emotional, and language developmental stages (Karmeliya et al., 2021). Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is a form of educational service that is specifically aimed at supporting the optimal growth of children before entering the primary education level. Early childhood education provides an important basis for the development of all aspects of children's personality, including early literacy as part of language skills (Firdaus, 2019).

One of the fundamental aspects of a child's literacy development is the ability to read at the beginning, which includes the recognition of letters, sounds, and symbols that form the basis of reading and writing skills. This ability is closely related to thinking and speaking skills, as well as the ability to understand ideas and ideas in writing (Firdaus, 2019). Children who are used to reading activities from an early age tend to have better language skills, both verbally and in writing (Rahayuningsih et al., 2019). Previous research shows that the ability to recognize

letters early is an important indicator of children's reading success at the next level of education (Christianti, 2015). Therefore, the introduction of the concept of the alphabet in early childhood is a crucial first step in forming a strong literacy foundation.

However, in practice, there are various challenges in the implementation of early reading activities in the PAUD environment, especially related to the limitations of the methods used and the readiness of teachers and parents in accompanying the children's learning process. Some elementary schools even require reading and writing skills for children who want to enroll, thus triggering parents' concerns and having an impact on the pressure of children's learning at the kindergarten level. This is not in line with government policy that does not require formal reading learning at the PAUD level. In this context, an approach is needed that aligns the needs of basic literacy mastery with the principle of play while learning which is a characteristic of early childhood learning.

In response to these challenges, Bebandem State Kindergarten, Karangasem Regency, Bali Province, has implemented an innovation in early reading learning based on play activities. Teachers at this school introduce letters to children through various methods such as word games, letter cards, guess the picture, and other activities that facilitate children to recognize letters without pressure. The initial reading activity at Bebandem State Kindergarten is not only designed to introduce letter symbols, but also encourages active involvement of children in the learning process, through visual, text, image, and audio media that are integrated into the learning theme. This strategy is believed to be able to increase children's motivation to learn and strengthen their literacy foundation.

This research was conducted to answer the problem of how to implement early reading activities in Bebandem State Kindergarten, Karangasem Regency, Bali Province. The problems raised focus on the process of planning, implementation, evaluation, and factors that support and hinder the initial reading activities in the kindergarten environment. In addition, it is also important to highlight the role of the family in accompanying children's reading activities at home, considering that collaboration between schools and families greatly determines the success of literacy learning in early childhood.

The purpose of this study is to describe in depth the application of beginning reading activities in Bebandem State Kindergarten. The main focus includes: (1) how the activity planning process is carried out by teachers and institutions, (2) how the implementation of initial reading activities is carried out through a play approach, (3) how evaluations are carried out to assess the effectiveness of activities, and (4) what are the supporting and inhibiting factors that affect the success of early reading learning.

By comprehensively examining the implementation of early reading activities in Bebandem State Kindergarten, the results of this research are expected to contribute to the development of relevant and effective early literacy learning practices in the PAUD environment. In addition, the findings of this study can also be a reference for educators, researchers, and policymakers in designing early reading learning strategies that are fun and meaningful for early childhood.

## **2. Preliminaries or Related Work or Literature Review**

### **Early Childhood Education (PAUD)**

Early Childhood Education is the initial stage of formal education given to children aged 0–6 years, as a form of stimulation to support the growth and development of children optimally, both physically, cognitively, social-emotionally, and linguistically (Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia, 2014). This period is known as the golden age, where the child's brain develops rapidly and is very responsive to educational stimuli. The main goal of early childhood education is to provide an important foundation before children enter the primary education level, as well as instill basic moral, spiritual, and life skills values (Supriani & Arifudin, 2023). In its implementation, PAUD focuses on holistic and contextual learning, through fun play-and-learn activities, including initial reading activities as part of early literacy (Lilis, 2017).

### **Early Childhood Development**

Children aged 4–6 years experience significant changes in various aspects of development, especially language development which is the main indicator of literacy readiness (Sukreni et al., 2014). The process of children's language development includes the ability to listen, understand spoken language, express opinions, and imitate and recognize

letter and number symbols (Khaironi, 2018). As they get older, children's language skills become more complex and develop into reading and writing skills. The government through Permendiknas No. 58 of 2009 has grouped the stages of children's language development according to their age, starting from the ability to express their voices spontaneously to being able to read and write simply. Therefore, early reading learning should be given by paying attention to the stages and characteristics of these developments.

### **Reading the Beginning**

Beginning reading is the initial stage in the process of learning to read which emphasizes the ability of children to recognize and understand the symbols of letters, sounds, and meanings of a simple text. According to Halimah (2014), beginning reading includes phonological skills, such as connecting grapheme with phonemes, and is the foundation for the development of more complex reading skills at the next level. The purpose of beginning reading is not only to introduce letters, but also to train children to be able to arrange letters into words, as well as understand the context of simple reading. Therefore, this activity must be designed in such a way that it is appropriate for the child's development and remains fun (Rislina & Khan, 2015).

### **The Essence of Knowing Letters**

Knowing letters is the initial process of literacy where children learn to connect the visual form of the letters with the sounds that symbolize them. This activity plays an important role in facilitating reading and writing skills (Pangastuti & Hanum, 2017). Children who have a strong understanding of the shapes and sounds of letters tend to master reading skills faster. The process of recognizing letters should ideally start from an early age and be carried out through concrete approaches, such as the use of visual media and educational games (Rislina & Khan, 2015). This is because early childhood is still at the concrete operational stage, where direct and real learning experiences are easier to understand.

### **Factors Affecting Literacy**

Children's ability to recognize letters is influenced by various internal and external factors. Internal factors include the child's intelligence, interests, motivation, talents, physical and psychological conditions (Rislina & Khan, 2015). Children with high motivation and a keen interest in reading tend to understand letters more easily. Meanwhile, external factors include the family environment, the availability of reading materials, interaction with teachers, and the social environment (Sari et al., 2021). Families that have a tradition of reading and provide time to accompany children to read have been proven to contribute positively to the development of children's literacy. In addition, the availability of contextual learning media is also an important factor in supporting the success of recognizing letters.

### **How to Develop Letter Recognition**

Cultivating the ability to recognize letters can be done through various approaches, such as sequential, simultaneous, or combined approaches. The sequential approach teaches letters alphabetically and phonetically, while the simultaneous approach uses whole words or sentences, then breaks them down into letters or syllables (Sari et al., 2021). The combination of these two methods can be adjusted to the characteristics and needs of the child. Learning media such as letter cards, pictures, songs, or picture stories can be used so that children are more interested and easily understand the concept of letters (Patiung, 2014). Play activities such as guessing words, matching letters, or arranging syllables have also been shown to be effective in fostering interest in learning letters in early childhood.

### **Characteristics of Letter Recognition**

The ability to recognize letters in early childhood has a distinctive characteristic, namely developing gradually and highly dependent on the stimulation given. According to the learning outcomes in the BSKAP Decree No. 33/H/KR/2022, children are expected to be able to recognize symbols, sounds, and letters as part of the pre-reading process (Patiung, 2014). Children also begin to be able to distinguish the shape of letters, pronounce their sounds, and associate these symbols with meaning (Fahrurrozi, 2016). Learning to recognize letters must be designed according to the unique characteristics of child development, should not be forced, and prioritize a fun approach to play (Rahman & Haryanto, 2014).

### Initial Reading Steps

The initial reading process is carried out through systematic learning stages, starting from the pre-reading stage to the independent reading stage. The pre-reading stage includes the introduction of a good sitting position, how to hold a book, turn the page, and observe pictures or texts (Muammar, 2020). Furthermore, the reading stage is carried out by introducing letters, letter sounds, and the arrangement of syllables into simple words. Teachers need to be models in reading, demonstrate intonation and expression, and provide positive feedback so that children are motivated to read. The use of songs, stories, and games is highly recommended to create a fun learning atmosphere (Ulfa, 2019).

### Factors Influencing Initial Reading

The success of initial reading is influenced by several factors. Physiological factors such as health, vision, and hearing affect a child's ability to receive learning stimulation. Mental factors such as intelligence, interest, and motivation also play a significant role in determining the speed and effectiveness of learning (Hidayah & Novita, 2016). The family environment, such as the availability of books, reading habits at home, and support from parents are external factors that greatly determine the success of children in reading. In addition, social factors such as interaction with peers and teachers also have a positive impact on the formation of reading habits from an early age (Yulinda Udhiyanasari, 2019).

### Stages of Initial Reading Implementation

The stages of implementing initial reading include learning planning, implementation of learning cores, and assessment or evaluation of learning outcomes. Planning includes determining learning objectives, selection of teaching materials, media, strategies, and forms of assessment (Kurniawati, 2021). The implementation is carried out with an active and participatory approach, where children are directly involved in learning activities through games or project-based activities. Evaluation is carried out formatively to determine the achievement of learning objectives and adjust strategies if obstacles are found. Assessment is also important to identify the individual learning needs of children, so that the learning approach can be more personalized and effective (Uno, 2008).

## 3. Proposed Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of describing in depth the application of early reading activities in Bebandem State Kindergarten, Karangasem Regency, Bali Province. This approach was chosen to explore the meaning, understanding, and dynamics that occur in the implementation of initial reading activities, based on the direct experience of teachers, principals, and parents (Sanjaya, 2013).

The research setting was carried out at Bebandem State Kindergarten which is located at Jalan Kuncara Giri, Sibetan Village, Bebandem District, Karangasem Regency, Bali. This location was chosen because the school has implemented systematic early reading activities for group B children.

The data source consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained directly through interviews with school principals, group B teachers, and parents of students. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from school documentation, literature, and the results of relevant theoretical studies.

Data collection methods and instruments include interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews are conducted in a semi-structured manner with open interview guidelines to allow flexibility in digging into in-depth data. These interviews involve principals, teachers, and parents. Documentation is used to strengthen the findings of the interview through visual data such as activity photos, school profile documents, curriculum, and early reading learning tools (Firman, 2018).

Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman model which includes three main stages: (1) *data condensation*, namely the process of simplification and selection of relevant data; (2) *data presentation*, which is organizing data in the form of narrative descriptions so that it can be easily analyzed; and (3) *drawing conclusions*, which are carried out inductively based on field findings and verified during the research process (Miles & Huberman, 2014). Maintaining the validity of the data, the researcher uses source triangulation techniques and techniques. Triangulation is carried out by comparing data from various sources (principals,

teachers, and parents) and using various techniques (interviews, documentation, and observations) to ensure the validity of the findings (Miles & Huberman, 2014).

## 4. Results and Discussion

### Planning Initial Reading Activities

The planning of the initial reading activity at Bebandem State Kindergarten began with the implementation of In House Training (IHT) activities involving all teachers and principals. This activity is the first step to build a joint commitment in implementing the Independent Curriculum, especially in the beginning reading activities. IHT is focused on the preparation of the Educational Unit Operational Curriculum (KOSP), Learning Goal Flow (ATP), and Learning Outcomes (CP) according to the characteristics of early childhood. In this planning stage, a teaching module is also prepared which contains daily and weekly learning plans, including learning steps, objectives, assessments, and learning media. The teaching modules are designed so that children can learn in a fun and meaningful way through activities such as playing letter cards, singing alphabet songs, and getting to know letters through picture stories. Teachers are given training to develop creativity in teaching so that learning remains interesting and according to the needs of each child.

### Implementation of Initial Reading Activities

The implementation of the initial reading activity at Bebandem State Kindergarten prioritizes a play-while learning approach that is in accordance with the characteristics of early childhood. Children are invited to get to know letters through letter card games, alphabet songs, picture stories, and attractively designed thematic worksheets. This process starts from recognizing letter symbols, voicing letters, matching images with initial letters, to arranging letters into simple words. Teachers facilitate learning in a fun and conducive atmosphere by utilizing a circular sitting position so that children participate more actively.

Learning activities take place in two stages: pre-game and core. In the pre-game stage, the teacher introduces letter symbols and engages the child verbally. The core stage continues with activities such as picking up a random letter card, guessing the initial letter of the picture's name, or finding a missing letter in a particular word. The worksheets provided are tailored to the learning theme, for example, marking pictures with the same first letter. Informal evaluations are carried out at the end of the session through light questions and answers and giving appreciation such as stickers or compliments.

This implementation received a very positive response from the children. They seem enthusiastic, actively answer questions, and show improvement in letter recognition. The teacher stated that about 85% of the children had achieved their learning goals by the end of the session. However, some children still have difficulty concentrating and distinguishing letters, which is a challenge for teachers.

### Evaluation of Initial Reading Activities

The evaluation of early reading learning at Bebandem State Kindergarten is carried out through two main approaches, namely direct observation by the principal and assessment by classroom teachers. The observations made by the school principal include an assessment of the achievement of learning objectives, the effectiveness of the media and methods used, and the extent of children's involvement in the learning process (Sudjana & Rivai, 2001). This process is followed by a reflective discussion between the principal and the teacher to identify learning achievements and barriers, which are part of the professional learning culture in the school environment (Abdul Majid, 2014). Meanwhile, classroom teachers conduct formative assessments by observing children's responses to learning activities, including the ability to pronounce letters, match letters with pictures, and arrange letters into words (Muammar, 2020). The results of this assessment are the basis for mapping learning outcomes and determining follow-up interventions, such as providing guidance in small groups or individually for children who have not yet achieved competence (Sari et al., 2021). Evaluation not only serves as a measurement of children's learning outcomes, but also serves as an important reference in developing more adaptive and contextual learning strategies in the next learning cycle.

## Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

The success of the implementation of the initial reading activity at Bebandem State Kindergarten was supported by the synergy between the principal, teachers, and parents. School principals as driving teachers play an important role in facilitating teacher training, developing learning programs, and providing supporting facilities such as reading corners, big books, letter cards, and other learning media that are in accordance with the play-while learning approach (Kurniawati, 2021). Teachers show collaboration and high enthusiasm in carrying out learning designed with differentiation strategies and thematic approaches (Abdul Majid, 2014). Parents also have a great contribution in accompanying children at home, providing reading materials, and establishing intensive communication with teachers (Rislina & Khan, 2015). However, there are internal obstacles such as low motivation for children's learning and differences in individual abilities, as well as external obstacles such as too many students and lack of assistance at home due to time constraints (Yulinda Udhiyanasari, 2019). To overcome this, teachers identify children who are experiencing difficulties, provide special guidance, and actively involve parents in the learning process (Sari et al., 2021). This reinforces the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration in creating an effective and enjoyable learning environment for early childhood.

## 6. Conclusions

Based on the results of the description and discussion of the research, several important findings were obtained related to the implementation of initial reading activities at Bebandem State Kindergarten, Karangasem Regency, Bali Province. Activity planning begins with socialization through In House Training (IHT) activities to build a joint commitment and the preparation of a learning plan that suits the needs of students. The implementation of initial reading activities is effective through the use of learning media such as picture cards and letter cards combined with themed worksheets to improve children's ability to recognize letters. The evaluation of learning is carried out by the principal through observation, with the aim of assessing the effectiveness of activities and identifying aspects that need improvement. The success of learning is also supported by the involvement of parents and families in the child's learning process. In addition, the implementation of initial reading activities is influenced by internal factors such as intelligence, interests, talents, and motivation, as well as external factors such as the family, school, and community environment.

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