

# Application Of Theory Of Zone Of Proximal Development (ZPD) In Group Learning Context In Early Childhood

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**Abstract.** Children are the next generation like future savings for both parents. In the golden age range, children must get maximum assistance so that all the potential that children have can develop optimally. Vygotsky with the theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) explains about learning models that prioritize social interaction activities between students and teachers and between students and peers during the process of learning activities to find problem solving. Learning with the group method requires good interaction among its members by using language development in conveying and receiving language as well as cognitive development to digest every opinion conveyed so that solutions can be collected for the problems being faced and their existence. in the process This activity also requires scaffolding in the form of full assistance given to children during the early stages of learning activities and then gradually reducing the intensity of the assistance until then the child is released to be able to take full responsibility for solving problems or assignments given by educators in their group. This study used a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through observation, interviews and documentation studies. The results of this study indicate that the use of ZPD theory in group learning activities is very helpful for early childhood to find solutions to problems because they are still in the early stages of learning activities which actually really need maximum affection and assistance in order to achieve learning goals and maximize the development of children's potential as a whole.

**Keywords:** ZPD Theory, Group Learning, Early Childhood

## 1 Introduction

Early childhood and their learning activities are the initial setting for the formation and development of the potential of the next generation related to the character and all the basic abilities that children have so that they can reach the future by seeing how their process is when they respond to a problem in their growth and development stage. To maximize the process of growth and development, early childhood needs guidance with a conducive learning atmosphere where learning activities take place in a calm, relaxed, orderly manner but children still actively participate in the teaching and learning process through positive interactions with teachers and peers.

Child development in the first years is very important and will determine the quality of children in the future. Children as individuals are different, unique, and have their own

characteristics according to their age stages. Therefore efforts to develop early childhood abilities should be carried out through fun activities or like a game even though in fact it is a learning activity so that children can comfortably carry out environmental exploration activities, discover new things, express feelings, be creative as they wish and children can also know yourself and with whom the child lives and the environment in which he lives.

The process of leaping children's progress at an extraordinary stage physically, emotionally and socially which must be addressed positively, meaning that as a teacher it is necessary to have a sense of responsibility when planning and making various activity programs for students. There is no type of education that can eliminate everything that has been formed since childhood, therefore it is very important that social education is well embedded from an early age. The child's personality is formed through a process of interaction with the environment, learning together and practicing together in a learning platform at school or in the child's environment.

The group learning model as a way of learning activities begins with the activity of dividing students into small groups to carry out joint activities in completing tasks that have been prepared by the teacher through cooperative techniques. In the process of working on it, group members are stimulated by the teacher to interact with one another. Lev Vygotsky argues that in learning activities children must have social relations with their environment, both with parents, educators and with their peers. Early childhood develops all potential and all aspects of ability through guidance from people who are skilled in their fields. Mental functioning and skills develop through direct social interaction with other humans and the natural surroundings with the help of various teaching aids that have been prepared by educators to facilitate children's concrete understanding of a problem.

Learning activities in early childhood education lay the foundation for children to develop various academic and non-academic potentials related to the formation of character, personality, physical abilities, social-emotional, spiritualism, cognitive, life skills/independence which will become a guide until children become adults in the future. All kinds of knowledge acquired is a guide for children to solve problems encountered in every step of their life which eventually becomes a permanent habit.

## **2 Theory and Method**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive correlation method. The research was conducted at RA Masyithoh 2 Sirau with 32 students during the study, 10 boys and 22 girls. Data collection was carried out by four teachers in each group in turn, so each teacher held the observed data for all children. The variables studied were learning behavior/enthusiasm for learning and the social emotional condition of children when working on group assignments. The teacher's main role is as an intermediary for the implementation of ZPD and scaffolding for children's learning activities as well as a team assessing program success. The scores collected from all teachers were then put together and became material for further discussion to be included in the research data.

### **3 Findings and Discussion**

#### **1.1 The concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**

Lev Vygotsky in his various theories focuses on the process of human interaction with the socio-cultural environment to gain knowledge and life experience. The development of the mindset and basis of early childhood cognitive learning is more influenced by the intensity of interaction with the environment and culture where the child lives and is raised to adulthood (Danoebroto: 2015 p. 194). When children carry out social interaction activities, it is certain that children will get new knowledge, no matter how big or small it affects the intellectual development of children. Zone Proximal Development was created by Vygotsky as a psychological way for educators and students to carry out the teaching and learning process with perspective relationship techniques through special instructions so that internalization occurs in the child. Children's abilities can be best improved if the child gets help from other people who are more skilled. Adults provide instructions, scaffolding, feedback, and finally collect an achievement node for students [1].

Vygotsky views that the social system is very important in the cognitive development of children. Parents, educators and peers interact with children and collaborate to develop an understanding or learning in a social context. Early childhood carries out learning activities with playing activities which are carried out repeatedly, step by step through supervision and fulfillment of infrastructure as well as small assistance from adults who function as experts by adjusting the level of child development tasks so that if the goals of the process learning can be achieved effectively and efficiently. To build children's abilities, use various actions that can be seen by children and adults around them as a stimulus to carry out activities in such a way that they can strengthen the strength to do work independently for all aspects of their development [2].

The idea of the closest development zone or ZPD that was coined by Vygotsky really reflects the level of complexity between the relationship between learning and development processes and the dynamics of the process of transferring expert assistance to students to find solutions in solving problems raised by educators or by the child's own thinking. This developmental period can be interpreted as a range that contains a series of processes or stages of early childhood skills in mastering science with a range from those that are specific or the child's closest environment to the widest range that is not limited to the ends [3]. The development zone for each child is different and changes along with the ongoing learning process. When at the beginning of learning the child gets help from the teacher it is possible for subsequent learning in the same activity program the intensity of the assistance will be reduced and may even not be given at all by the teacher because the child can carry out activities on his own unless the difficulty stage of the problem is increased again by the teacher then the assistance children still need. Even though children are active learners, and have a great curiosity about everything, with the right help children can learn more and this needs to be stimulated so that the learning process becomes more effective.

Vygotsky suggested that the assistance provided by experts to students was in the form of cues, encouragement/motivation and repeating the clarity of orders or problems so that various assessments would appear about the development of students ranging from knowledge, skills to hidden potentials that faintly emerged after the reduction of scaffolding. for children, thus the potential of children will also be monitored which must receive more attention. Gradually children will form their own understanding through the positive influence given by the teacher, namely by focusing children's attention on certain objects through an intense process of interaction between students and the teacher or with their peers in a small group. Learning

and thinking in doing something will be very helpful if it is done with an adult intermediary. Beginning with instructions and examples and full demonstration from adults, children gradually break away from dependence towards independence

In applying the ZPD theory, it is necessary to have scaffolding, namely assistance or support provided by adults/experts/teachers to children, especially when children will achieve learning abilities that have a higher level of difficulty than previous learning. The form of assistance provided can be in the form of instructions, short demonstrations, keywords, dialogues or direct conversations that contain the core material that will be worked on by the child. Due to the limited number of teachers, dialogue activities can be replaced with peers which will eventually get results which are knowledge reconstruction from the interaction process in the dialogue that is carried out. In essence, learning activities according to Vygotsky's theory still involve children in active learning in teacher mentoring and scaffolding, interaction with peers during cooperative activities. scaffolding according to children's abilities.

### **1.2 Definition of Group Learning**

A child's early life starts from the home environment with whoever is in the house is a member of it. Early childhood education is a level of education that starts from the age of 0-8 years where in this age range the child's growth and development process is still very wide ranging physically and psychologically so that it requires good guidance and methods so that in the future the child can become a superior person both physically and mentally. From this it can be ascertained that children are social beings who live wherever and whenever they need other people (zoon politicon). In order to live together in a child's environment, good social-emotional management is needed, but it is a pity that education at this time prioritizes cognitive abilities or intellectual intelligence and overrides the development of other abilities.

Collaborative activities are an example of applying social behavior in early childhood and this can be developed by learning in group work. Group work is a learning strategy carried out by two or more people for solving and solving certain problems and trying to achieve common goals. Group work can also be interpreted as a process of doing tasks where students are in a group which is a separate unit to achieve certain goals by working together and working together to solve the problems presented to be solved.

Group learning as a learning model in which students work together to achieve specific goals in completing tasks assigned by the teacher. This activity focuses on the interaction of members with one another. When the learning process takes place, group members are given the opportunity to express ideas and opinions about their observations of the problems presented, cooperate and interact with each other in small groups, think together.

The purpose of group study is to develop critical thinking in solving problems, develop communication and social skills, increase self-confidence in students' abilities and so that students can understand and respect other people, especially when arguing about problems in groups. Before carrying out group learning activities, the teacher manages the class by first arranging the classroom according to the activities to be carried out, then arranging tables and chairs as needed so that children feel comfortable and free when doing activities.

Things to consider when doing group study activities are; there is dependence between group members where joint efforts are made when the problem solving process is a determining factor for success. Even though the task is addressed on behalf of the group, the assignment of responsibilities to each group member is something that the teacher needs to prepare beforehand. And in order to be able to carry out good collaborative activities in groups, its members must be able to work in accordance with the division of tasks that have been received, observe and

know the environment, especially friends in the group, be able to adapt, be open and willing to accept and give opinions.

Basic guidelines in group study include; All group members are expected to be attentive and communicative active listeners, not belittling others, promising to respect each other's differences in completing assignments, willing to share responsibilities and earnestly carry out their responsibilities. Group learning activities are expected to be able to motivate learning enthusiasm between one friend and another, share information and knowledge, build reciprocal communication with discussions, lighten tasks because they are done together, and improve personality quality due to the growth of social traits during activities. Learning takes place.

When a person interacts with other people, a social relationship will be established between them. Among these social relations, good impacts emerge, such as helping and cooperating, although there are also negative impacts, such as the emergence of hostility and envy. The attitude of being ready to cooperate is very important for the social emotional development of children to develop the ability of early childhood collaboration in groups, teachers can use several ways, including by first telling about activities carried out by many people, it is better to do it with an interesting picture story book. The teacher introduces positive values that emerge during the activity, namely affection, mutual cooperation, sharing, open mindedness, helping each other or helping each other, and being serious when doing activities together.

Group learning activities have advantages including; can provide opportunities for students to communicate a problem openly, provide opportunities to carry out intensive investigations of a problem, can develop leadership talents, especially in leading discussion skills, allow teachers to pay attention to children as individuals and their needs, children can develop an attitude of tolerance, tepo seliro, tolerant and respecting the opinions of others when discussing. Weaknesses of group learning, among others; children who are not fluent in speaking cannot play an active role in discussion activities or are only listeners and the success rate of group work is also largely determined by the merits of the group leader in managing the opinions that arise in the discussion process [4].

### **1.3 Group work practice with the application of ZPD theory at RA Masyithoh 2 Sirau**

RA Masyithoh 2 Sirau is a special early childhood education institution that was founded in 1965. It is located in the Sirau Village area, Kemranjen District, Banyumas Regency, or to be precise, the southern tip of the Banyumas district bordering Cilacap Regency. The students who entered came from children in the Sirau village area and some from neighboring villages such as Nusamangir, Grujugan and Bajing Kroya. With the diversity of regional origins, the various characters and behavior patterns of the students also vary. To unite the mindset of children and try to train a sense of cooperation and train the social emotional development of students, group work methods are applied in teaching and learning activities.

Group study activities were chosen because the teacher assessed that children were getting bored with independent learning activities and the learning atmosphere did not seem conducive and to distract children and revive children's learning enthusiasm. Beginning with the distribution of groups consisting of 8 random children or random between boys and girls in one group. The teacher then explained the activities that would be carried out in stages and briefly. Each group is given a different task and later each task will be carried out by each group in turn. The activities carried out are; Assembling picture story puzzles, learning how to build a school, drawing a school atmosphere, grouping school tools according to their function.

In the process of doing the task, each group is accompanied by an educator whose job is to provide instructions or scaffolding for the group. The teacher observes each process of doing

the task while occasionally giving motivation to group members by recording in the observation sheet which contains indicators of achievement of abilities such as; intensity of interaction between group members, participation/activity of group members, mutual assistance activities, responsibility for completing tasks correctly.

#### **4 Conclusion**

From this activity, data was generated that applying the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development and scaffolding to group learning activities made children more enthusiastic about learning, children's social interaction continued even though group activities ended, quiet children interacted with code or directly performed work and increased sense of social emotional sensitivity of all students.

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