Purpose of Indonesian Early Childhood Education Accreditation:
Is It for Rating Grade of Institutions or Improving Their Quality?

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ABSTRACT

Since 2002, the number institutions for Early Childhood Education (ECE) institutions in Indonesia has grown rapidly in quantity. However, the increase in does not guarantee the quality improvement of ECE institutions. There are various types of ECE institutions in Indonesia, such as kindergarten, day care, community preschool, religious schools and so on. Moreover, Indonesia is a vast country with several islands, races, and cultures. That makes the quality of each ECE institution different, for example school building and operating hours In order to evaluate and to improve the quality of various ECE institutions, Indonesian government had launched an organization affiliated with the government namely the National Association of Accreditation for ECE and non-formal education in 2006. However, some institutions stated that they do not know how to prepare for accreditation due to lack of information about it. Thus, this paper believes that training and guidance for institutions should be conducted before they are accredited so that the institution can prepare and improve the quality of aspects assessed.

Keywords: Quality of education, accreditation, early childhood education, ECE

1. INTRODUCTION

The Early Childhood Education (ECE) in the world has been quantitatively and rapidly developed under the motto of "Education for All" in 1990s (World bank, 1999). Also, the number of institutions for ECE in Indonesia has dramatically increased in quantity. In 2012, the Indonesian government had announced a motto of "one village one ECE institution" so that ECE institutions have been great expanded nationally (Director General PAUDNI, 2012). As a result, the number of Indonesian ECE institutions nearly doubled from 117,051 to 224,321 in just three years from 2013 to 2016 (BAN PAUD & PNF, 2017). However, increasing the quantity does not guarantee the quality improvement of ECE (Yang, 2000; Won, 2019; BAN PAUD & PNF, 2017).

Indonesia is a vast country with more than 17,000 islands and the world's fourth largest population of 260 million. It has huge socio-economic differences among islands, communities, ethnicities, cities and rural areas (Adriany, Yulindrasari, & Tesar, 2020). Then, Indonesia has a rapid economic growth. Unfortunately, the growth does not diminish the social and economic inequality in the community (Sumner, Yusuf, & Sumner, 2014). These inequalities also exist with large gaps in Indonesia, specifically in ECE (Adriany & Saefullah, 2016). Adriany (2018) explained this broad gap on the quality of

ECE institutions in Indonesia through her experiences in Bandung, West Java, pointed out that the government's role in improving the quality of ECE has been left with the private ECE institution according to social judgement.

In 2006, Indonesian government founded the National Association of Accreditation for ECE and Non-formal education in order to reduce the gaps in ECE and to improve the quality of ECE institutions (BAN PAUD & PNF, 2017). Additionally, in 2015, the Government Accreditation Association actively participated in accreditation in 2008 (BAN PAUD & PNF, 2017). It coincided with the time when the United Nations (UN) discussed the quality of ECE as the fourth goal in Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) (UN, 2016). It declared that all girls and boys should be guaranteed to have a quality education and care in regard to primary school readiness (UN, 2016). As a result, the global education system has devoted special attention and investment of ECE to ensure a quality education for children by 2030 (Adriany & Saefullah, 2015).

What is quality education? In this paper, researcher attempt to bring up the meaning of the quality of education through the existing discourse regarding quality for the first step.

2. DISCOURSE OF CURRENT QUALITY EDUCATION

Quality is often defined by the quality of a product. When looking at the concept of quality, it is common to see that it is discussed in relation to business or industrial areas. This is the concept of quality that relates to how much a product conforms to the standards or criteria of quality which had set by the producer, and that include materials, production processes, and finished products. Quality has a meaning something that can be corrected. It is also depended on what the quality is aiming at: what is produced, what is used for, and how users feel about the product (Zazin, 2011). In other word, quality means a service to meet existing specifications. Quality is used to draw a conclusion on whether the currently provided service meets the criteria of quality. That is, when a product meets its purpose, it can be said that the product has a good quality (Zazin, 2011).

Arcaro (2006) argued that the concept of quality used in education should be distinguished from the quality used in commercial world because their culture, environment and progress in the area of education and business are different. The quality used in the area of education should play a role in helping education to accept changes in a positive and constructive direction. It is meaningful when a good education satisfies the needs of the community and this educational environment plays a role in developing their culture in a good relationship with the community to prepare the society to embrace the development and changes of modern technology (Zazin, 2011, p. 65). Daming in Arcaro (2006) explained that 'the quality' is used as a process of continuous completion to solve some problems. In other words, management of quality is one of the ways to make something to be better through a continuous process.

According to Fattah (2012), the quality of education consists of two areas: internal and external customers. Internal customers in education area refer to students who directly experience with the quality of education. On the other hand, external customers include all stakeholders related to the quality of education such as the families of students, society furthermore country. Quality goes through various processes, such as supervision, evaluation, and research, to achieve guaranteed quality. The guaranteed quality can provide a system that contains values and principles that can reach continuous change, improvement and quality enhancement through problem resolution processes.

Quality education is education which can develop the maturation of student's quality through the liberation of ignorance, helplessness, dishonesty and from the bad morals and faith (Mulyasana, 2015). In line with the opinion of the Global Monitoring Report (2005) that quality education should use children or students as goals. Through quality education, schools are able to provide opportunities for children to reach their superior potential both in terms of cognitive, emotional and creative capacity.

Quality education is education that can create quality in terms of humanist traditions, quality in terms of behaviorist traditions and quality in terms of critical traditions. Quality education in terms of the humanist tradition is how education provided in schools can help children find meaning in the learning process, help children receive various guidance from teachers who act as facilitators and not instructors and use learning as a social process rather than the results of individual interventions. Furthermore, education is quality in terms of the behaviorist tradition, educators have a role as instructors of learning, educators have an important role in determining stimulation. The last, quality education in terms of critical tradition, is related to the atmosphere of learning that is able to encourage children to actively participate and encourage children to be able to analyze critically through appropriate curricula and learning methods for children.

The quality of education can also be interpreted as structure quality and process quality. Quality structures include the area of the school, teacher certificates and the state of the classroom or children's learning space. While the process quality includes how teachers interact with children, the rewards given by teachers to children, including the implementation of learning conducted by educators to children in the classroom (Yeom & Go, 2014).

While Moss and Dahlberg (2008) state that using the term quality to determine the quality of education is not appropriate. Dahlberg suggested the use of the right words to talk about quality of education, is use term "meaning making". It can be interpreted to democracy in general and early childhood specifically (Moss & Dahlberg, 2008).

Quality education can be realized through good planning, material and governance systems and teachers. Good planning is planning according to the needs of students. Material and good governance systems are those whose benefits can be felt directly by students. Also, good teachers are teachers who are competent in their scopes both in terms of learning material and personal character so that they can transmit a good character to children through quality education components (Mulyasana, 2015).

All things about creating quality education can be realized not only by schools or teachers in the classroom. However, the government and education stakeholders play an important role in realizing the intended quality. To that end, the government has provided one way to achieve good quality for educational institutions by providing accreditation services for every existing educational institution. Accreditation is related to the formation of educational structures and the creation of quality learning environments for education users, namely students, parents including the community.

3. BRINGING UP A PROBLEM OF PRESENT INDONESIAN ECE ACCREDITATION

Indonesian government began implementing the accreditation system in 2008 to ensure and manage the quality of ECE institutions systematically (BAN PAUD & PNF, 2018). With a load map of information on the quality of ECE institutions which has obtained through implementation of accreditation program, the government can develop education programs and policies that are needed to provide quality education services.

The government's guide book for system accreditation (BAN PAUD & PNF, 2018) state about functions of accreditation like below.

1) Accreditation system has the function to approve the quality of the institution through an appropriate evaluation process on whether they are satisfied the eight national education standards proposed by the government.

2) Accreditation system has a function to guarantee quality education to the community by promoting the maintenance and improvement of quality education for ECE institutions.

3) Accreditation system has a function that not only allows institutions to comply with the documentation requirements, but also supports actual implementation as stated in the documents.

In other words, the accreditation system provides many benefits for establishing quality education to the ECE institutions, local communities and government. The functions and purposes of accreditation system are similar to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries such as United States, Australia, Korea, and Sweden, which have already performed and improved the accreditation system continuously (Choi & Jung, 2014; Lee, 2005; Yeom & Go, 2014). However, it will be necessary to continuously check whether these functions and objectives are actually performing well.

Indonesia accreditation system was the last started in 2008, compared to the above OECD countries, but the accreditation is supported by national laws and regulations "Law on the National Education System" (Indonesia Government, 2003), "Regulations for Education standard" (Indonesia Government, 2015), "Regulations for Accreditation" (Indonesia Government, 2009, 2018). So, Indonesian accreditation system is organized and managed by the national level through government-designated agencies. This showed that the Indonesian government is actively supporting accreditation system as a tool for controlling quality of education.

The government of Indonesia provides accreditation service with free of charge compared to some OECD countries still request substantial payment of participation for accreditation such as the U.S.A and Australia. (BAN PAUD & PNF, 2019; Choi & Jung, 2014). Although it is not mandatory, the Indonesian government actively encourages ECE institutions to promote their quality.

Nevertheless, the rate of participation of Indonesian ECE institutions in the accreditation is quite low compared to the government efforts. According to (BAN PAUD & PNF, 2019) 52,208 institutions has participated in the accreditation by 2018, a figure that is 22.5 percent among all ECE institutions.

Why is Indonesia's participation rate in accreditation such a low even after 11 years has already passed since the first pilot accreditation in 2008? Among several factors, (Asiah, 2018) reported that many of ECE teachers were afraid to participate because they felt that it was quite difficult to prepare all necessary documents to apply for accreditation. It was stated that many institutions were not prepared documents based on 8 National Education Standards, or even if they had the documents, they did not know how to arrange them to meet the standards properly, or they were afraid of reporting in the documents was not match in reality.

Nuryanto and Irmade (2019) said that system uploading documents using an online program called SISPENA to apply for accreditation, which makes it hesitant or difficult to participate in accreditation because they are not familiar with the methods and sometimes having technical problems. Also, they do not understand the criteria of accreditation, or do not know the form of documentation required to apply for accreditation.

Musa and Uthartianty (2019) also pointed out in the study that few ECE workers who involved in the accreditation who clearly understand about the eight National Education Standards, which are foundation of accreditation instruments. They said that teachers and principals of play groups in regional, did not graduate from ECE department, even some of them graduated from high school. Many of play group teachers in rural area are volunteers who are dedicated to ECE, because institution and the government do not guarantee their salaries. Furthermore, they have difficulties getting financial support by the government as non-formal ECE institutions. Assuming that, there are many ECE institutions in Indonesia in this situation, they would be extremely difficult and fearful to participate in accreditation. It is like the situation of a student who takes a test but doesn't understand the questions well. A student who has reads the textbooks and prepares himself thoroughly to solve the questions will get a great score on the test, but a student who tried the test without preparing since he did not know should be prepared will get a low score.

The website of National Accreditation Agency for ECE provides guidebooks and brochures about 8 National Education standards, yet it may also be a challenge for teachers in rural area who did not graduate from ECE department to interpret those criteria of standards and to collect the information by themselves (Musa & Uthartianty, 2019; Sonhadji, Ulfatin, & Supriyanto, 2018). Adriany, Yulindrasari, and Tesar (2020) It stated that many parents become volunteers to replace the role of teachers in rural area in ECE institutions. It could be a factor in improving the quality and quantity of ECE since those volunteers are not able to get teacher certificate.

Thus, the program of 'one ECE in one village' will be difficult to achieve.

In addition, whether students having a good teacher with helpful guideline about test or not, the results of the test may be different. The regional education office has responsibilities to supervise ECE institutions during process of implementation of accreditation through school assessors for efficient quality management (BAN PAUD & PNF, 2019). However, it is also comparable to the enthusiasm and ability of each assessor.

Researcher visited several ECE institutions where are participating accreditation during on-site visitation day in Bandung, West Jawa, Indonesia as a pilot study of master's thesis. At that time, the researcher found that there was a gap of the capacities between each supervisor not only by regional but also by personal. As a result, the institution's readiness for accreditation were varied. In fact, some teachers and principals from another institution visited the place where on-site visitation occurred to get information about implementation of accreditation. After visitation, they told that they were afraid to participate accreditation because of lack of information and less understanding about criteria of instruments and it was difficult to collect documentations for accreditation.

In the Republic of Korea, which has implemented accreditation system only three years earlier than Indonesia in 2005, there were many difficulties and problems also in the early stage of the accreditation (Choi & Kim, 2007; Y. S. Kim, 2008). Among them, difficulties of teachers and principals who participated in accreditation were a lack of accurate understanding and awareness of accreditation, a difficulty in interpreting indicators of instruments, and a heavy workload due to preparation of accreditation. (Kim & Kim, 2008).

The initial phase of the Korean accreditation system, there were many negative views on accreditation system. Thus, difficulties were more highlighted than positive effects due to lack of understanding about necessity of accreditation, operating system, and indicators. However, the rate of participation in accreditation has increased over the years with changes of perception about it. According to a national report, 83 percent of all institutes maintain their accreditation as of April 2019, with more than 90 percent had participated in accreditation more than once. It is also reported that the average score of accreditations has increased year by year and the actual quality level has improved (Korean Childcare Promotion Institute & Ministri of Health and Welfare, 2019; Cho, Yu, & Park, 2014; Jung, Kim, & Min, 2008; H. E. Kim, 2008; Mo, 2009; Rhee, Yoo, & Kim, 2007; Suh, Kim, & Song, 2009). Although the accreditation system was first introduced in the year 2008 which is the initial stage of implementation. In fact, the institutions began participating in accreditation at 2016. Then, it is expected that there are many trials and errors until the accreditation system is complete. So, the government should pay close attention and work towards the problems.

4. CONCLUSION

The purpose of accreditation system is the improvement of quality of education through self-assessment and improvement processes that is providing the necessary criteria for qualified education to the institutions for participating in accreditation system (Choi & Kim, 2007). To achieve this purpose, the government needs to check whether the quality of the accreditation system which should be appropriate to improve their quality continually during implementation of the accreditation. System and instrument of accreditation should be improved continually to meet the main role for improving quality of institutions. In order to improve the quality of accreditation, the participants' views should be considered. In this study, the researcher analyzed the views of teachers and principals who participated in ECE accreditation to find out the reasons for the low participation rate and their difficulties. To sum up the problems, there is an anxiety like taking a test to take a part accreditation. It caused by a lack of understanding of the indicators of 8 national educational standards, a difficulty in preparing many documents for applying accreditation and collecting information and data about the accreditation, and a technical difficulty for uploading the application as the first step of accreditation. To synthesize those problems, the researcher suggests that:

First, the documentations and up-loading procedures for application should be understandable for all participants through briefing sessions and detailed guidebooks, in order to minimize barriers to entry into the accreditation. Secondly, the government should guide and support to check their quality and improve their deficiencies through self-evaluation before on-site evaluation. Thirdly, system and instrument of accreditation should be improved continuously by reflecting feedbacks of ECE institutions. Fourthly, in order to improve quality of accreditation system, several researches related accreditation should be conducted.

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