

# FREE CURRICULUM THROUGH COMPASS BULOK GAME (LOCAL CULTURE) IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AT RA AMALIA DARMA SUNGGAL

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**Abstract:** "Free Curriculum" is an innovative educational approach that encourages the development of creativity, skills, and character of students. One interesting approach in implementing the "Free Curriculum" is the use of educational games, such as "Local Culture Compass," which aims to connect students with local cultural heritage while facilitating enjoyable learning. This research proposes to investigate the phenomenon of implementing the "Free Curriculum" through the "Local Culture Compass" game in the context of education. The aim of this research is to explore the impact of the "Local Culture Compass" game in integrating the principles of the "Free Curriculum" into learning. This research will explore the perceptions of students and teachers regarding their experiences in using this game. Data collection methods will involve classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis. The collected data will be analyzed using an interpretative approach to identify key patterns in learning and teaching experiences. The results of this research are expected to provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of the "Local Culture Compass" game in implementing the "Free Curriculum." Additionally, this research will also produce practical recommendations for the development and implementation of the "Free Curriculum" through game-based approaches in the context of local culture. Thus, this research has the potential to make a positive contribution to advancing innovative education in Indonesia and promoting the preservation of local cultural heritage in the learning process.

**Keywords:** Supporting, Inhibiting Factors, Pedagogic Competen, Islamic Education

## Introduction

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) plays a crucial role in shaping the holistic development foundation of children. ( One key element in early childhood education is the curriculum implemented. In recent years, the concept of "free education" has become a major focus in the educational landscape of Indonesia. The Free Curriculum prioritizes learning that grants freedom to children to explore, develop creativity, and learn through real-life experiences.

In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, it is crucial to integrate local cultural elements that can strengthen the identity and self-awareness of children. Local culture is a valuable heritage that can aid in character development, enhance pride in one's own culture, and foster an

understanding of the surrounding social and cultural environment. One method to integrate local culture is through games, which can serve as an engaging and interactive medium for early childhood learning. RA Amalia Darma has adopted the Merdeka Curriculum and strives to implement local cultural elements through the local cultural compass game. However, further research is needed to examine the phenomenon of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum through the local cultural compass game in early childhood at RA Amalia Darma.

The Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum concept that focuses on developing the potential and creativity of students and allows schools the freedom to organize learning according to local needs and culture. This curriculum enables schools to integrate local wisdom and cultural elements into the learning process, providing greater space for teachers and students to participate actively in the teaching-learning process. The phenomenon of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in early childhood education institutions (PAUD) is an interesting subject to research, especially in the context of using games as an effective and appealing teaching tool for young children.

Early childhood education is a crucial foundation in character building and the development of a child's potential. Young children have high capacities for thinking and imagination and are susceptible to influences from their surroundings, including local culture. Therefore, PAUD is an essential stage for introducing local wisdom and culture as part of forming a child's identity and understanding of their environment. Young children tend to be more enthusiastic and excited when learning through games. Games are fun and interactive, which can enhance learning motivation and develop various skills and abilities in children. In the context of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, games can be an appropriate means to introduce and integrate local cultural values.

Indeed, the competencies required for general teachers differ slightly from those needed by teachers at Early Childhood Education (ECE) institutions. The academic manuscript for Early Childhood Education Teacher Education (PG PAUD) highlights the comprehensive competencies of an ECE teacher, which include the ability to:

- a. Deeply understand children - Recognizing the unique characteristics and needs of each child to tailor educational approaches effectively.
- b. Master the profile of children's physical and psychological development - Having a solid grasp of the developmental stages of early childhood to ensure that teaching methods and interactions are age-appropriate and supportive of children's overall growth.
- c. Organize play activities that stimulate holistic development - Creating engaging and educational play scenarios that facilitate cognitive, social, and emotional development. Additionally, the ability to incorporate storytelling, singing, and exploration activities, collectively referred to as the "three bers" (in Indonesian, "bermain" for play, "bercerita" for storytelling, "bernyanyi" for singing, and "berkelana" for exploring), is crucial. These activities form the core learning model in early childhood education, emphasizing a

playful, narrative, exploratory, and musical approach to teaching that is both engaging and effective for young children's learning. (Rozana, S. et. Al, 2021)

These competencies are essential as they ensure that ECE teachers are equipped not only with knowledge of educational theories and methods but also with practical skills that cater to the holistic development of young children, making learning a dynamic and integral part of their early growth. Through this research, it is anticipated that the benefits, challenges, and developmental strategies needed to optimize the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum through the local cultural compass game can be identified. Additionally, the results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of learning approaches that are more aligned with the characteristics and needs of young children, while also promoting the recognition and appreciation of local culture in the midst of globalization.

Understanding the background of this issue, the study on the phenomenon of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum through the local cultural compass game at RA Amalia Darma is poised to offer valuable insights for the development of early childhood education. This approach is oriented towards enhancing local cultural values and fostering creativity in children. Such insights could prove crucial for educators and curriculum developers aiming to integrate more culturally relevant and engaging teaching methods that harness the potential of play-based learning while reinforcing cultural identity and innovative thinking among young learners.

## Literature Review

### A. The Merdeka Curriculum

#### 1. Defenition The Curriculum

The curriculum is a series of activities carefully designed based on standards where students can practice and become proficient in the knowledge and skills specific to their subjects (Yunita & Suryana, 2022). To ensure that every student has access to high-quality academic experiences, the curriculum serves as the ultimate guide for all educators on what is essential for the teaching and learning process. The organization, structure, and attention of the curriculum are all designed to enhance student teaching and learning. Objectives, techniques, resources, and evaluations necessary to promote efficient teaching and learning must be included in the curriculum. (Holifurrahman, 2020). Wafi (2017) outlines the role of the curriculum as a guideline for implementing the learning process as limited. In this approach, the curriculum is created to provide new opportunities for students that they can develop as part of their own personal growth. (Matsuroh, 2010; Alawiyah, 2013; Nugraha, 2022). This aligns with Mahrus's (2021) view that in designing teaching and learning activities and collecting, organizing, and assessing student progress, the curriculum is used as a work guide for instructors. Therefore, for the continuity of the learning process in educational institutions, the curriculum is a critical component

#### 2. Defenition of The Merdeka Curriculum

The "Merdeka Belajar" Curriculum is one of the innovative advancements in Indonesian education, aiming to maximize students' potential and learning interests. This curriculum is designed so that students can learn according to their interests and talents without feeling burdened by excessive academic demands. In this curriculum, learning content is optimized, providing ample time for students to understand concepts and develop competencies. Teachers also have the freedom to choose various learning tools, allowing for tailored teaching that meets the learning needs and interests of students. Projects aimed at strengthening the achievement of the Pancasila Student Profile are developed using a theme-based approach set by the government. These projects are not intended to achieve specific learning outcomes and are therefore not tied to any particular subject content.

### **B. The Essence of Play for Early Childhood**

Play is a fundamental principle in early childhood education, making it natural for play to be a mandatory method employed by teachers in early childhood learning. The advantages of this method include:

1. **Developmentally Appropriate:** It aligns with the developmental stage of children who need a medium to develop all aspects of their growth, including physical, cognitive, and emotional development.
2. **Encourages Learning Interest:** Play stimulates children's interest in learning. When children play, they often do not realize they are learning because their primary focus is on the enjoyment and engagement in play.

Play activities are always associated with games. Generally, games are tools used in play activities, making these activities highly engaging and memorable for children. However, as times change, play activities and games have become more sophisticated. In the past, children spent a lot of time playing with other children or friends using traditional games such as jump rope, hopscotch, marbles, plate breaking, rounders, hide and seek, congkak, playing in the river, and exploring gardens or fields. In contrast, children growing up in the era of globalization now prefer spending time alone using gadgets, leading them to be familiar with online games. These games are not only accessible to children aged six but also to those as young as three years old.

Jean Piaget stated that play is an activity that is repeated and brings joy or satisfaction to the individual. Mildred Parten viewed play as a means of socialization, providing opportunities for children to explore, discover, express feelings, create, and learn in an enjoyable manner. Additionally, play activities help children learn about themselves, their relationships with others, and the environment in which they live. Docker and Fleer further argue that play is essential for children, as it provides knowledge that develops their abilities. Play is a unique activity distinct from other activities such as learning and working, which are always done to achieve a specific end result. (Sujiono, Yuliani Nurani, 2013: 155)

In summary, play is a vital method in early childhood education, offering numerous benefits that support holistic development. Through play, children can engage in meaningful and

enjoyable learning experiences, fostering their growth and preparing them for future academic and social challenges.

### **C. Local Culture Compass Game (BULOK)**

The Local Culture Compass Game is a type of activity designed to engage participants, especially children and teenagers, in exploring and understanding the local culture and cultural heritage within their environment. This game aims to introduce values, traditions, stories, arts, and unique aspects of the local culture in an interactive and enjoyable way.

In the Local Culture Compass Game, participants are often given challenges or tasks that involve physical exploration, information gathering, and interaction with their surroundings. They might need to search for cultural artifacts, answer questions related to local stories, or engage in creative activities inspired by the local culture

### **Method**

This research is characterized as field research with a qualitative type that is rich in requirements and will produce descriptive data. (Bungin, 2001: 66) This study employs a qualitative research method because the tradition in social education fundamentally relies on the observation of humans, both in their personal selves and in interactions with others within a society.

In this study, the data analysis used was the Miles and Huberman model. The data analysis suite can be simplified to three stages as described (Miles and Huberman, 1992: 16-18) In the following Qualitative Data Analysis:

1. Data presentation, can be understood as a set of composed information that gives the possibility of drawing conclusions and taking action. The presentation of this data can be done in the form of tables, graphs, charts, and so on. But the most common is with narrative texts.
2. Data reduction is the process of selecting, focusing on simplifying, abstracting and transforming "rough" data that arises from written records in the field. When researchers start doing research will get a lot of data and vary and even very complicated. Therefore the data needs to be reduced.
3. Conclusion drawing (verification). Usually the conclusion formulated at the beginning is temporary, for which evidence must be found that corroborates it so that the conclusion can answer the formulation of the problem that has been compiled at the beginning.

### **Result and Discussion**

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the management and analysis of the data obtained from the conducted research. The researcher carried out the study using the methods and instruments defined in the previous chapter. The data were collected through observation and interviews as the primary methods of data collection.

The implementation of the educational media in the form of the Local Culture Compass (Kompas Bulok) has shown considerable improvement. This is evidenced by the data collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis.

## A. Result

From the observations, it was evident that children could focus better on the lessons provided through the Kompas Bulok learning media. Kompas Bulok made it easier for teachers to implement the lessons, and children found it easier to understand numeracy, literacy, and local cultural awareness. This was apparent from the active and interactive participation of children during the learning process. The children were quite enthusiastic when playing Kompas Bulok. Instilling local culture can better build a child's character. Noble character traits such as politeness, friendliness, cooperation, discipline, and adherence to rules need to be cultivated through consistent methods and examples from all educational elements in the school. The indicators for instilling local culture in early childhood are as follows:

1. Religious: Attitudes and behaviors that comply with their religious teachings, show tolerance for other religions, and live harmoniously with followers of other religions. Learning achievement indicators: a. Having a correct faith b. Performing correct worship c. Praying before and after learning sessions d. Relating learning material to the power of God Almighty
2. Honesty: Behavior aimed at making oneself always trustworthy in words, actions, and work. Learning achievement indicators: a. Reporting experimental results accurately b. Never cheating in tests c. Never lying in conversations d. Admitting mistakes e. Being open in giving evaluations to students
3. Tolerance: Attitudes and actions that appreciate differences in religion, ethnicity, and others' actions. Learning achievement indicators: a. Providing equal service to all students regardless of their background b. Offering support to children with special needs c. Working in groups with peers of different backgrounds d. Not imposing one's will or opinions on others e. Showing respect, politeness, and courtesy
4. Discipline: Actions that show orderly behavior and compliance with various rules. Learning achievement indicators: a. Arriving on time b. Participating in all learning activities c. Following learning activity procedures d. Completing assignments on time
5. Hard Work: Behavior that demonstrates earnest efforts to overcome learning challenges and complete tasks on time. Learning achievement indicators: a. Striving diligently to create a healthy competition spirit b. Challenging students to think critically c. Completing all assignments given by the teacher d. Finding solutions to encountered problems
6. Creativity: Thinking and doing something to produce new ways or results from existing resources. Learning achievement indicators: a. Creating learning situations that

- encourage creativity b. Assigning challenging tasks that stimulate creativity (projects, scientific works, etc.) c. Producing new, authentic works
7. Independence: Attitudes and behaviors that do not easily depend on others and complete tasks independently. Learning achievement indicators: a. Not expecting help from others during tests b. Completing assigned tasks independently c. Presenting completed tasks d. Motivating students to develop self-confidence
  8. Democracy: Thinking, behaving, and acting in a way that values equality of rights and obligations for oneself and others. Learning achievement indicators: a. Interactive and dialogical learning b. Active participation of all students during learning c. Respecting every student's opinion
  9. Curiosity: Attitudes and actions that continuously strive to know more about what they learn, see, and hear. Learning achievement indicators: a. Applying exploration and elaboration in learning b. Using educational media that stimulate curiosity c. Fostering a desire for research d. Having a broad perspective
  10. National Spirit: Thinking, acting, and having a perspective that places national interests above personal or group interests. Learning achievement indicators: a. Cooperating with friends from different ethnic backgrounds b. Relating learning material to events that foster nationalism and patriotism
  11. Love for the Homeland: Thinking, behaving, and acting in ways that show loyalty, care, and high appreciation for the nation's language, physical environment, society, culture, economy, and politics. Learning achievement indicators: a. Singing patriotic songs b. Discussing the nation's natural wealth, cultural heritage, and significant events c. Fostering a love for local products in learning d. Using local educational media and tools
  12. Appreciation for Achievement: Attitudes and actions that encourage oneself to produce something beneficial for society and acknowledge and respect others' achievements. Learning achievement indicators: a. Giving students opportunities to showcase their ideas, talents, and creations b. Praising students for well-completed tasks, brilliant ideas, or unique creations
  13. Friendliness/Communication: Actions that show pleasure in talking, socializing, and collaborating with others. Learning achievement indicators: a. Classroom arrangements that facilitate student interaction b. Group discussions to solve problems c. Providing guidance to students who need it d. Asking and answering questions politely e. Presenting task results verbally or in writing
  14. Peace-loving: Attitudes, words, and actions that make others feel happy and safe. Learning achievement indicators: a. Not mocking or speaking ill of others b. Cooperating and helping each other c. Creating a peaceful atmosphere in the school environment
  15. Responsibility: Attitudes and behaviors to perform duties and obligations that should be done, towards oneself, society, the environment, the country, and God Almighty. Learning achievement indicators: a. Always carrying out tasks according to rules/agreements b. Being accountable for all actions taken

## **B. Discussion**

In relation to the descriptive analysis conducted, this discussion will elaborate on the results of observations and interviews regarding the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum through the Kompas Bulok (Local Culture Compass) game for early childhood students at RA Amalia Darma Sunggal. The findings indicate that there is a deeper understanding of local culture among the children. The objective of instilling cultural values is to connect students with their local cultural heritage while facilitating enjoyable learning experiences.

As per the principles of early childhood learning in the book by Yuliani Nurani S, children learn from their environment and through their sensory experiences. Using the Kompas Bulok game as an example to instill cultural values is much easier for teachers compared to just storytelling. Additionally, children find it easier to memorize numbers and letters due to the appealing and colorful learning media, making it easier for them to comprehend.

According to Wahyuni (2020), learning through play is an activity for early childhood children that is done with joy, without coercion, but with patterns expected to foster beneficial development for the child. Play is also a means for children to channel their abundant energy and discover new things in an enjoyable way.

The Kompas Bulok game serves as a learning medium that significantly supports the success of the learning process. Through play, learning becomes more engaging and enjoyable. Information delivered orally is sometimes not fully understood by children, especially if the teacher is not skilled in clarifying the material. Thus, media acts as an aid to clarify the messages conveyed during the teaching-learning process.

With the presence of learning media, lessons attract the attention of students, thereby generating learning motivation. The benefits of this learning media include assisting teachers in conveying material more easily, making learning more interesting and varied, preventing children from feeling bored or weary, and enhancing learning achievements. Children learning with media find the process more efficient and aligned with learning objectives.

Reintroducing local culture can be effectively achieved through education, especially targeting early childhood education (PAUD) students. PAUD students are the best target group for educators and society to preserve and reintroduce our local culture, enabling them to understand and appreciate their local heritage.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the research conducted at RA Amalia Darma Sunggal on the Phenomenon of Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum through the Kompas Bulok (Local Culture Compass) Game for Early Childhood, it was found that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum through the Kompas Bulok game for early childhood can have a positive impact on the development of local cultural awareness and the development of children's character. Children find it easier to understand the material presented by the teacher.



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