

Indonesian Government Efforts to Improve Early Childhood Education: A Balanced Quality Perspective

Feri Faila Sufa** M. Hery Yuli Setiawan, Oka Irmade

Abstract: *Early childhood education (ECE) is considered to be essential and strategic in the process of human resource development. It has precisely identical terms in Indonesian perspective. Based on the strategic plan for early childhood education and education community, it is necessary to increase ECE's access which needs to be balanced with its quality. The purpose of this study is to find out how the efforts made by the government to improve the quality of ECE. A qualitative approach is carried out using interviews, observation and documentation in Solo Raya area to see how ECE institutions improve their quality. The results show that in gaining the quality of the institution, it was conducted through internal and external ways. ECE's internal quality development was done through quality mapping by the education office. In addition, the external quality improvement was taken by meeting the standard from National Accreditation Council for Early Childhood Education and Non-formal Education.*

Keywords: *Education Quality, Early Childhood Education, Government roles.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Human growth and development occur very rapidly at an early age. Early childhood is explained in the national education system Law No.20 of 2003, and Ministerial Regulation number 137 of 2014 that children are stated to be at an early age by the age of 0 to 6 years. At this age, there is a very fast growth and development in aspects of physical, language, cognition, social emotion and language. Montessori called this period as a golden period or a sensitive period. The international world has agreed on the need for Early Childhood Education or Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini (PAUD). This agreement was written on the Education for All Commitment (Thailand 1990), the Declaration of Dakar Senegal (2000) and the World Fit for Children Commitment (New York 2002). Moreover, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, approved by the United Nations General Assembly (20 November 1989), has also agreed to the principles of children's rights, namely non-discrimination, the best interests of children, the right to life, survival and development and respect for the opinions of children. They are the future and valuable assets for a country.[1]

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Schools and families are to be very sensitive to give influence on the early childhood environment.[2] Indonesia is also committed to early childhood education, with the inclusion of it as becoming part of the national education system. Amendment to the 1945 Constitution article 28 b which states: "Every child has the right to survive, growth and development and entitled to be protected from violence and discrimination". Law No. 20/2003 also complements Law No. 23/2002 on Child Protection. Moss and Pence's perspective (1994) saw quality as a relative concept and not added objective reality. Quality reflects on value, trust, needs and agenda, influence and decision of authority. Carr (1993) stated that the quality for those who are not educators like politicians, economists, and business people, tend to interpret and evaluate quality of teaching not related to the education process. At this perspective, education is seen as something that can serve national interests, the economic needs of society or labor market demands. Then, the quality in teaching will be established, without applying teaching criteria as an educational process, but based on criteria which focus on the effectiveness of teaching for impure purposes educate".[3]

Indonesian's goal to achieve a Golden generation in 100 years of independence needs to be started from early childhood education. It is not only ECE's access that needs to be a concern of the government but also its quality as well. The spirit of establishing dynamic ECE institutions needs to be balanced with the spirit of improving the quality or quality themselves in accordance with the standards of the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia number 137 of 2014 concerning national standards for ECE education. Therefore, the Ministry of Education and Culture which handles the ECE program is expected to be able to foster, facilitate and increase its capacity in order to cope with educational standards on its implementation leading to controlled and guaranteed quality. In line with the stages of development in the National Long-Term Development Plan 2005-2025, it is set a breadth and equality of access to ECE's quality, gender equality, and education-oriented for sustainable development (ESD) and global citizenship in all provinces, districts and cities. One of the easiest way to find out the quality of an education unit is by looking at the accreditation of an institution. It is the activity of feasibility program on assessment in an education unit based on predetermined criteria. The government conducts accreditation to ensure the quality of educational institutions to be maintained.[4]

The implementation of early childhood education (ECE) has a major contribution in the development of children. In the last decade, the government has put much attention to ECE. On the other hand, there are still many problems related to the management of ECE institutions, including (1) Irrelevant teachers' educational background (2) Inadequate facilities and infrastructure (3) Improper building used by ECE institutions to have learning process (4) Poor management in most ECE institutions. ECE teachers are still found concurrently to be headmasters and the board director of its foundation at once. There is no clear standards in ECE management. It is very crucial for the government to give more concern on the related problems as mentioned above to come with solutions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The quality of education rarely becomes the subject of discussion in a variety of writings. Moss and Pence (1994) and Casassus (1999) explain that quality is the solution to various educational problems. When discussing an education quality, it seems that it always refers to the judgments about content education (what is taught) and

collected from specific theories and defined paradigms. Therefore, it is necessary to create a common perception to apply quality in educational practice. The quality of education also focuses on aspects involving professional teachers and policy makers, and users (stakeholders) such as the community, parents and students.[5] The demand about quality are asked by Carnegie Commission (1968) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO) symposium (Beeby 1969) tells about the analysis on problems regarding to quality that originates on basic education around the world. The lack of data about problems leads to the cost of education and its evaluation. The study of quality began to expand at the positivist rationalism.

Woodhead (1996) uses integrated approach to the quality which is relative, not absolute and focused on children's education. Complex human systems that involve many individuals and groups have a close impact on quality criteria related to beliefs about goals and functions. Similarly, Casassus (1999) recognizes that the concept of quality has a historical nature and social construction as dimensions that can help measure and evaluate. Analysis of quality criteria in research shows that the factors that have the most influence and impact on early childhood education are as follows. [6] Parents contributions to ensure education consistency at home and at school. 2). Interaction quality between adults and children in emotionally and cognitive connection. 3) Clear and relevant educational objectives as needed by all participants. 4). Supervision and evaluation system for children's learning program. 5). Adequate and organized physical space with access to explore along with the importance of teacher and community creativity rather than sophisticated and expensive ready-made goods. 6). Stable routines, such as food needs, hygiene, etc. but not monotonous. 7). Ongoing training using adult learning methodology. 8). Children actively take roles through play.

Woodhead (1996) suggest three things related to quality: (1). Entry indicators, as a basis for set quality standards. including the building and its surroundings, materials and equipment (furniture, games equipment, teaching and learning materials, audiovisual equipment, etc.); and resource teams (qualifications, basic experience, salary and conditions, child-adult ratio, etc.). (2) Process indicators, reflect on what is happening daily. Some examples: caring styles, children's experiences, teaching and learning approaches, approaches to control and handle the children, relationships between adults, parents, homeroom teacher and others. (3) External indicator is an impact of experience gained from processes that include (a) children's health by monitoring their growth and health. (b) Children's skills which include psychomotor, language, cognitive, social, introductory aspects of mathematics, reading and writing. (c) adjusting children to school life. (d) family attitudes that support children's learning and parental competence, etc.[7]

III. METHOD

Qualitative approach was used in this research. The study was conducted in Solo and surrounding areas. Researchers gained the data related to the implementation of quality management and quality assurance programs through interviews with principals, teachers and from the government, observations at institutions, and review documents' quality. The next step is to conduct a Forum Group Discussion (FGD) correlated to the results obtained from observations and to explore data that has not been found yet. The FGD was done by inviting all related

research participants to sit together and having round table discussion .It was conducted to check or confirm perceptions made by researchers. To analyze the data, it applied qualitative data analysis interaction model.[8]

IV. RESULTS AND FINDING

The quality of ECE becomes the government's priority after its access has been given where at least every village/ sub district has the institution. Its quality standards include 8 standards. (1) Child Development Achievement Standards as a graduate competency standard from ECE institutions. (2) Content standards in field of curriculum development standards through themes and sub themes (3) process standards include planning, implementation, evaluation and supervision. (4) assessment standard as the process and learning outcomes. (5) educators, education staff standards and professionals in charge with planning, implementing and assessing learning outcomes. (6) infrastructure standard as an equipment in the management of education related to the implementation of education. (7) Management standards as implementation standards for content, processes, educators and education personnel, facilities and infrastructure and financing. (8) Financing standards include the educational funding component. consisting of educational operational costs and children's personal costs. [9]

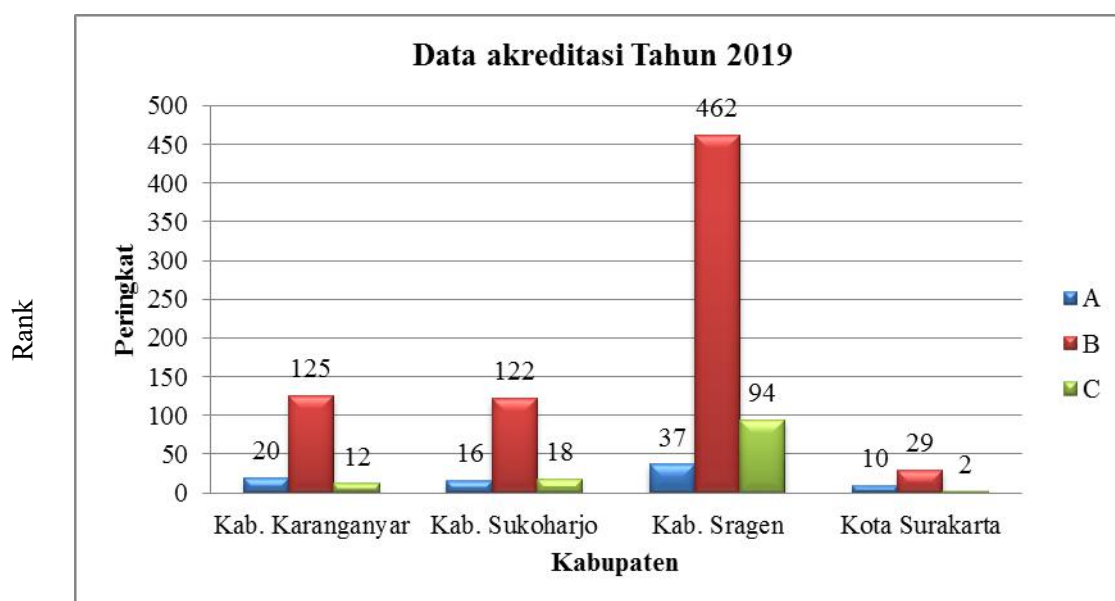
Table 1

National Standard Department of PAUD

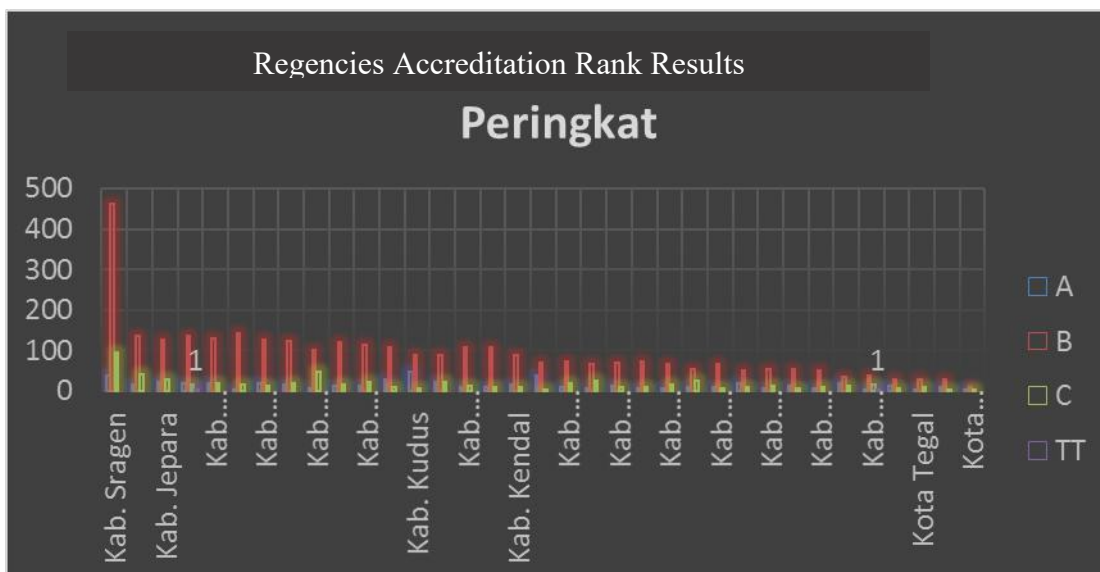
1	Child Development Achievement Standards	Discussing the growth and development of children, including safety and health behavior based on age levels from three months to six years.
2	Content standards	The curriculum used by the institution includes the characteristics of institutions that are superior compared to other institutions.
3	Process standard	Involving on how the institution prepares learning plans in one year, each semester, weekly and daily.
4	Assessment standard	Appraisal standards explain how the institution compiles assessments and how appraisal results can be utilized by various parties
5	The standards of educators and education staff	Regulating the infrastructure is used to stimulate various aspects of development needed by children, both artificial and made by the teacher. It is sufficient to adjust the child's learning group
6	The standard of infrastructure	Regulate the infrastructure used to stimulate various aspects of development needed by children, both artificial and made by the teacher. It is sufficient to adjust the child's learning group
7	Management	Management standards focus on institution management starting from

	standards	planning, implementation including supervising teachers and collaborating with agencies that support the learning process.
8	Financing standards	Financial standards relating to financial management, detail bookkeeping on income and expenses, making budget plans.

The data from the Indonesian National Accreditation Department of Early Childhood and Non- formal Education (BAN PAUD PNF) taken from Solo areas (Sragen, Surakarta, Karanganyar and Sukoharjo reGENCY) related to the rank achievement on accreditation can be seen on the graph 1 below.

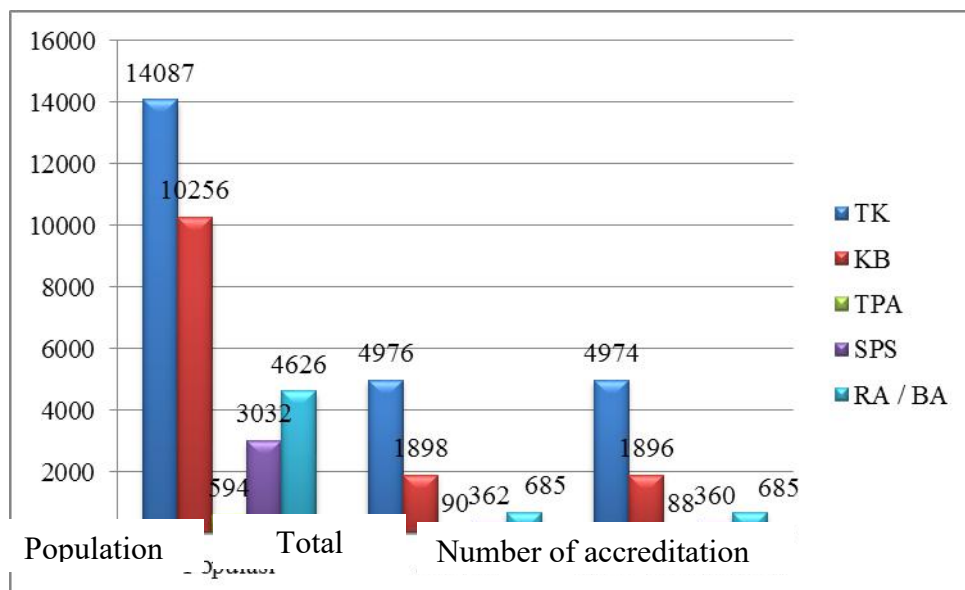


Graph 1. Rank of Accreditation Achievements



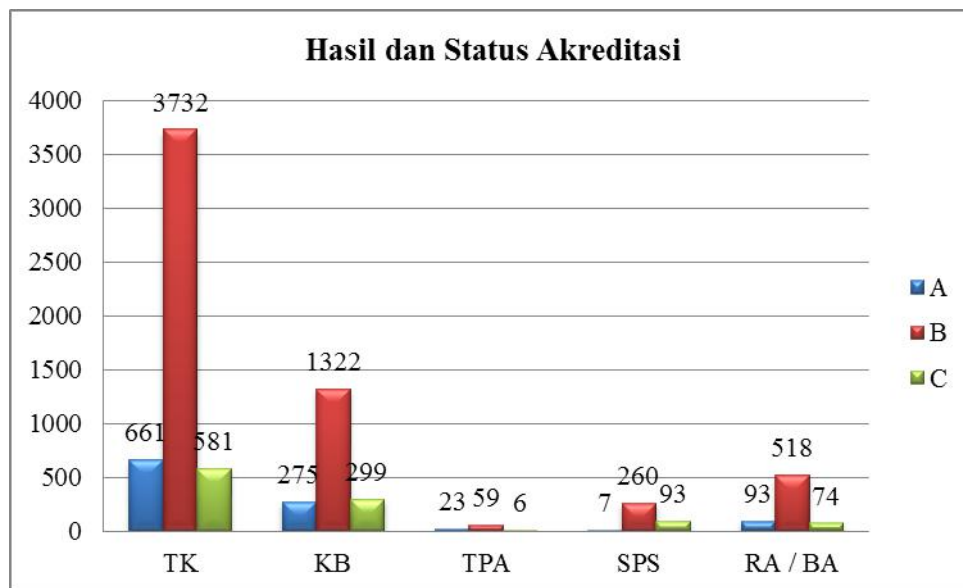
Graph 2. Regencies Accreditation Rank Results

Based on the PAUD unit, kindergartens (TK) are the highest performing accreditation institutions because as PAUD formal institutions, they are different from other formal institutions such as the Play Group (KB), Child Care Park (TPA), and Kindergarten PAU (SPS).



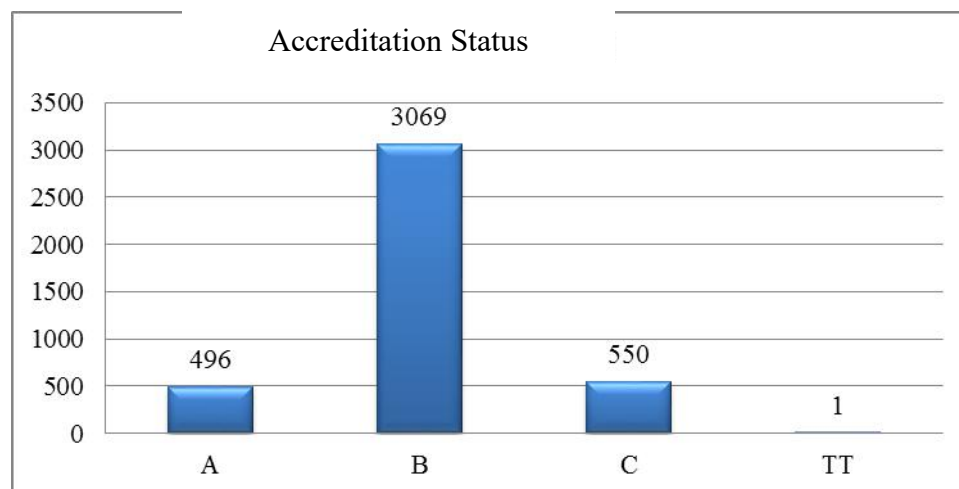
Graph 3. The Spread of Accreditation based on the Score

Among PAUD institutions, the following is the ranking of Accreditation results. Data that has a B rating is very high, compared to rank A and C.



Graph 4. PAUD Results and Accreditation Status

In general, the status of PAUD institutions that have A, B, and C and TT scores (not accredited). According to the 2019 PNF BANPAUD Accreditation assessment guide, it is explained Rank A if the assessment score shows a score of > 850, B if the score is 701-850 and C if the score is 551-700 and is not accredited if <551.



Graph 5. Overall National Accreditation Status of PAUD

The achievements of BAN PAUD PNF in conducting quality assurance at PAUD institutions can be seen in table 2:

Year	Capacity	Result
2016	500	500
2017	600	600

2018	2.725	Achieved : 3150
2019	4000	Achieved : 4325
2020	5000	Process

Table 2. Achievements of PAUD institutions accrediting BANPAUD

The data above shows that the number of PAUD institutions still needs to be increased. Equal access to PAUD must be balanced with the quality of PAUD. [10] Some studies explain that high quality PAUD is associated to improved language development, cognitive functioning, social competence, and emotional adjustment. However, others have failed to report such links. [11] Graduates of pre-school education are expected to have social, cognitive and language development abilities that can support basic skills in children's basic abilities. Based on survey data, it is known that 40% of PAUD institutions are trying to find information about children's readiness in accepting further development tasks and their efforts have not yet been done. Another obstacle in improving the quality of education is the means of infrastructure that needs to be improved to ensure the safety and comfort of children playing learning.

Based on observations there are still many school buildings that use residential buildings for the learning process, so it is not yet suitable for education institutions. Besides that, the role of parents is very important in supporting the quality of PAUD and there is a need to collaborate with PAUD institutions. [12] However in the PAUD quality indicator there are no indicators that refer to the role of parents in PAUD quality improvement. Early childhood education has a very big influence throughout the process of human development (Ereky-stevens, n.d.), so the government of Indonesia as a developing country pays attention to the analysis of early childhood. After the successful implementation of equal distribution of health insurance for young children, where in each village, there is at least one PAUD institution, the focus of the government is to improve quality. As an effort by the government to improve the quality of PAUD, what the government has done in improving the quality of institutions is described below.

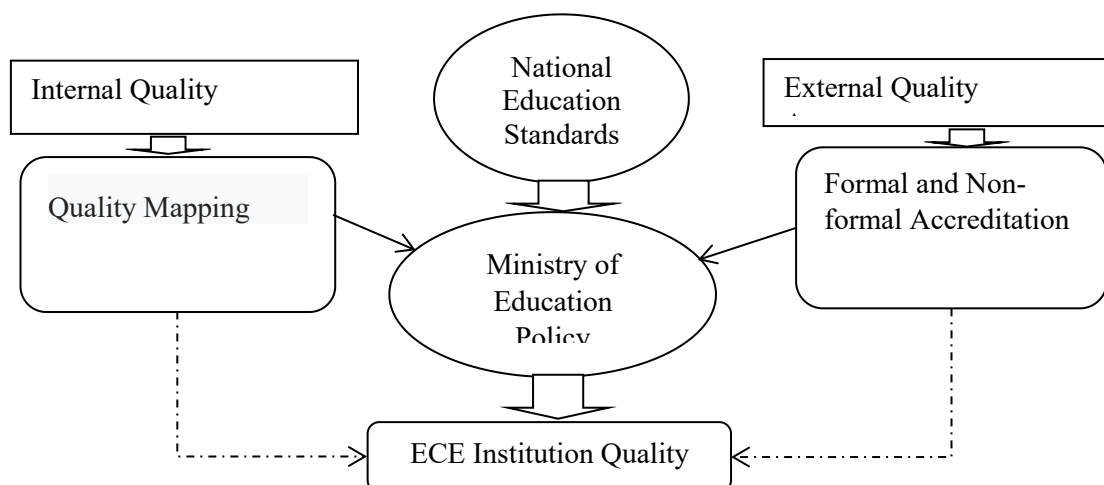


Figure 1. Quality improvement in PAUD

Quality indicators used in early childhood education are varied. Indonesia has an education standards body to determine the quality of education regulated by ministerial regulations. Halle, Vick Whittaker & Anderson (2010) explain that there are at least fifty quality scales available. One of the most influential factors to analyze the quality of processes is through the learning thinking shell which Hamre (2014) has divided into 3 important parts, namely (1) emotional support. (2) Class organizing. And (3) learning support.

Name	Focus	Source
Child Caregiver Interaction Scale	Emotional domain Cognitive/Physical domain Social domain	Arnett (1989)
Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale– Revised Edition (ECERS-R)	Space and furnishings Personal care routines.	Harms, Clifford & Cryer (1998)
Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Extension (ECERS-E)	Literacy Mathematics Science Diversity	Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart (2003)
Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS-R)	Space and furnishings Personal care routines.	Harms, Cryer & Clifford (2003)
Observational Record of the Caregiving Environment (ORCE)	Positive and negative affect Language..	Vandell (1996)
Child/Home Early Language & Learning Literacy Observation Tool (CHELLO)	Literacy environment Group/family observation	Neuman, Koh & Dwyer (2008)
Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)	Emotional and instructional support Classroom organisation	Pianta et al. (2008)
Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation Pre-K Tool (ELLCO Pre-K)	Classroom structure Curriculum	Smith, Brady & Anastasopoulos (2008)

Table 3. Learning Thinking Shell

V. CONCLUSION

The quality of early childhood education in Indonesia is based on government standards through eight education standards. (1) the level of achievement on child development standard. (2) content standards (3) process standards (4) educator and education personnel standards (5) infrastructure facilities standards (6) management standards (7) assessment standards (8) financing standards. To keep the quality of early childhood education institutions is done by having internal and external quality assurance. Internal quality assurance is carried out by the education office

which cover early childhood education institutions. Whereas external quality assurance is held by a national accreditation body. In developing countries such as Indonesia Quality improvement is a necessity that must be achieved by PAUD institutions to see the impact of early education, given the importance of early education for human development.

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