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Indonesian Early Childhood Teachers and their Lesson Plans

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Abstract. This study examined the quality of lesson plans developed by early childhood based on criteria set by the Ministry of Education regarding lesson plan components and their alignment. Document analysis was conducted using an observation table based on the guidelines of the Ministry of Education. The analysis comprised two stages: initial examination of lesson plan documents and content analysis. Close reading and thematic coding were performed to identify dominant themes and unique issues. The analysis revealed such issues as poorly formulated learning objectives, misalignment between objectives, activities, and assessments, and uneven development of literacy, numeracy, and arts compared to religious, moral, and identity learning outcomes. Only 1-2 sub-elements of the latter are addressed. Effective planning which aligns activities with learning objectives is crucial for holistic child development. Despite the objective of the in-service Teacher Professional Education Program to improve lesson plan quality, shortcomings still persist, indicating a need for improved teacher training.

Keywords: Effective lesson plans; lesson plans' alignment; Teacher Professional Program; Indonesian education

1. Introduction

Lesson plans play an important role in teaching and learning. Several studies have highlighted the significance of lesson plans for effective teaching, student learning, and classroom management (Iqbal et al., 2021; Sehweil et al., 2022). However, many teachers and preservice teachers encounter difficulties in creating high-quality lesson plans (Nurfitri et al., 2020; Nurtanto et al., 2021; Sahin-Taskin, 2017). In Indonesia, early childhood teachers face significant challenges in developing lesson plans, primarily due to the lack of clearly defined learning objectives. This issue is prevalent among teachers using the previous curriculum, K13. In 2022, the Ministry of Education introduced the new national curriculum, Kurikulum Merdeka (KM), allowing schools to choose between K13 and KM.

Kurikulum Merdeka pays considerable attention to the quality of lesson plans. The Ministry of Education recognizes that the majority of lesson plans developed by early childhood teachers lack clearly defined learning objectives, leading to potential inefficiencies in learning activities and assessments. This issue can be addressed by effective planning, which has been identified as one of the four key components crucial for ensuring quality learning, as outlined in the Norms, Procedures, and Criteria document developed by the Ministry of Education (Nurhasanah et al., 2022).

The emphasis on effective planning is also reflected in educational reports and accreditation criteria for early childhood institutions education. The Ministry of Education has established two minimum criteria for lesson plans to support effective learning. First, lesson plans must include such components as learning objectives, learning activities, and learning assessments. Second, these components must align with each other to ensure coherence and effectiveness. The Ministry of Education's support for effective planning is also integrated into teacher professional development programs. Two national teacher professional development programs, the in-service teacher professional education program and the tiered training program, emphasize effective planning as an important element of teacher competency. The curriculum of the tiered training program is currently being revised. Therefore, this study focuses on the in-service teacher professional education program. This research aims to examine the quality of lesson plans created by early childhood teachers who have participated in the in-service Teacher Professional Education Program (the literal name of the program in Indonesian is Pendidikan Profesi Guru – PPG). These teachers are graduates with a major in early childhood education. Most of them have more than two years of teaching experience and have passed the national selection process to participate in the PPG program. The research question guiding this study is: 'What is the quality of lesson plans developed by early childhood teachers who participated in the in-service PPG program?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Effective Lesson Plans

Effective teaching requires meticulous planning encompassing the understanding of the teaching purpose, content, and methodology to ensure optimal learning outcomes for students. Proper planning, including setting clear teaching objectives, selecting appropriate materials, engaging in diverse learning activities, employing effective teaching methods, and conducting thorough evaluations, is essential for successful teaching practices. Proper planning will benefit learners while improper planning often leads to chaotic classrooms. Poor planning results in poor quality programs. Planning is closely related to the quality of learning (Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren, 2017). Therefore, early childhood educators need to have effective planning skills.

Effective lesson planning begins with clear learning objectives (Farrel, 2002; Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren, 2017). It is supported by well-aligned learning activities and lesson plans (Hadiyanti et al., 2023; Nurhasanah et al., 2022; Rahardjo & Maryati, 2021). Good learning objectives state what children should

achieve and understand by the end of a learning period (Baume, 2009; Baume & Scanlon, 2018). The objectives must explicitly outline what students will learn, guide the selection of appropriate learning activities, provide directions during the learning process, and serve as a reference for teachers in evaluating what the students have learned. Some common errors in the development of learning objectives include being too specific, stating unrealistic learning outcomes, including too many verbs, using 'weak' verbs that can hinder effective assessment, and using unmeasurable indicators (Popenici and Millar, 2015).

After establishing learning objectives, teachers need to determine learning activities aimed at achieving the objectives. The activities should integrate appropriate materials, procedures, and various strategies to create learning outcomes. Additionally, teachers need to design the learning evaluation which provides information about student learning and guides future planning (Farrel, 2002; Iqbal et al., 2021; Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren, 2017; Sehweil et al., 2022). The Indonesian government has started to pay attention to lesson planning. The Norms, Procedures, and Criteria issued by the Directorate of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) stipulate that quality early childhood education consists of four service elements: the quality of the learning process, partnerships with parents, support for the fulfilment of essential early childhood services, and leadership and resource management. The first element, quality learning, is marked by four indicators: planning for an effective learning process, appropriate learning strategies for early childhood, learning content that aligns with the curriculum, and assessment to improve the quality of learning.

The explanation of the Norms, Procedures, and Criteria states that effective lesson planning indicates the relationship between the activities and the learning objectives, and includes forms of assessment to evaluate the achievement of these objectives. It is emphasized that an effective lesson plan must have three components: clear learning objectives, activities that are believed to help children achieve these objectives, and an assessment plan (Anggraena et al., 2022; Nurhasanah et al., 2022).

2.2. Indonesian Early Childhood Teachers and The Teacher Professional Development Program

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology oversees several units with specific functions and roles. Some of these include the Directorate General of Early Childhood, Primary, and Secondary Education which manages educational institutions; the Agency for Standards, Curriculum, and Educational Assessment which handles national curriculum issues, supporting books, and national assessments; and the Directorate General of Teachers and Educational Personnel which manages the quality of teachers and educational personnel (principals) nationwide.

Educational transformation in Indonesia places teachers as the primary target for quality improvement. To support the educational transformation, the Directorate General of Teachers and Educational Personnel (DGTEP) also performs transformation as outlined in the DGTEP Strategic Plan. DGTEP provides various

programs for teacher professional development. One of the programs considered important at the national level is the Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG).

The Teacher Professional Education Program is designed for teachers from early childhood to secondary levels. To encourage completion of the program, the Indonesian government provides monthly allowance for professional teachers who have completed the Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG) (Astiti et al., 2018; Nurhattati et al., 2020). Currently, the PPG offers two pathways: one for in-service early childhood teachers and one pathway for fresh graduates of education departments. Upon successful completion of the program, participants are recognized as certified professional teachers and become eligible to receive a monthly professional allowance from the government.

The learning journey of the in-service early childhood teachers in the PPG program comprises three main phases. The first phase was problem identification where teachers observed their students, gathered data from their classrooms, and analysed the primary issues present. The issues typically pertained to students' abilities, which were identified as priorities for development. Subsequently, these identified issues served as the foundation for defining the learning objectives of the lesson plans. For example, a teacher who understands that her 6-year-old students are experiencing difficulties in understanding number concept might set a learning objective 'children develop number senses'. The second phase of the learning journey was lesson plan development, which served as a continuation of the problem identification phase. In this stage, teachers drew upon insights from literature and discussions with fellow practitioners to identify various effective practices or solutions. These solutions were then integrated into the lesson plans as learning activities. Furthermore, the teachers also incorporated assessments into their lesson plans to measure students' progress and understanding. The third phase was the implementation of the lesson plans developed in the second section. In this phase, teachers used the lesson plans in their classrooms. They also assessed whether the learning objectives set forth in the lesson plans had been achieved and determined whether further enrichment was necessary in subsequent cycles. Overall, the teachers' learning experience spanned three months, covering all three phases.

At the end of the program, the teachers took a final examination. In the examination, they were required to create and implement one lesson plan in their classroom. The lesson plans are expected to reflect the knowledge and skills acquired by the teachers over the three-month in-service PPG program. The participants are declared to have passed the program if their scores are above 76. Participants who pass the PPG program will be certified as professional teachers and receive a monthly state allowance.

2.3. Current Early Childhood Education Curriculum in Indonesia

In 2021, the Ministry of Education and Culture initiated the Merdeka Curriculum, a new national curriculum which was piloted in selected schools across the nation. Unlike the previous curriculum, the Merdeka Curriculum specifies the learning

outcomes that children need to achieve by the end of their early childhood education period and requires early childhood education (PAUD) units to independently formulate their learning objectives.

Learning outcomes for early childhood education (PAUD) are referred to as Foundation Phase Learning Outcomes. Children should achieve three interrelated elements of learning outcomes at the end of their early childhood education. In practice, early childhood education (ECE) institutions need to formulate learning objectives and align them according to their services. For instance, an ECE institution providing services for children aged 3-4, 4-5, and 5-6 years old needs to formulate learning objectives and arrange them so that students achieve the learning outcomes specified in the national curriculum within the 3-year learning period (Anggraena et al., 2022; Hastasasi et al., 2022).

To facilitate the formulation and alignment of learning objectives, each learning outcome has some sub-elements. For example, the fundamentals of literacy, mathematics, science, technology, engineering, and arts have seven sub-elements. These sub-elements include "Children demonstrate curiosity through observation, exploration, and experimentation using their surrounding environment and media as learning resources to gain ideas about natural and social phenomena" and "Children demonstrate early abilities in using and engineering technology, as well as seeking information, ideas, and skills safely and responsibly." With these sub-elements, educational institutions can easily formulate and align learning objectives so that children attending the institutions can achieve the learning outcomes by the end of their educational journey. Here are the three learning outcome elements and their sub elements:

1. The first learning outcome is related to “Religious Values and Characters” stated as “Children understand the concept of the Almighty God, familiarize themselves with religious practices or beliefs, appreciate themselves, fellow human beings, and nature as a form of gratitude towards the Almighty God.” The elements of religious values and character aim to cultivate children who understand the concept of the Almighty God, familiarize themselves with religious practices or beliefs, appreciate themselves, fellow human beings, and nature as a form of gratitude towards the Almighty God upon completing their early childhood education.

   This element comprises 4 sub-elements that should be developed throughout the children’ learning in early childhood education. The four sub-elements are as follows:

   1.1 Children believe in the Almighty God, beginning to understand and practice the core teachings according to their religion and beliefs.
   1.2 Children actively participate in maintaining personal hygiene, health, and safety as a form of self-love and gratitude towards the Almighty God.
   1.3 Children respect fellow human beings with their differences and practice good and noble behaviour.
   1.4 Children appreciate nature by caring for it and showing affection for living creatures created by the Almighty God.

2. The second learning outcome is related to "identity," which is stated as "children recognize their own identity, are able to utilize motor functions, and possess emotional maturity and social skills to engage in learning environments."

   The identity element is aimed at developing children who are able to recognize their own identities, have a positive attitude towards their identity, can recognize and manage their emotions to build healthy social relationships, and develop motor functions so they can develop themselves.

   This element comprises 4 sub-elements developed throughout the early childhood education. These four sub-elements are as follows:

2.1 Children recognize, express, and manage their emotions and build healthy social relationships.

2.2 Children understand their identity formed by gender characteristics, religion, and socio-cultural aspects.

2.3 Children recognize and have positive behaviours towards their identity and role as part of the family, school, society, and Indonesian children, enabling them to adapt to the environment, rules, and norms.

2.4 Children use motor functions (gross, fine, and tactile motor skills) to explore and manipulate various objects and their surrounding environment as a form of self-development.

3. The third learning outcome is related to "Foundations of Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Arts" stated as "Children have basic literacy, mathematics, and science skills, and are able to utilize simple technology and engineering as well as and create and appreciate works of art" (Badan Standar, Kurikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan Kementerian Pendidikan, Riset, 2022a; Badan Standar, Kurikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan Kementerian Pendidikan, Riset dan Teknologi, 2022b).

   The element of foundational literacy, mathematics, science, technology, engineering, and arts is aimed at preparing children to master basic literacy, numeracy, and science and technology skills, and to produce and appreciate art. This element consists of 7 sub-elements which are developed throughout the early childhood education. These seven sub-elements are as follows:

3.1 Children recognize and understand various information, communicate feelings and thoughts orally, in writing, or using various media, and engage in conversations.

3.2 Children show interest, enthusiasm, and participate in pre-reading and pre-writing activities.

3.3 Children have the ability to express relationships between numbers in various ways (numerical awareness), identify patterns, recognize shapes and characteristics of objects that can be compared and measured, classify objects, and understand time through exploration and direct experience with concrete objects in the environment.

3.4 Children can state reasons, choices, or decisions, solve simple problems, and understand cause-and-effect relationships of a condition or situation influenced by natural laws.
3.5 Children demonstrate curiosity through observation, exploration, and experimentation using the surrounding environment and media as learning sources to obtain ideas about natural and social phenomena.
3.6 Children demonstrate initial abilities to use and engineer technology and to seek information, ideas, and skills safely and responsibly.
3.7 Children explore various artistic processes, express themselves, and appreciate works of art.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology has prepared various tools that can be utilized by educational institutions and classroom teachers to formulate learning objectives. In various formulations of learning objectives, the competency-based language is consistently used. For instance, to achieve the sub-element outcome "Children demonstrate curiosity through observation, exploration, and experimentation using their surrounding environment and media as learning resources to obtain ideas about natural and social phenomena", various learning objectives are formulated and arranged in sequence such as (1) Children show interest in various natural and artificial objects in their surroundings; (2) Children gather information about various natural and artificial objects that attract their interest; (3) Children communicate their knowledge about various natural and artificial objects they have learned; (4) Children show interest in various cultural objects (food, clothing, dance, handicrafts, etc.) in their surroundings; (5) Children gather information about various cultural objects that attract their interest; (6) Children communicate their knowledge about various cultural objects they have learned. These six learning objectives are aligned and developed into learning instructions with their respective learning durations. Learning objective one to three are the objectives children must achieve during their Kindergarten A (ages 4-5 years), while objective four to five are achieved when the children are in Kindergarten B (ages 5-6 years). With these learning objectives, institutions believe that at the end of the educational journey, children will have achieved the learning outcome of becoming curious individuals who can observe, explore, and experiment. They will have an understanding of the natural and social phenomena around them.

From this example, it is evident that the primary objective of learning is to develop children into curious individuals who can build their knowledge of interesting natural or social phenomena. The focus of learning may differ between institutions. However, the competency, which refers to the desire for joyful learning, observation, inquiry, exploration, and communication of knowledge, is similar/ the same among children attending different schools.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

Based on the research objectives, this study employed qualitative method. Qualitative method is characterized by rich, detailed descriptions of people, places, and conversations, which cannot be analysed using statistical methods.

This method focuses on obtaining rich meanings from data interpretation. It enables the researcher to address the research question 'What is the quality of lesson plans among early childhood teachers who participate in the in-service PPG program?' by closely examining the lesson plans. This method allows the researcher to generate themes while making notes during the examination. Qualitative researchers do not frame research questions by defining specific variables; instead, they design questions to explore topics in their full complexity and context. While the researchers develop a focus, they do not begin their research with predetermined hypotheses to test (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.2. Locale and Participants of the Study

Purposive sampling technique based on specific considerations was employed for selecting the participants. This aligns with the nature of qualitative research which does not aim to seek data representation for the purpose of generalizing the research findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The participants of this study were 20 teachers of early childhood education (PAUD) enrolled in the PPG program Batch 2 at Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana (UKSW). The 20 individuals obtained final exam scores ranging from 86 to 100. According to the assessment rubric, these scores represent the highest scores in the exam. The 20 participants were purposefully selected because this study aims to assess the quality of lesson plans developed by teachers who achieved the highest scores in the PPG program.

The validity of data in qualitative research is indicated by credibility and transferability. Credibility testing was conducted through prolonged engagement and the use of peer debriefing. The prolonged engagement allowed the researcher to develop an in depth understanding of the data. For peer debriefing, the researcher asked a colleague to review and ask questions about the result (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Furthermore, the data collection, data analysis, and the research context were clearly explained so that readers of this study can obtain a clear understanding and apply transferability if they wish to conduct similar research in different settings.

3.3. Research Instruments

For evaluating the quality of the lesson plans created by the in-service early childhood teachers who participated in the Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG), the researcher developed an observation table based on the two minimum criteria established by the Ministry of Education: the components of the lesson plans and their alignment. The observation table was adapted from Campbell and Evans (2000). The observation table was structured to identify (a) learning goals/instructional objectives, (b) learning activities linked to the objectives, and (c) learning assessments linked to the objectives.

3.4 Data collection process

This study presents findings from a document analysis of lesson plans created by in-service early childhood teachers who participated in the Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG) at the researcher's institution in 2023. A selection process is conducted annually to select teachers for the program, which is then administered by designated universities with teacher training departments.

Generally, there are three batches of participants each year. The program duration for each batch is approximately three months, with classes held six days a week. Each meeting comprises 7-unit hours, where 1 unit hour equals 50 minutes. The learning structure consists of 3-unit hours dedicated to online meetings with lecturers and 4-unit hours allocated for independent learning and tasks.

In this study, data were collected from PPG batch 2 conducted between September and December 2023. The researcher's institution did not participate in the first batch, and data from the third batch were not available at the time of this study. The data analysed in this study were obtained from the lesson plans submitted as part of the final examination. The final exam did not explicitly provide guidance on how to develop a lesson plan, nor does it prescribe a specific format. However, it is assumed that the participants, having completed the three-month program, possess an understanding of the minimum requirements for creating effective lesson plans. These requirements typically include the three main components: learning objectives, learning activities designed to support the achievement of the objectives, and assessments to evaluate students' progress toward meeting the objectives. It is expected that the three-month learning experience in the PPG program adequately prepares the teachers to fulfil these requirements. The lesson plans reflect the knowledge and skills acquired by the teachers in the three-month in-service PPG program.

In the second batch, 58 early childhood teachers were enrolled in the PPG program. However, not all 58 lesson plans submitted were included in the analysis. Only lesson plans that received a score higher than 86 from the examiner were selected for this study. According to the rubric used to assess various tasks throughout the program, scores between 86 and 100 represent the highest category. Out of the 58 lesson plans submitted, 20 (34.5%) were selected and analysed.

3.5. Data Analysis

Document analysis, a qualitative research technique, was employed to assess the quality of the lesson plans. According to Bailey (1994), document analysis is a systematic approach to identifying, analysing, and interpreting the content and context of the documents. Payne and Payne (2004) describe it as a methodical process for evaluating information in documents. This approach has been widely used in triangulation methods to combine various research techniques (Bowen, 2009; Kutsyuruba, 2023). In this study, the method involves systematically reviewing and interpreting both printed and electronic documents to obtain insights and draw conclusions about the subject under investigation. It allowed the researchers to study pre-existing texts and to address the challenges associated with other research methods.

In the first stage of data analysis, the researcher examined the lesson plan documents and made notes in columns (a), (b), and (c) of the observation table. In the second stage, the researcher conducted a content analysis to interpret the qualitative data (Bengtsson, 2016; Elo et al., 2014; Tunison, 2023). This analysis commenced with close reading and critical examination of the lesson components,

accompanied by thematic coding. Dominant themes or unique issues identified in this process are presented as the results of the analysis (Marín et al., 2018; Moira Maguire, 2014; Xu & Zammit, 2020).

4. Findings and Discussion

The findings from the analysis are presented in two major sections to address the research question 'What is the quality of lesson plans among early childhood teachers who participate in the in-service PPG program?" The first section discusses the lesson plan's components and the second section examines the alignment between each component.

4.1. The Lesson Plan Components

The results of data analysis indicate that all the examined lesson plans contain three important components: learning objectives, activities, and assessment plans. This indicates an improvement from previous concerns regarding the absence of "learning objectives" in many lesson plans. However, a more detailed examination reveals a significant issue concerning the planning of learning objectives. Specifically, the problem lies in the absence of competency-based language in the learning objectives. Instead, the objectives consist of descriptions of learning activities. For instance, if the learning activity was playing a puzzle, the teacher would write the learning objective as "the child can" followed by the "the activity" resulting in "the child can play a puzzle". The examples of learning objectives that exhibit this issue can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample of Learning Objectives from the Teachers' Lesson Plans

Subject number	Sample of learning objectives
Subject 1	"Children recognize and name butterflies as creatures created by God."
Subject 4	"Children can sort vegetables chopped by hand from those cuts with tools/knives."
Subject 7	"Children can make freshly squeezed orange juice" and "Children can arrange letter sticks to form the word 'orange' using playdough."
Subject 8	"Children can make *klepon** dough, "Children can shape the *klepon* dough into balls" "Children know how to cook *klepon*." Notes: **klepon* is an Indonesian traditional snack made from rice flour and filled with palm sugar.
Subject 10	"Children can solve a maze worksheet."
Subject 11	"Children can describe the taste of the freshly squeezed orange juice they made."

Subject 13	"Children can name the parts of a spinach plant and vegetables."
Subject 15	"Children can name the parts of a house."
Subject 17	"Children can use small stones, shells, and bottle caps as ornaments for pond creation"

As the examples indicate, most learning objectives are directly related to specific activities. Those type of learning objectives are problematic. For example, the objectives of Subject 8 in Table 1 regarding *klepon* do not show any competencies and thus, leave many critical questions. Why should children learn to make *klepon* dough? What makes *klepon* special? Why not other Indonesian snacks? What are the benefits for children mastering this skill? Should they be expected to make their own food in the future? Or are they meant to assist their parents in making and selling *klepon*?

Based on the review of various lesson plans, the formulation of learning objectives that directly mention activities is problematic. In the case of Subject 8, the learning objectives of making *klepon* dough and cooking *klepon* are intended to support the achievement of which learning outcomes? Making *klepon* dough could be aimed at supporting the competency of fine motor skills. However, this activity could also be used to achieve the competency of using simple technology in daily life. Additionally, making *klepon* could be aimed at fostering children's curiosity so that they can increase their knowledge about local culture.

In the example, the selected social topic are cultural objects such as food, clothing, and handicrafts. However, specific materials are not mentioned in the learning objectives. This accommodates the varying interests of children. For instance, one institution might be located in an area which has a diverse type of food; one of which could be *klepon*. However, there might be other traditional foods. Compared to the learning objectives "Children can make *klepon* dough," "Children can make the *klepon* dough into balls," and "Children know how to cook *klepon*", the learning objective "Children show their interest in various cultural objects (food, clothing, dance, handicrafts, etc.) in their surroundings" is better. This type of learning objectives is more relevant for building children's competencies. The competency developed is reflected by the objective "children demonstrate interest, curiosity, and the ability to obtain information/knowledge from cultural objects that pique their interest." Interest, curiosity, and the ability to obtain information constitute competencies that individuals need in their lives.

This finding has a significant implication for the way teachers deliver effective assessments. Learning objectives which are too specific and 'weak' (Popenici and Millar, 2015) shift the focus of assessments, from informing teachers about students' competency to merely completing the task. Teachers often feel obligated to compel students to engage in these activities in order to assess their learning.
In contrast, setting learning objectives using competency-based language would yield different outcomes. For example, the objective "children can present

information related to various traditional foods from their region" can be justified by arguing that the ability to present information is a crucial skill. By having the ability to present information, children can share knowledge with others, persuade others, and obtain various benefits. Therefore, teachers should be able to translate the learning outcomes outlined in the national curriculum into competency-based learning objectives (M'mboga Akala, 2021; Martinsone et al., 2022; Morcke et al., 2013).

4.2. The Alignment of the Lesson Plan

Even though all the lesson plans contain the three essential elements (the learning objectives, the learning activities, and the learning assessment), the finding shows that they lack of alignment. An effective lesson plan is characterized by learning activities that support the learning objective (Sehweil et al., 2022; Wijngaards-de Meij & Merx, 2018; Zhao et al., 2023). A further analysis of the lesson plans revealed several findings which are important for planning a more strategic teacher professional development program arrangement to improve the quality of teachers' planning.

As discussed earlier, there are three interrelated elements of learning outcomes that children need to achieve upon completing kindergarten. The first learning outcome is related to "religious values and characters," the second learning outcome relates to "identity," and the third learning outcome is related to "foundations of literacy, mathematics, science, technology, engineering, and arts." The early childhood education (ECE) institutions need to formulate learning objectives for each element of the learning outcome. The learning objectives outlined in lesson plans typically range from 5 to 10 items. Almost all of the participants consistently included several learning objectives from the three elements of learning outcomes. Only three participants did not fully articulate the learning objectives from all three elements: subject 9 only listed 4 learning objectives from the foundations of literacy, mathematics, science, technology, engineering, and arts; subjects 13 and 19 did not include learning objectives for the identity achievement element.

In discussing "the alignment conformity of the lesson plans", this finding will be presented based on three learning outcome elements stipulated in the national curriculum. These elements serve as foundational pillars guiding the educational journey of the students, encapsulating key areas essential for their holistic development. By examining the themes through these learning outcome elements, insights into the alignment and coherence of educational practices with curriculum objectives can be obtained. This approach enables a comprehensive exploration of how instructional plans conform to the overarching goals and standards outlined in the national curriculum. Through this analysis, the study sheds light on the effectiveness and strategic implications of educational planning in achieving desired learning outcomes.

4.2.1 The Alignment of Teacher's Lesson Plans based on Religious Values and Characters Learning Outcomes

The element of religious values and character outcome consists of four sub-elements. From those four sub-elements, the first sub-element "Children believe in the Almighty God, beginning to understand and practice the core teaching according to their religion and beliefs" is most commonly developed into learning objectives. Most lesson plans include the learning objective "children pray before and after activities." From the review, it is evident that the written learning objectives are not competency-based but activity-based. What competency is developed through the activity of praying? In relation to learning outcomes, the competency should be developed is so that children can practice the core teachings of their religion, in this case, praying. Thus, a more appropriate learning objective is "children develop a habit of praying before and after initiating an activity." Other learning objectives related to the introduction of religious practices and beliefs are "children can say Bismillah (in the name of Allah) and Alhamdulillah (thank God)", "children can respond to the teacher's greetings", and "children can participate in all provided play activities". Again, those objectives use the formula "children can" and "activities or actions".

In terms of alignment, teachers who set learning objectives related to religious practices such as the habit of praying are able to prepare learning activities that support the achievement of these objectives. Praying activities are performed before and after learning. Praying activities at the beginning and the end of learning are common practices in almost all early childhood education institutions in Indonesia.

Learning objectives that is also commonly developed in the first sub-element are "Children believe in the Almighty God." In lesson planning, this achievement is often pursued with the learning objective "children believe that x is the creation of Allah." X represents the topic being studied. Early childhood education in Indonesia employs a thematic approach rather than subject-based teaching. Typically, teachers will select specific topics to be studied over a certain period. For example, when teaching about fish, the teacher writes the learning objective "children believe that fish are the creation of God" (Subject 17). Another example, when teaching about apples, the teacher writes the learning objective "children believe that apples are the creation of God" (Subject 16).

An issue that arises is the misalignment of learning activities with these objectives. Almost all learning objectives related to 'believing in God' do not have supporting learning activities. These objectives are only achieved in the opening section. As previously discussed, an opening section also serves as an initial step to transition children into core activities. This initial step involves the teacher introducing the day's learning topic, which is selected based on the theme set by the teacher. For example, when discussing fish, the teacher will play a video about fish or bring fish into the classroom for observation. Then, the teacher usually engages in a question-and-answer session with the children about what they have learned from the video or the observation. These activities are supplemented with additional explanations from the teacher about the topic being studied. It is during this time that the teacher inserts the statement that "Fish are the creation of God."

At the end of the opening session, the teacher will ask the children, "who created the fish?" The children will respond in unison, "God" or "Allah." At this point, the teacher feels that the learning objective has been achieved.

The other sub-elements from the "religious values and character" outcome (sub-element 2, sub-element 3, and sub-element 4) are not extensively developed. From the 20 reviewed lesson plans, very few participants developed learning objectives to achieve the outcomes of those three sub-elements. Only 2 participants developed the objectives. Table 2 illustrates the establishment of learning objectives by these four participants along with the analysis of learning activities and assessments related to these objectives.

Table 2: Learning Objectives of Sub-elements 2, 3, and 4

Subject number	Learning Objectives	Learning Activities and Assessments
Subject 8	"Children know how to avoid hazardous objects" (sub-element 2)	<u>During the opening activity:</u> Teacher narrates various traditional foods. <u>In the core activity:</u> • Children are guided to make klepon dough. • Children are guided to cook klepon. The researcher's notes: These activities are conducted in the classroom, with the teacher providing a stove and a pot filled with water. The klepon dough is boiled. Children are expected to learn how to avoid hazardous objects such as hot water, pans and fire from the stove. <u>Assessment</u>: The teacher checks a checklist. In the child's name section, the teacher will tick if there are no hazardous incidents involving the child, such as touching the hot pan or stove.
Subject 10	"Children are capable of caring for and conserving plants" (sub-element 4)	There are no learning activities designed to facilitate the achievement of this objective in the lesson plan. Learning activities listed in the plan include: • Completing a maze worksheet. • Creating letters s, a, k using loose parts. • Drawing various fruits using finger painting • Planting fruit plants in the block area There is no assessment plan for this learning objective.

Subject 13	"Children can understand and actively participate in caring for and nurturing plants" (sub-element 4)	There are no learning activities designed to facilitate the achievement of this objective in the lesson plan. Learning activities listed in the plan include: • Watching a video about spinach plants. • Observing spinach leaves and discussing plants. • Picking spinach leaves and arranging them from smallest to largest. • Making spinach leaf eco-prints. • Arranging the word 'spinach' using spinach leaf stems. There is no assessment plan for this learning objective.
Subject 20	Children can demonstrate behavior of caring for fellow friends (sub-element 4)	During the opening activity: • Children are invited to watch a video "helping friends." • Children are invited to sing the song "I want to be your friend." • In the core activity: • Children are asked to write their friends' names on the laptop. There is no assessment designed to see if children have demonstrated behaviour of caring for fellow friends.

The data in Table 2 suggests some important points. First, there are no learning activities specifically designed to achieve the learning objectives in the sub-elements of religious and moral values. For example, subject 8 did not design any specific activities to help children achieve the competency of "recognizing and having the ability to avoid dangerous situations". Instead, she inserted 'advice' for children to be careful when cooking with fire and hot water.

Additionally, there are some efforts to facilitate learning activities to achieve learning objectives, but they are not effective. This can be seen from the lesson plan of subject 20. The learning objective states that children are expected to demonstrate the behaviour of caring for their peers. However, learning activities such as watching videos and singing songs about friends do not provide opportunities for children to demonstrate this behaviour. There are messages in the video and song about the importance of caring for friends. However, these do not align with the objective which states "children demonstrate behaviour of caring for friends". This objective requires active actions from children, not just instilling the concept of how to care for friends. Lastly, two teachers, subject 10 and 13, wrote learning objectives but did not include any activities to facilitate children in building the competencies and skills.

In developing the elements of religious and moral values, the competency most frequently built upon is the ability of children to engage in religious practices, particularly praying. The sub-elements of personal hygiene, health, and safety as a form of gratitude to God, appreciating differences in oneself and others, as well as caring for the environment as God's creation are not sufficiently developed in the lesson plans. It is expected that within 1-2 years of ECE service, the institution will build these competencies. These learning outcomes should be accommodated in a 1-year plan in the operational curriculum document of the educational institution. This document outlines the lesson plans for 1 year across all classes. In this document, all sub-elements of learning outcomes should be translated into learning objectives to be implemented by classroom teachers.

Classroom teachers should refer to the operational curriculum document in setting learning objectives for their classes. Further, if classroom teachers refer to the institution's learning objectives, they will be able to design learning activities that support the achievement of the objectives. From the discussion with subject 10 and 13, it was found that classroom teachers listed learning objectives but did not plan activities that could facilitate the development of these competencies. This should be considered in the development of various programs for teachers designed by the Indonesian Ministry of Education.

4.2.2 The Alignment of Teacher's Lesson Plans based on Identity Learning Outcomes

The element of identity learning outcome consists of four sub-elements. From those four sub-elements, the ones related to emotions and self-identity are rarely developed. Out of 20 participants, none set learning objectives supporting the achievement of the first sub-element "children recognize, express, and manage emotions," the second sub-element "understand their identity," and the third sub-element "recognize and have positive behaviours towards their identity." Conversely, the sub-element that is most developed is related to motor functions. More than half of the participants set learning objectives to develop children's motor skills. The motor functions include gross and fine motor skills.

Some teacher participants set learning objectives to develop children's gross motor skills. The development of gross motor skills is generally facilitated during the opening section. After prayers, greetings, and introductions, the teacher engages the children in movement. A common activity is singing children's songs accompanied by various body movements. For example, Subject 5 set the learning objective "children can follow movements according to the rhythm." In the opening session, Subject 5 planned movement activities and songs like "rotating hands" and jumping with both feet. Another example is Subject 7 who set the learning objective "children can imitate the movements and song 'planting seeds' with agility." Activities to support these objectives are conducted during the opening session. The same pattern was observed in Subject 10, who set the learning objective "Children can perform body movements while singing and dancing" and other lesson plans.

Some teacher participants choose to develop children's fine motor skills. The teachers facilitate children during the core activities, often combined with learning objectives aimed at fostering creativity. Teachers engage children in

creating artworks using various loose parts materials, and in the assessment, they evaluate both the children's fine motor skills and their artworks. For example, Subject 3 set the learning objective "Children can actively participate in activities that involve fine and tactile motor movements" and facilitate it by inviting children to create turmeric plants from loose parts materials. Another example, Subject 11, set the learning objective "Children can actively participate in fine motor activities" and facilitated it during core activities by inviting children to make collages.

In addition to the sub-elements related to adapting to the environment, norms, and rules, as well as the sub-element related to children's achievement of building healthy social relationships, it appears that these aspects have also been developed by the research participants. However, the lesson planning for these sub-elements exhibits similar characteristics to those discussed in the sub-elements of religious and moral values.

Firstly, the learning activities are generally developed through habituation, especially the learning objectives aimed at fostering discipline and responsibility in children. For instance, Subject 4 sets the learning objective "Children are able to take responsibility for tidying up the area after the activity is finished," which is achieved through habituation. Every time the core activity is completed and before the closing activity begins, children are encouraged to tidy up the toys they used earlier.

Secondly, the learning activities are generally not specifically facilitated during the lesson, but are expected to emerge as children engage throughout the day. For example, Subject 6 sets the learning objective "Children can follow or agree on rules together in the context of playing with friends." During the core learning activity, the teacher engages children in various traditional games. In these games, the teacher observes the children and assesses whether they can follow the rules of the game using a checklist instrument.

Sub-elements related to the identity learning outcome have been more evenly developed by the research participants. However, there are two issues similar to those of the learning outcomes in the elements of religious and moral values. Firstly, the learning objective statements are not competency-based but rather describe learning activities. For example, if a teacher intends to engage children in singing and moving together, the learning objective is written as "children can sing and move together." This leads to the following questions: Why do children need to sing and move together? What competency is developed? If the competency developed is for children to control their body movements, then the learning objective should be written as "children can control their body movements." Body movement control is a crucial skill for children to master because without good body control, they may move clumsily, potentially hindering their movement and even affecting their psychosocial health (Lorás Hávard, 2020; Rose et al., 2015; Viholainen et al., 2014). Learning objectives should focus on core competencies to develop rather than being activity-based. This approach offers teachers greater flexibility in designing learning activities.

Secondly, similar to the learning outcomes in the elements of religious and moral values, the learning outcomes in the self-identity element are often not facilitated in learning and assessment activities. Teachers set objectives, but they do not design learning activities, and they cannot develop effective measurement indicators. Only the sub-element related to the development of body movements seems to be facilitated. Conversely, competencies for building healthy social relationships and competencies for understanding and adhering to norms and rules are not carefully designed. Teachers assume that daily activities automatically develop these abilities. This contradicts the purpose of instructional planning, which is to design learning activities systematically (not spontaneously) to develop competencies and skills (Iqbal et al., 2021).

4.2.3 The Alignment of Teacher's Lesson Plans based on Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Arts Learning Outcome Element

As the document analysis revealed, this element has been well developed in the learning objectives. Learning activities in the core session are dedicated to achieving the learning objectives of this element. However, a similar issue persists. The writing of learning objectives does not indicate the competencies to be developed, but focuses on the activities to be carried out. Various examples can be seen from the lesson plans. Subject 9 writes "Children can role-play as fruit juice sellers." As discussed earlier, such learning objectives raise various critical questions. Why do children need to be able to role-play as fruit juice sellers? What competencies are developed through role-playing activities? Is it the competency in the first sub-element stating that children are able to express their ideas and thoughts? Or is it the competency in the fourth sub-element where children can state reasons or choices? Or the ability to solve problems? The competency to express ideas and thoughts is different from the competency to solve problems. If the teacher intends to develop the children's problem-solving skills through role-playing activities, the setting of the environment and materials prepared should be different.

On the other hand, writing detailed learning objectives which include methods and materials provides advantages in the alignment of the learning objectives. For example, the learning objective "Children are able to arrange 5 series of miniature apples from largest to smallest" (subject 16) mentions the materials to be used, as well as the method of carrying out the learning activities designed by the teacher. In this case, the learning objective is facilitated by learning activities. This differs from learning objectives in the elements of religious and moral values as well as self-identity. Many learning objectives are only written in the lesson planning document but the activities are not designed to facilitate children in achieving those objectives. Other examples include "Children can place objects into containers at specified distances" (subject 5); "Children can describe the taste of freshly squeezed orange juice they made" (subject 11); "Children can name the parts of plants and spinach" (subject 13); "Children can create a frame for a family photo according to their imagination" (subject 14); "Children can use small stones, shells, and bottle caps as decorations for the pond" (subject 17); "Children can play

typing letters on a laptop" (subject 19). The activities will align with the learning objectives.

The findings show that the teachers develop learning activities that do not support the learning objectives. The alignment between learning activities and the objectives is crucial. It is not enough for teachers to be able to provide a good learning experience (Stefani & Baum, 2016). Good learning means students having an enjoyable, stimulating, or inspiring learning experience. Good learning also means students having developed a wide range of competencies. This is more important than merely having enjoyable activities. Therefore, the alignment of each lesson plan's components is crucial. The misalignment nonconformity of the components makes the learning outcomes difficult to achieve and be assessed, leading to low-quality learning (Baume & Scanlon, 2018).

5. Conclusion

This research aims to examine the quality of lesson plans developed by early childhood teachers who participated in an in-service PPG program. The findings show that the lesson plans developed by the prospective professional teachers have quality issues.

Although various training sessions and tools have successfully encouraged teachers to include the three core components in their lesson plans, especially learning objectives, these learning objectives are still poorly formulated, which result in poor learning assessment. Secondly, there are many issues related to the alignment between learning objectives, learning activities, and learning assessments. Even though teachers have set learning objectives targeting some competencies, they do not design learning activities systematically to enable children to master the skills.

The findings of this study leave serious issues because low quality lesson plans might result in ineffective learning. Children have learning activities, but they do not effectively support the development of competencies. Therefore, the Indonesian government should improve its teacher training programs, specifically the PPG program. This professional program is important as teachers who pass the program will obtain professional certification and receive financial allowance from the government. The PPG program should be further developed to improve teachers' planning skills. The program should be able to improve teachers 'ability to design learning activities that align with the learning objectives. Teachers need to consider the implications of each learning objective. For each learning objective, teachers need to carefully choose activities for the learning process to provide children with an opportunity to master the competencies or skills targeted in the learning objectives.

6. References

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