

Implementation of Early Childhood Education Standard in kindergarten: Case study in Semarang district, Central of Java, Indonesia

Lily Muliana Mustafa¹, Abdul Halim Masnan^{1*}, Amir Syamsudin²

Abstract--Ideally, kindergarten should be a wonderful and bright introduction before attending the real school as it sets the foundation for the rest of their education journey. The objective of Early Childhood Education National Standard is important as an instrument for principal to prepare a kindergarten with a good quality management. National Accreditation Board for Non-formal Education is responsible to ensure the criteria being obeyed. In this study, we explored the role and responsibility of implementing the ECE Standard in a rural part of Semarang City. Four principals and one government officers were interviewed for the purpose of this research. They are previously talented teachers with more than 20 years in the early year centers. The main barrier to the quality of management in the opinion of the officers interviewed was the insufficient information communications technology (ICT) practices in the center. This will impact the ICT knowledge of principals and teachers, therefore demotivated them to use ICT sources while managing kindergarten. Hence, ICT training and workshops should also be concentrated for accreditation requirement to enhance the knowledge and skills of ICT practices in the kindergarten.

Keywords: Childhood Education, Standard in kindergarten, Indonesia

I. Introduction

In the regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of Indonesia (MOEC), number 137, 2014 stated about Early Childhood Education National Standard (ECE Standard). This ECE standard policy generally providing guidelines for every kindergarten, public and private to fulfill the accreditation checklist and evaluation.

Early childhood education standard policies started practically in the year 2013. Purposely to improve the quality services in every kindergarten either urban or rural districts in Indonesia. Specifically, these policies determine the level of accreditation after evaluation process by the officer from the National Accreditation Board (MOEC, 2014).

Principal is a person who lead the kindergarten and managing every issue related with children development and service quality. They are the lynchpin of quality, providing the link between policy and practice (Moloney & Pettersen, 2017). The policy helps each center to determine the level of quality base on the eight standards quoted in the instruments. The standards consist of children development levels, content, process, assessment, educators, facilities, administration, and financial (MOEC, 2014). The instrument is used to obtain data related the eight standards which explained kindergarten condition under Non-formal Education Department. Evaluation instrument should be complete by the principal or supervisor who are

¹Early Childhood Education Department, Faculty of Human Development, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia.

²Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Corresponding email: *abdul.halim@fppm.upsi.edu.my

responsible towards managing the kindergarten. Appropriate and accurate information are required by the National Accreditation Board to ensure standards are satisfied.

Even though, quantitative data collection approaches have been widely used to explore the quality in a kindergarten or preschool, the respondents mostly from the parents' assessment and opinions (Suad Noor, A.T., 2017). Thus, this current study explored perception, experiences and attitudes among principals and government officer who involved directly in the kindergarten management. Findings from this study will provide information which could assist the management practices to implement appropriate strategies to improve the overall ECE (Early Childhood Education) standard quality.

II. Methodology

Study site and population

The study was conducted in the area of Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES), located in Gunung Pati, Semarang City, Central of Java, Indonesia. Most of its population belongs to the Javanese ethnic group, whose main economic activities are subsistence farming, small business, industrial and construction workers (Statistics Central of Semarang, 2016). There are only one public kindergarten and 48 private kindergarten in Gunung Pati, Semarang City.

At the time of data collection, the principals chosen are participants who consistent attended the ECE workshops in UNNES. Their kindergarten located in the Gunung Pati district. Four principals and one government officers were interviewed for the purpose of this research. They are previously talented educators with more than 20 years teaching in ECE centers and minimal five years in administration (Martin, 2019). Those experiences, applicable them to become a principal or head teachers in the kindergarten.

Study design and data collection

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), there are four data collection approaches in qualitative research: (a) observations which are utilized in obtaining open- ended data by observing participants, (b) interviews which are utilized in having an open- ended dialogue with participants, (c) documentation which can consist of public or official records, and (d) audio-visual materials which consist of photographs, videotapes, and/or other digital images. This descriptive qualitative study undertaken between February and April 2018 in the context of a study conducted in the same area of UNNES. UNNES is one of the public universities, which is consistently support the knowledge, skills and other needs which are related. Principal should be groom with knowledge and skills to ensure their centers produce a well-organized preschool system. Four kindergartens were selected into the study.

At each of the four centers, interviews involved with managers, represented by principals experienced more than 20 years in ECE environment. To qualify for participants in the study, the manager had experienced in administration at least five years. Meanwhile, the government officer, represented by supervisor from National Accreditation Board within the district area is the one who responsible to supervise the implementation of ECE standards in the selected centers.

Interviews with the principals were conducted in the respective private room for each kindergarten, whereby the government officers being interviewed in the district education office. Sessions ran for approximately 60 minutes with the principals and 35 minutes with the officer. The interviews were carried out in Indonesian and/ or English languages depending on the participants' preferences. All interviews were digitally recorded.

Interview guides were developed to explore the role and responsibility of implementing the ECE Standard in the rural part of Semarang City from the perspectives of both the principals and parents. The principals were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire focusing on (a) general perception of ECE standards in the study area, (b) roles of ECE standards

within the kindergarten management, (c) experiences with ECE standards implementation. The officer was asked about (d) perception towards principal's capability while implementing ECE standards in a kindergarten.

Transcription and data analysis

The full content of the interview recordings in the local language (Indonesian) was transcribed verbatim and translated into English. All transcripts were read for accuracy before the analysis. Data were coded separately according to the original research questions and the data collection guides. Data were coded using pre-defined themes based on the research questions and analyzed manually using a content data analysis method, which involved familiarization with data through reading and re-reading of transcripts and refining of themes by comparing codes with research questions (Patton, 2015). The headings used in the results and discussion sections of this paper reflect the codes used for the analysis.

Ethical approval and consent to participate

The study was approved by the Director of Institute of Post-Graduate Studies. Administrative approval to conduct the study was obtained from the board of directors of kindergarten. With participants' prior agreement, written informed consent was obtained prior to the interview. During transcription, names were replaced with codes to ensure anonymity and digital recordings were deleted once the transcription and translation had been completed and checked for quality (Harding, 2018).

III. Results

Five participants – four principals and one officer were interviewed. The demographics of the principals are provided in Table 1. Previously, principals had been trained in ECE curriculum program and skills to manage education center. Their minimal level of education is Diploma in Early Childhood Education or Diploma in Counselling. Two of the principals had been working as teacher for more than 20 years and become a principal for more than 10 years. Meanwhile, the other two had been involved in teaching small children since 15 years ago and responsible as a principal more than five years.

Predefined themes were coded around the four key topics in the topic guide: (a) general perception of ECE standards in the study area; (b) roles of ECE standards within the kindergarten management; (c) experiences with ECE standards implementation; (d) perception of officer's towards principal's implementation of ECE standards in a kindergarten management.

Table 1: Characteristics of principals included in the study (N=4)

Characteristics	Principal A	Principal B	Principal C	Principal D
Age	50	55	44	40
Education level	Diploma	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree
Years of experience as principal	12	15	7	6
Quantity of teachers and staff in center	10	12	8	6
Quantity of children in center	102	150	90	85

a. General perceptions of ECE standards among principals

When responding to the open-ended question about ECE standards, various benefits shared among the principals. Since the ECE standards being developed, Ministry of Education has been delivered the policy by officers who responsible for every district.

“As soon as I received the ECE standards, I started to act. We never let the grass grow under our feet!” [Principal A]

“ECE standards increase the sensitivity about administration and management in a kindergarten. We take every action with full responsibility.” [Principal B]

“Even though, this type of center only handles small children, but the existence of ECE institutions today is different compare the past. The government officer will make sure, we act according to the standards.” [Principal C]

“ECE standards help the principal, to achieve our mission and vision. Furthermore, we act through the advices from the officers”. [Principal D]

Principals were alert with the instructions given by ministry even though they did not fully understand the implementation process. The actions measured base on the principals capability to fulfill the standards. Each principal desired a kindergarten which offer children with an opportunity to learn and practice the essential social, emotional, problem-solving and study skills that will use throughout schooling. Additionally, as example in Australia, National Quality Framework focusing the children outcomes which included ECE standards considers development needs, interests and experiences of each child (Moloney & Pettersen, 2017). Therefore, even a kindergarten has a perfect curriculum module, managing the curriculum activities indeed significant to ensure the learning arrangement and outcome results are satisfied.

b. Role of ECE standards within kindergarten management

All principals agreed that ECE standards establish rules and regulations to guide principals, teachers and supporting staff while managing center. Having these policies in place means there are indicated procedures for how kindergarten operated. Moloney & Pettersen (2017) agreed that policy determines to a large extent the knowledge and skills required of a principal, as well as the principal’s role and responsibilities.

“ECE standards help define rules, regulations, procedures and protocols for kindergartens. These are necessary to help a center run smoothly and safely, as well as ensure that children receive a quality education.” [Principal A]

“The role of ECE standards to create standards of quality education for learning and safety, along with expectations and accountability.” [Principal B]

“Ultimately, ECE standard is necessary for a good quality and successful of a school.” [Principal C]

“Managers, teachers, staff members and children deserve to feel physically and psychologically secure and safe within the kindergarten environment. Therefore, ECE standards provide guidelines for a quality management team to set goals and establish productivity.” [Principal D]

Each respondent admitted the outcome results may relate with the quality standard of kindergarten management, followed by quality of education deliver by teachers to the children. Indeed, the children may receive the holistic education development.

c. Experiences with ECE standards implementation

Response regarding the experiences with ECE standards were positive. In the private session, principal said that they had good interactions with the teachers and staff during meeting and discussion of kindergarten management.

“I have known the ECE standards in the Ministry of Education official website. In the same week, I invite all staff for a meeting, together we divide tasks and making decisions together, to implement the ECE standards.” [Principal A]

However, there were also some negative experiences. Principal B mentioned that information about ECE standards should not only provided through online website of Ministry of Education, but introducing the new policy during the monthly meeting of principals according district area.

“Implementation of ECE standards officially delivered through website Ministry of Education. Although, the policy efficiently posted in the website but not all principals read and take action immediately. Anyway, my teachers and I has given full commitment together towards the process of implementation. ” [Principal B]

“Were you given any explanation about the benefits of ECE standards?” [interviewer]

“No, I was only received the document standards by online and instantly download, for reading and understanding the process of implementation in kindergarten. This is base on my own initiative.”

Others complained of long waiting for the officer’s visit, and mentioned that these delays influenced their action towards ECE standards. Furthermore, a kindergarten which operating far from the urban area, is higher possibility to accept delay important information especially if they had no computer in the center or their home.

“This (waiting time) makes it a bit difficult because I live far away from the district education department. Although distance is the barrier, we still manage to give co-operation towards the standards implementation. ”[Principal C]

“Sometimes, once a year, education officer may come and consult our kindergarten management system. So, during the moment, we sit together with teachers and the education officer for setting up a workshop to fulfill the process of policy. ”[Principal D]

Consequently, these actions may present the commitment of principals and teachers towards implementation of ECE standards. Moloney & Pettersen (2017) and Hearron & Hildebrand (2011) proved that any individual who assumes the management role in a kindergarten should bring together theory, research, experience, application and knowledge, which underpin management. The spirit of team work being build up in the kindergarten creates beneficial for children milestone development.

d. Perception of principal’s responsibility towards ECE standards

Moloney & Petersen (2017) written in the Early Childhood Education Management regarding working in management is not designed for everybody. Since some people expected that the job as principal is going to be very pressure and stressful. Although three out of four principals did not realize earlier the ECE standards instrument, the officers from education department stated that each kindergarten given duration of time to implement the standards. Officers commented the effect of principals slow in action for practicing the standards may not fulfill the quality demanded by the government.

“Officially, the ECE standards will distribute in the Ministry of Education website. The action taken by the principal gives impact towards the kindergarten management. It is like a step by step instructions on how the manager should perform their duties to produce. The instrument is designed similar to checklist for the principal’s guideline.”

The officers recognized that in most cases, ECE standards being deliver without explanation because of insufficient officers to monitor all kindergartens in the period of time. As clarify before, the total of kindergarten in the Gunung Pati district is 48, meanwhile there are only two supervisors monitoring every aspect of quality. The ratio is likely one supervisor should monitor 24 kindergarten. In addition, the work load of officers do not only monitoring kindergartens, as well as include other ECE institutions for small children, from birth until four years old. Hence, using technology to monitor is very efficient and effective.

Moloney & Pettersen, (2017) and Griffin, (2005) mentioned that within the ECE institution, the one person accountable and responsible for the outcomes is the manager or principal. Principals responsible to make proactive action by reporting their progress management by electronic mail or set up a video call to avoid any lacking information regarding the implementation standards before the officers instructed them.

IV. Discussion

This qualitative study investigating perceptions and opinions of key informant groups (principals and government officer) in the Gunung Pati districts that should prove valuable for delivering strategies within the implementation standards in the kindergarten. The first research question related with the quality of principal to lead and act actively in a kindergarten, that help to create dynamic environment. Principals proactively acted when instructions from the government given for the benefits of children milestone development and teachers' performance. In addition, the four principals had experienced more than 20 years in ECE institutions. Principals knew how to guide the teachers and motivated them to implement together the ECE standards. Our findings support with the study by Chatib (2013) revealed that teachers must always try to improve their quality.

Although the checklists standard has been completed, principals need to monitor consistently until end of the year. Therefore, quality of management will produce quality education for children needs. Other scholars also stated ensuring quality is the main factor for a principal to put high effort towards managing kindergarten, such as Moloney & Pettersen (2017). They both proved the most important aspect of management functions as an ECE manager is quality assurance. In addition, other research also shown that early educational experiences make a difference; there exists substantial empirical evidence of the value of high-quality educational programs for children before their kindergarten years (Narot, 2019; Walker et al. 2011; Duncan et al. 2010; Bornstein et al. 2010)

In this study, principals worked hard to explain the importance of early learning to the parents, hence every child have chances and equal of education. Principals who are constantly dedicating their full energy to the children will deliver high commitment towards the ECE standards. The previous study by Bustan, Mailani & Bukti (2020), discovered that teachers who teach in the selected kindergarten have a high commitment, it can be seen from their persistence in teaching there for years even though there are some people whose homes are far from school.

The main barrier to the effective management in the opinion of the officers interviewed was the insufficient technology practices in the center. This finding is consistent with reports from another study whereby teachers' practices have positively changed because of using ICTs and the training programme improve the quality of their ICT practices (Ihmeideh, F. & Al-Maadadi, F., 2018).

Hence, an important function of the principal is to build consensus within the staff. Building consensus about issues is equally important because staff are often very focused on their job territory and fail to pay enough attention to changes related to policy, human resources, work ethics etc. This consensus assists in bridging any potential communication gaps occur (Moloney & Pettersen, 2017).

V. Conclusions

Although insufficient facilities may affect the kindergarten's management, but principals always prepare for alternative solutions to deliver the development of children milestone towards parents (Nadaraj, 2014). The relationship between principals and parents during kindergarten event was very valuable to increase good communication and meet the parents' expectation of children's performance. In order the team to work effectively, it is essential for a principal to develop a strong

culture within the organization (Moloney & Pettersen, 2017; Griffin, 2005). Hence, the kindergarten will be more dynamic and effective. Similar findings were found in the Canadian schools, the effective schools are composed of principal and teachers, that will meet regularly to discuss issues in their school (Yin, 2005).

REFERENCES

- [1] Bustan, R., Mailani, L., & Mukti, Y. Understanding of Teachers Related to the Application of Character Values in Children of Kindergarten Age.
- [2] Bornstein, M.H., Hahn, C.S., & Haynes, O.M. (2010). Social competence, externalizing, and internalizing behavioral adjustment from early childhood through early adolescence: Developmental cascades. *Development and psychopathology*, 22(4), 717-735.
- [3] Chatib, M. (2013). *Gurunya Manusia*. Bandung: Kaifa Mizan Pustaka.
- [4] Duncan, G.J., Ziol-Guest, K.M., & Kalil, A. (2010). Early-childhood poverty and adult attainment, behavior, and health. *Child development*, 81(1), 306-325.
- [5] Griffin, R.W. (2005). *Management*. 8th edn. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- [6] Harding, J. (2018). *Qualitative data analysis: From start to finish*. SAGE Publications Limited. Hearron, P., & Hildebrand, V. (2011). *Management of Child Development Centers*. New York: Pearson.
- [7] Ihmeideh, Fathi & Al-Maadadi, Fatima. (2018). Towards Improving Kindergarten Teachers' Practices Regarding the Integration of ICT into Early Years Settings. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*. 27. 65–78. 10.1007/s40299-017-0366-x.
- [8] Martin, M. (2019). THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS. *Asian Journal of Assessment in Teaching and Learning*, 9(1), 44-56.
- [9] Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- [10] Ministry of Education and Culture. (2014). *Badan Akreditasi Nasional Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini dan Pendidikan Nonformal (BAN PAUD dan PNF), Kisi-Kisi Instrumen Akreditasi Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini (PAUD)*
- [11] Moloney, M. & Pettersen, J. (2017). *Early Childhood Education Management: Insights into business practice and leadership*. New York: Routledge Research in Early Childhood Education.
- [12] Nadaraj, S. (2014). Assessing Students Socialization Processes through Hidden Curriculum in Schools. *Asian Journal of Assessment in Teaching and Learning*, 4, 1-18.
- [13] Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice*. 4th Edition. Sage publications.
- [14] Suad Noor, A.T. (2017). *A Comparative Study about Early Childhood Teachers' Preparation and Role in England and Kuwait*, Durham theses, Durham University. Available at Durham E-Theses Online: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/12067/>
- [15] Walker, S.P., Wachs, T.D., Grantham-McGregor, S., Black, M.M., Nelson, C.A., Huffman, S.L., & Gardner, J.M. (2011). Inequality in early childhood: risk and protective factors for early child development. *The lancet*, 378(9799), 1325-1338
- [16] Yin, R.K. (2005). *Introducing the World of Education: A Case Study Reader*. COSMOS Corporation, Sage Publications.