

## Implementation of the one-year Early Childhood Education (ECE) policy: A review of the education implementation process

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### ABSTRACT

Policy, as a set of regulations governing societal life, is analysed through three main aspects: effectiveness, efficiency, and fairness in implementation. Given the strategic role of ECE in supporting early childhood development as mandated by Indonesian Law No. 20 of 2003, adjusting the one-year ECE policy is crucial to achieving sustainable development goals. The transition from ECE to elementary education requires optimal support from teachers and parents, despite challenges arising from some ECE educators not yet meeting the expected qualifications. This study aims to describe the impacts, analyse the influencing factors, and examine the role of relevant institutions in the implementation of the one-year Early Childhood Education (ECE) policy in Semarang City. This study employs a descriptive, qualitative approach, using interviews and observations, to gain an in-depth understanding of policy implementation. Primary data were collected through direct interviews with school principals and educators, while secondary data were obtained from various relevant written sources. The findings indicate that the implementation of the one-year ECE policy in Tembalang District, Semarang City, significantly contributes to improving the quality of early childhood education. This policy supports inclusive education and expands equitable access to education. The success of the policy largely depends on teacher training, the availability of adequate facilities, and active parental involvement; thus, maintaining consistency in its implementation is essential to minimise the risk of programme failure.

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## INTRODUCTION

The term 'policy' is often translated with various words, such as 'politics', 'rules', 'programmes', and 'decisions'. Policy can be understood as a set of formalised rules and guidelines that regulate behaviour and foster the creation of new societal values (Ramdhani & Ramdhani, 2017). In policy analysis, there are three approaches: empirical, evaluative, and normative (Setiawati, 2018). The empirical approach provides facts, the evaluative approach seeks values, and the normative approach offers guidance for action. Policies are made to solve problems. In the educational arena, policy plays a critical role by setting the framework for decision-making and guiding the processes that shape educational quality and access. Education policies are inherently multifaceted, reflecting not only governmental priorities but also the complex interplay of socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors (Mustari, 2015). This study focuses on the implementation of the one-year Early Childhood Education (ECE) policy in Semarang City, Indonesia, examining its impacts, the various factors that influence its execution, and the roles played by key institutions in its operationalisation.

Adopting the international education policy of the Incheon Declaration set out on 21 May 2015 at the World Education Forum (WEF 2015) in Incheon, Korea (Sayed et al., 2018). The Declaration points to the commitment to Education 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Agenda. International frameworks such as the Incheon Declaration (UNESCO, 2015) further reinforce the significance of early education in achieving sustainable development goals by ensuring equitable access to quality education from an early age. Within this broader context, the one-year ECE policy in Semarang City emerges as a strategic initiative aimed at enhancing children's readiness for formal schooling and ensuring a smooth transition from early education to primary school.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is defined in education policy for children from birth to eight years of age. Countries use different terms for ECCE services, reflecting each country's focus (Hinzen & Schmitt, 2016). Primary school entry typically marks the end of early childhood, whereas in health, it is generally considered to be up to the age of five (Peters, 2010). Access to ECCE provides children with learning opportunities outside the home, supporting the development of children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Ananda et al., 2023). Early Childhood Education, which in Indonesia is referred to as PAUD (*Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*), is recognised as a pivotal stage for the holistic development of children. Enshrined in Law No. 20/2003 on the National Education System, early education is viewed as a foundation for lifelong learning, shaping children's cognitive, social, and emotional capacities. ECE is defined as an effort to support the growth and development of children aged 0-6 years before they enter further education. This education is crucial in shaping children's character (Amini & Aisyah, 2014). In line with Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational philosophy, education is a way to develop individuals into humans with good character (Bustomi et al., 2022). Education aims to shape character, which is more effective if done from an early age (Elfert, 2019).

The implementation of this policy is affected by a myriad of factors. Demographic challenges, economic disparities, cultural nuances, institutional frameworks, infrastructural constraints, human resource issues, health and nutritional considerations, and political dynamics all intersect to shape the policy's effectiveness. For example, uneven distribution of population and resources, varying levels of educator qualifications, and inconsistent supervision have all been identified as critical barriers to the policy's optimal execution. Moreover, the success of the policy is contingent upon robust intersectoral coordination—between local education authorities, health departments, community organisations, and other stakeholders—to ensure that both the quality and equity of early childhood education are maintained. Based on Presidential Regulation No. 59/2017, Indonesia is an active member of the United Nations in its efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, it needs to be adjusted in line with the National Long- and Medium-Term Development Plan (Nuraeni et al., 2018). Education policy plays a crucial role in determining the direction and guidelines for implementing education in a country (Habe & Ahiruddin, 2017). This policy is made by the government or authorities in educational institutions. Education policy supports the nation's intelligence, as education has a significant impact on individual and social human life (Hasyim et al., 2009).

The National Education System Law guides the education process and standardisation. It includes education components that are essential to achieve national education goals (Ginting & Haryati, 2012). The national education system is also used to make education policies at all levels (Mustari & Rahman, 2014). Mandatory education is a minimum education programme that must be followed and is the responsibility of the government. Education must be carried out in a democratic, fair and non-discriminatory manner, upholding human rights and values that exist in Indonesia. The government's efforts in education are noteworthy because they have a significant impact on people's lives. Education policy plays a crucial role in shaping the direction of the education process, and the decisions made will significantly impact the overall quality of education. Policy effectiveness and efficiency must be understood so negative impacts can be reduced (Srihartini et al., 2021). Local governments have the responsibility to provide

services to the community as part of regional autonomy (Fauzi, 2019). One important area is education, where local governments are obliged to prioritise services in line with Law No. 20 of 2003, which regulates the basic needs of education for every community (Imran *et al.*, 2020).

The Early Childhood Education (ECE) programme was established because public awareness of the importance of children's education before primary school is low. ECE provides a strong foundation, enabling children to be ready for further education and become the next generation of quality. Several studies have shown that the lack of ECE supervision is due to the small number of supervisors and inspectors in Indonesia. This affects the performance of ECE educators, who do not apply their competencies. Research has also found that supervisors' performance is not optimal due to various factors (Srihartini *et al.*, 2021).

The transition from ECE to primary education represents a crucial turning point in a child's academic journey. This phase requires not only pedagogical alignment between the early education and primary systems but also substantial support from teachers, parents, and policymakers. In response to these challenges, initiatives such as the *Merdeka Belajar* Episode 24 have been launched by the Ministry of Education to improve the continuity and quality of early education by addressing issues related to teacher training and resource allocation (Reza *et al.*, 2024). Despite these efforts, significant gaps remain, underscoring the need for ongoing evaluation and refinement of the policy framework. Schools should assume that children entering primary school are equally prepared and capable, allowing learning to be tailored to the individual learner's development. The ECE-Primary School transition policy aims to ensure that all children receive the same rights (Susilahati *et al.*, 2023), regardless of whether they have attended kindergarten or not.

ECE teachers, primary school teachers, and parents should understand the basic skills that children need before entering primary school, regardless of whether they have previously attended ECE or not. These skills are crucial in helping children transition smoothly from ECE to early primary school (Yuliantina *et al.*, 2023). The central government has enacted Law No. 20/2003, Law No. 14/2005, and Government Regulations No. 19/2005 and No. 74/2008 to achieve national education goals. These regulations provide the legal basis for the government to provide legal protection for teachers (Rohani, 2020).

The Semarang city government issued Mayor's Regulation No. 79 of 2020 regarding the Implementation of 1-year pre-primary Early Childhood Education. This policy aims to regulate education equity, graduate quality, teaching staff, education facilities, and community participation (Saputra *et al.*, 2016). Its scope includes the learning process, quality assurance, enrolment, educator qualifications, curriculum, community participation, and guidance and supervision from the Office of Education (Ahmad, 2018). The one-year ECE phenomenon in Semarang should be implemented in both public and private primary schools. However, there are problems such as ECE institutions that do not comply with regulations, a lack of supervisors, a cognitive-only learning focus, and suboptimal supervision by the local government (Murdiyaningrum & Rahman, 2019). The Office of Education needs to conduct regular monitoring. The success of ECE depends on the role of educators who nurture, care for, educate and protect children. ECE educators need to plan, implement and assess the learning process. The goal of this education is to form quality children according to their development (Nadar *et al.*, 2021). Educators must be competent and professional in the field of ECE.

Many ECE educators do not fulfil the qualifications and competencies in educating early childhood. Many have only a high school education and are involved in teaching at the neighbourhood level through Family Welfare Empowerment. Few have a diploma or a bachelor's degree in a field relevant to ECE. Many ECE services are managed by educators with low educational backgrounds. The Minister of National Education's Regulation No. 58/2009 requires educators to possess professional and pedagogical competencies (Nurhayati & Rakhman, 2017). These competencies need to be improved through education and training.

Based on the background, this study identified several problems: the lack of a comprehensive 1-year ECE policy for early childhood, the suboptimal role of local government in implementing the policy, and the inadequate ECE institutions in Semarang City. The problem formulation includes the impact of policy implementation, influencing factors, and institutions' efforts to overcome barriers. The objectives of the study were to describe the impact, analyse the factors, and assess institutions' efforts related to the 1-year ECE policy in Semarang City.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach (Moha, 2015), using in-depth interviews and observations to explore the real-world implementation of the one-year ECE policy in Semarang City, which will hereinafter be referred to as Kindergarten A, Kindergarten B, and Kindergarten C. The study captures the nuances of policy enactment at the grassroots level by collecting primary data through face-to-face interviews with key informants and supplementing these insights with secondary data sourced from official documents, reports, and archival records (Afrizal et al., 2022).

The study population encompassed all ECE institutions in Semarang City, with a purposive sampling strategy employed to select institutions representing diverse levels of policy implementation. Participants included principals, teachers, parents, and ECE supervisors, ensuring that the findings reflect a wide range of perspectives and practices. They were chosen to capture diverse experiences and viewpoints relevant to early childhood education transitions, and because they implement the ECE Policy and are located in Semarang. Data were gathered through a combination of in-depth interviews, direct observations, and extensive documentation, including written materials, photographs, and video recordings. Interview protocols and observational checklists were developed and refined through pilot testing and expert consultation, aligning with the operational standards of the Semarang Education Office to ensure a comprehensive and relevant exploration of the policy's implementation.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

#### *Impact of the 1-year ECE Policy at Kindergarten A*

At Kindergarten A, the implementation of the one-year Early Childhood Education (ECE) policy is systematically directed by the Office of Education through a series of strategic measures. Initial steps include developing the Education Unit Curriculum (ESC) in line with government policy and establishing collaborations with primary school institutions to ensure a smooth transition for kindergarten children entering primary education. Learner data is meticulously recorded using the *Data Pokok Pendidikan* (Basic Education Data) or *Dapodik* system, while policy socialisation is carried out through structured ECE forums, laying a solid foundation for effective policy execution.

The kindergarten aims to provide quality and affordable early childhood education, grounded in Islamic values, and offers a holistic curriculum that nurtures both cognitive skills and character development. It also seeks to expand access by opening branches in remote areas and supporting parents through programmes that align home practices with classroom learning. These initiatives aim to create an inclusive educational environment that not only enhances the quality of early childhood education but also contributes to the development of a smart, healthy, and well-rounded generation (Susilahati et al., 2023).

To meet national education service standards, the institution employs strategies such as fee subsidies, community partnerships, and extension programmes, complemented by continuous teacher training, regular evaluations, and a holistic pedagogical approach. According to the principal, enhancing the competence of the teaching staff is a top priority, achieved through rigorous training, certification, workshops, and mentoring, despite increased workloads. This commitment to professional development, combined with rising community awareness through social media, seminars, and local involvement, has significantly strengthened the relationship between schools and families, thereby ensuring the successful implementation of the policy.

### ***Impact of the 1-year ECE Policy at Kindergarten B***

At Kindergarten B, the implementation of the one-year ECE policy began with the adoption of a curriculum provided by the Office of Education. The institution strategically establishes partnerships with private primary schools to ensure that its kindergarten children are thoroughly prepared for the transition to primary education. Additionally, the systematic management of student data through the *Dapodik* system and the integrated socialisation of policy within the education community have laid a robust foundation for the policy's successful adoption.

The vision at Kindergarten B is to deliver quality, affordable, and character-based education, while its mission focuses on offering inclusive and technology-driven ECE services that guarantee universal access. In pursuit of these goals, the policy is designed to enhance early childhood education participation through comprehensive socialisation efforts and strict adherence to national standards. This includes the implementation of the latest curriculum, thorough teacher training, and continuous programme evaluations to ensure the highest quality of education.

Emphasis is also placed on active community participation, fostered through strong partnerships and ongoing educational initiatives. To address the challenge of improving educator quality, Kindergarten B implements systematic training and certification programmes. Although these measures increase the workload on teachers, they are essential for maintaining high teaching standards and ensuring sustained motivation among staff. Effective communication plays a crucial role in the policy's impact, with the kindergarten utilising social media and collaborating closely with local communities to raise public awareness and encourage parental involvement. The success of these communication strategies is monitored through surveys and active engagement assessments, ensuring that feedback is continuously integrated into the programme for ongoing improvement (Afrizal et al., 2022).

### ***Impact of the 1-year ECE Policy at Kindergarten C***

Kindergarten C implements the one-year ECE policy by rigorously following a series of preparatory steps as directed by the Office of Education. The institution strictly adheres to established regulations and collaborates closely with primary school institutions to ensure a seamless transition for children from kindergarten to primary education. Key measures include preparing children for further education and accurately recording learner data through the *Dapodik* system, with policy socialisation effectively conducted through dedicated ECE forums.

The kindergarten's vision is to provide quality and affordable ECE services, while its mission emphasises the development of Islamic values and enhanced educational access. In line with this vision, Kindergarten C actively collaborates with local communities through various initiatives, aiming to increase participation in early childhood education across Semarang City. By consistently following government policies and standards, the institution maintains high service quality and ensures that its educational practices remain aligned with national objectives.

In addition to these preparatory and collaborative efforts, Kindergarten C continuously enhances educator quality through targeted training and workshops. This commitment to

professional development has led to positive community perceptions, as reflected by increased active participation in its ECE programmes. Moreover, diverse communication strategies are utilised to disseminate information and raise public awareness, further contributing to the overall successful implementation of the one-year ECE policy (Yuliantina *et al.*, 2023).

### ***Factors Influencing the 1-Year ECE Policy at Kindergarten A***

At Kindergarten A, teacher recruitment is conducted through a rigorous process that includes interviews, skills tests, and competency evaluations, with key criteria encompassing academic ability, pedagogical skills, religious value comprehension, communication proficiency, and genuine care for children. The institution underscores the importance of professional development through ongoing training such as workshops and seminars, which are integral to enhancing teaching quality. The curriculum, deeply rooted in Islamic values, is designed to foster overall child development through play, project-based, and thematic teaching approaches that nurture social, emotional, and cognitive skills. Additionally, the kindergarten maximises technology use by implementing a digital administration system for effective student data management and integrating interactive digital media into learning, which further boosts operational efficiency. Although the current facilities adequately support a comfortable learning environment, budget constraints necessitate the use of Education Operational Assistance (BOP), donations, and government grants to supplement the development of new facilities.

### ***Factors Influencing the 1-Year ECE Policy at Kindergarten B***

At Kindergarten B, teacher recruitment is open and requires a minimum of a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, combined with strong academic credentials, pedagogical competence, and relevant experience. Emphasis is also placed on the candidates' understanding of religious values and their passion for working with children. The institution provides continuous professional development through structured training programmes that support holistic child development. The curriculum is designed to foster creativity and address local cultural needs through play, experimentation, and project-based learning. Technological tools are employed to streamline administrative processes, facilitate interactive learning, and enhance parent communication. To overcome limitations in physical infrastructure, the kindergarten employs creative solutions utilising locally sourced learning materials, while securing funding through BOP, donations, partnerships, and active community engagement. Strong community involvement further reinforces local cultural values, and established collaborations with local government and other institutions underpin the overall success of the ECE programme.

### ***Factors Influencing the 1-Year ECE Policy at Kindergarten C***

Kindergarten C utilises a systematic teacher recruitment process involving WhatsApp groups and direct interviews to select educators with substantial experience in early childhood education and qualities such as patience and meticulousness. Professional development is prioritised through regular training sessions and tiered education programmes aimed at continually enhancing teaching quality. The curriculum at Kindergarten C integrates local content with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, employing play-based, project-oriented approaches and activities based on the Pancasila Learner Profile (P5) to support holistic development. Technological solutions are optimised for administrative tasks, learning, and communication, including the use of LCD displays to promote interactivity. Constraints in facilities are addressed through the use of BOP funds, self-help initiatives, and government grants. Across all three institutions, growing public awareness of the importance of ECE, combined with active parental and community support, reinforces local cultural values and strengthens the overall implementation of the one-year ECE policy.

### ***Efforts Made by Kindergarten A***

Kindergarten A has implemented a wide range of initiatives to socialise and promote early childhood education, thereby boosting community participation in the one-year ECE programme in Semarang City. The institution actively conducts extensive socialisation and counselling sessions to raise public awareness about the critical importance of early childhood education. These efforts are supported by a collaborative approach with local communities to build robust support networks, ensuring that families are well-informed and encouraged to participate in the educational process. In addition, the kindergarten utilises multiple channels, such as seminars, publications, home visits, and digital platforms, to disseminate information and foster a culture that values early education.

In response to the quality standards set by the Semarang City Government through accreditation, Kindergarten A has made significant investments in the professional development of its educators. The institution has organised continuous teacher training programmes, workshops, and certification processes focusing on enhancing pedagogical skills and integrating interactive, play-based learning methods. Simultaneously, it has developed an interactive curriculum that not only meets national education standards but also emphasises the holistic development of children by incorporating Islamic values alongside cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Regular internal evaluations ensure that these educational practices remain effective and aligned with the institution's mission of providing quality and equitable ECE services.

Furthermore, the kindergarten has undertaken major facility upgrades and infrastructural improvements to create a conducive learning environment that is both accessible and affordable. By utilising funding from government grants, Education Operational Assistance (BOP), and community donations, the institution has been able to expand its reach to remote areas and enhance its existing facilities. Parental involvement is actively promoted through coordinated efforts between the government, the institution, and other stakeholders, ensuring that interactive learning methods and community-based initiatives are consistently reinforced. These comprehensive efforts not only support the seamless transition of children to primary education but also contribute to the overall success of the one-year ECE policy by fostering an inclusive and quality education environment (Rohani, 2020).

### ***Efforts Made by Kindergarten B***

Kindergarten B actively promotes early childhood education through a series of targeted socialisation campaigns and community engagement initiatives designed to boost participation in the one-year ECE programme. The institution undertakes intensive outreach efforts, including in-person meetings, counselling sessions, and digital media campaigns, to educate the community about the long-term benefits of early childhood education. By forging robust partnerships with local community organisations and parent groups, the kindergarten ensures that families are well-informed and motivated to support the ECE initiatives, thereby fostering a collaborative and supportive educational environment.

In alignment with the quality standards mandated by the Semarang City Government, Kindergarten B places significant emphasis on the continuous development of its teaching staff and educational programmes. Regular workshops, seminars, and training sessions are organised to enhance teacher certification and competence, ensuring that educators remain updated on the latest curriculum and pedagogical strategies. The institution also conducts periodic programme evaluations and strives to meet rigorous accreditation standards, which together contribute to maintaining high educational quality and responsiveness to the evolving needs of its students.

In addition to professional development, Kindergarten B is dedicated to improving its physical and technological infrastructure. The institution actively pursues funding applications and collaborates with local partners to secure resources for facility renovations and upgrades.

By integrating modern technology into the learning process and partnering with publishers for enhanced educational content, the kindergarten creates a dynamic and interactive classroom environment. These efforts not only prepare children effectively for primary education but also ensure that safety, accessibility, and special requirements are adequately addressed (Rohani, 2020).

### ***Efforts Made by Kindergarten C***

Kindergarten C has developed a comprehensive set of initiatives aimed at promoting early childhood education and strengthening community participation in the one-year ECE programme. The institution works closely with local government agencies, community organisations, and various stakeholders, utilising both face-to-face meetings and digital media platforms to raise awareness about the importance of early education. This multifaceted approach ensures that the benefits of ECE are clearly communicated, resulting in a well-informed community that actively supports the kindergarten's educational objectives.

Adhering to the quality standards established by the Semarang City Government, Kindergarten C places a strong emphasis on teacher development and rigorous accreditation processes. The institution implements regular training programmes, including workshops, performance assessments, and curriculum innovation sessions, to maintain high educational standards and ensure that active learning methods are consistently applied in the classroom. By continuously monitoring and evaluating teacher performance, the kindergarten sustains a culture of excellence that not only enhances pedagogical quality but also optimises student readiness for primary education.

Furthermore, Kindergarten C is committed to enhancing its facilities and learning resources through strategic collaborations and resource optimisation. Facility improvements are supported by government initiatives, private sector partnerships, and community self-help projects, all of which contribute to creating a safe and stimulating learning environment. The institution employs structured learning sessions and regular assessments to track child readiness, while increased parental involvement—facilitated through active community engagement and the effective use of Education Operational Assistance (BOP)—ensures that high-quality, inclusive education is accessible to every student. This integrated approach reinforces the kindergarten's dedication to excellence in early childhood education and prepares children for a seamless transition to primary schooling (Yuliantina *et al.*, 2023).

## **Discussion**

### ***Impacts Resulting from the Implementation of the 1-Year ECE Policy***

Kindergarten A initiated the one-year Early Childhood Education (ECE) policy by developing an Education Unit Curriculum (ESC) as directed by the Office of Education. This process involved establishing strategic partnerships with primary schools to facilitate a smooth transition for kindergarten children, managing student data meticulously through the *Dapodik* system, and conducting intensive policy socialisation via dedicated ECE forums. Such measures underscore the institution's commitment to delivering quality, equitable, and affordable ECE services rooted in Islamic values, while also fostering a holistic curriculum that nurtures cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development.

Kindergarten B and Kindergarten C implemented similar strategies in accordance with government directives. Both institutions adopted the prescribed curriculum from the Office of Education, formed partnerships with primary schools—private institutions in the case of Kindergarten B—and ensured effective data management using the *Dapodik* system, complemented by regular socialisation sessions conducted through ECE forums or cluster-based approaches. Research indicates that all three kindergartens adhere to these directives,



focusing on enhancing the educational transition and deepening stakeholder understanding of early childhood education.

Despite having different visions and missions, all three institutions share a common objective of increasing participation and enhancing the quality of ECE. Kindergarten A emphasises delivering services that are not only of high quality and equitable but also affordable, integrating Islamic values with parenting programmes. In contrast, Kindergarten B focuses on cultivating an inclusive and globally minded ECE environment, while Kindergarten C prioritises affordability, the promotion of Islamic behaviour, and equitable access. They collectively strive to boost participation through inclusive practices, subsidisation, and community partnerships while maintaining service standards that comply with national regulations. Enhancing educator quality through training, certification, workshops, mentoring, and regular evaluations is a critical priority, even though the one-year ECE policy contributes to an increased workload. Support for educator welfare and ongoing professional development is expected to further improve teaching competence and overall educational quality.

Public awareness regarding the importance of early childhood education has notably increased due to these concerted efforts. Kindergarten A utilises a diverse range of communication strategies, from digital media outreach and community seminars to home visits and printed publications, to educate the public about the benefits of ECE. Kindergarten B actively involves alumni in its outreach campaigns, sharing success stories that inspire community trust and participation, while Kindergarten C collaborates closely with local communities to ensure that information about ECE services is readily accessible. The use of social media platforms and regular socialisation forums has proven effective in supporting the programme. Coordinated efforts between PAUD institutions and local governments, through training, data management, and systematic monitoring, further ensure the sustainability and continuous improvement of the one-year ECE policy.

Kindergarten A's extensive communication strategy, grounded in the national policy framework outlined by Rohani (2020), demonstrates how the one-year ECE programme operationalizes the mandates of the 2003 National Education System Law, particularly its emphasis on equal access, competency-based curricula, and community involvement, by tailoring outreach through digital media, community seminars, home visits, and printed materials; Kindergarten B builds on this foundation by leveraging alumni success stories to foster trust and participation, reflecting Rohani's observation that local context shapes policy uptake; and Kindergarten C's partnership with community organisations exemplifies the law's call for stakeholder collaboration in monitoring, data management, and teacher training, ensuring that information about ECE services is accessible and that programme sustainability and continuous improvement are achieved through systematic local-government coordination.

### ***Factors Influencing Implementation of the 1-Year ECE Policy in Semarang City***

At Kindergarten A, the recruitment process for educators is particularly rigorous, involving comprehensive interviews, skills tests, and competency evaluations. Essential criteria include strong academic credentials, excellent pedagogical skills, a deep understanding of Islamic values, effective communication abilities, and an inherent passion for working with children. To bolster professional development, the institution conducts ongoing workshops and seminars that significantly enhance teaching quality. In contrast, Kindergarten B employs an open selection system that requires a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, along with proven academic and pedagogical competence, and relevant field experience. It regularly organises training sessions to refine teaching skills and support holistic child development. Meanwhile, Kindergarten C utilises digital platforms, such as WhatsApp groups, to facilitate teacher recruitment, which is then complemented by interview sessions that prioritise practical experience in early childhood education and personal qualities like patience and diligence. All

three institutions regard educator quality as a top priority, which is essential for providing optimal educational services.

In terms of curriculum design, each kindergarten adopts an approach that aligns with its core values and educational objectives. Kindergarten A promotes a curriculum centred on Islamic values and holistic intelligence development, employing fun, play-based, and thematic teaching methods that support children's cognitive, social, emotional, and motor skill development. Kindergarten B, on the other hand, designs its curriculum to stimulate creativity and meet local needs through innovative, play-based learning and experimentation. At Kindergarten C, the curriculum is developed with reference to local content and the Merdeka Curriculum, incorporating play activities, project-based learning, and the application of P5 values to optimise children's overall potential. Despite these differences, all three kindergartens share a common goal of fostering holistic child development.

The integration of technology plays a pivotal role in both the management and learning processes at these institutions. Kindergarten A utilises a digital administration system to manage student data efficiently, while enhancing interactive learning with digital media such as engaging educational videos and online platforms that facilitate communication with parents. Similarly, Kindergarten B incorporates technology into its administrative and classroom activities, adopting a thematic approach that improves the overall quality of learning. Kindergarten C further optimises the use of digital tools by employing LCDs in classroom settings and utilising social media to disseminate information quickly and effectively to parents. Regarding facilities and infrastructure, although Kindergarten A is equipped with adequate learning facilities, budget constraints remain a challenge that is addressed through the utilisation of Education Operational Assistance (BOP). Kindergarten B maximises existing facilities via BOP funds, donations, and partnerships, while Kindergarten C improves its conditions by relying on grants and community support. All three institutions combine these funding sources with efforts from the Semarang City Government to enhance learning quality, teacher training, and necessary facility procurement, with coordinated efforts ensuring the programme's sustainability.

Building on [Reza et al. \(2024\)](#) emphasis on a seamless, technology-enhanced transition from early childhood to primary education, all three kindergartens leverage digital tools not only for management and learning but also to bridge students into formal schooling: Kindergarten A's digital administration and multimedia lessons are complemented by an online preparatory portal that familiarizes children with elementary-level activities; Kindergarten B's thematic, tech-integrated classrooms incorporate interactive story-based assessments modeled after primary school formats to reduce transition anxiety; and Kindergarten C's widespread use of LCD-supported lessons and social-media-driven parent workshops includes instructional modules on basic literacy and numeracy skills aligned with first-grade standards. Despite disparities in physical infrastructure, each institution utilises a combination of BOP funding, grants, and community partnerships, mirroring Reza et al.'s call for multi-stakeholder resource mobilisation, to procure age-appropriate digital learning stations and to train teachers in blended-learning methodologies, thereby ensuring that technology integration both streamlines administrative processes and scaffolds children's readiness for the next educational stage.

### ***Efforts by Institutions to Overcome Barriers to the One-Year ECE Policy in Semarang City***

Efforts to overcome barriers to the one-year ECE policy are multifaceted and tailored to the specific contexts of each institution. At Kindergarten A, intensive socialisation and extension activities are conducted to increase community participation. These activities, which include detailed seminars, home visits, media publications, and digital information dissemination, are designed to clarify the importance of early childhood education and encourage active community involvement. By collaborating closely with local communities and subsidising

education, the institution aims to ensure that the community not only understands the benefits of ECE programmes but also supports and participates in them directly.

At Kindergarten B, similar efforts are made to optimise community engagement. The institution organises targeted campaigns, meetings, and direct counselling sessions, utilising social media as an effective educational tool to convey vital information about early childhood development and the available ECE services. These initiatives have proven effective in increasing community understanding and involvement, thereby strengthening efforts to improve the quality of education at the early level. In contrast, Kindergarten C implements a robust socialisation strategy that emphasises intensive collaboration with local communities and leverages digital platforms to ensure that information regarding ECE services is easily accessible. This approach significantly enhances community participation and underscores the shared goal among all three institutions of promoting community involvement through collaborative efforts, regular seminars, and routine meetings. The Semarang City Government further supports these initiatives by setting quality standards through accreditation and promoting continuous quality improvement via teacher training, curriculum development, and facility enhancements.

Building on [Susilahati et al.'s \(2023\)](#) findings on creating a smooth and enjoyable transition from early childhood to primary school, each kindergarten has developed context-specific strategies to address barriers to the one-year ECE policy: Kindergarten A intensifies its outreach through detailed seminars, home visits, media publications, and digital campaigns, mirroring Susilahati et al.'s emphasis on comprehensive socialisation, to foster genuine community ownership and subsidise participation; Kindergarten B organises targeted campaigns, direct counselling, and social-media-driven educational sessions that align with the authors' recommendation for multi-channel engagement to deepen parental understanding of early development and available services; and Kindergarten C leverages robust collaboration with neighborhood stakeholders and digital platforms, reflecting Susilahati et al.'s call for accessible information dissemination, to boost community involvement. These institution-level efforts are reinforced by the Semarang City Government's support in the form of accreditation-based quality standards, ongoing teacher training, curriculum development, and facility upgrades, ensuring a coordinated, continuous improvement cycle for the one-year ECE programme in line with the holistic transition framework proposed by ([Susilahati et al., 2023](#)).

### ***Educator Quality Improvement and Facility Development***

Improving educator quality is a central focus across all three kindergartens. At Kindergarten A, the Semarang City Education Office plays a key role in organising regular training sessions, workshops, seminars, and mentoring programmes, alongside initiatives for developing innovative learning media, to ensure that educators meet stringent government standards and maintain high instructional quality. Kindergarten B conducts similar professional development activities, with an emphasis on effective classroom management, active teaching methods, and a robust certification programme to guarantee teaching excellence. Likewise, Kindergarten C prioritises teacher development by organising comprehensive training sessions and workshops that support the implementation of relevant curricula and the adoption of innovative learning media, thereby optimising classroom management and overall educator performance.

In addition to these quality improvement initiatives, the Semarang City Government actively supports the construction and renovation of ECE facilities to enhance access to quality education. At Kindergarten A, collaboration with government and community stakeholders has led to the construction of a new building and the provision of modern educational playground equipment. At Kindergarten B, facility improvements are achieved through funding applications, donations, and consistent budget support, while Kindergarten C benefits from grants

specifically allocated for renovations. These upgrades aim to create optimal learning environments that support holistic development and ensure that inclusive early childhood education is both accessible and sustainable. Through coordinated efforts between the ECE institutions and the local government, including ongoing socialisation, training, and monitoring, the one-year ECE programme is continuously reinforced, ultimately strengthening community participation and elevating the overall quality of early childhood education in Semarang City.

Building on [Srihartini et al.'s \(2021\)](#) findings regarding the pivotal role of policy support in enhancing early childhood education quality in Bogor Regency, and [Yuliantina et al.'s \(2023\)](#) community service insights into technical guidance for PAUD–SD transitions, all three kindergartens in Semarang City have strengthened educator competencies and learning environments through coordinated government and institutional efforts: Kindergarten A benefits from the Semarang City Education Office's ongoing mentorship programmes, seminars on innovative media development, and workshops aligned with national educator standards, mirroring Srihartini et al.'s emphasis on sustained professional development, while simultaneously partnering with community stakeholders to construct new facilities and procure modern playground equipment; Kindergarten B implements a rigorous teacher certification pathway, active teaching methodology training, and classroom management workshops, funded through BOP allocations and local donations in line with [Yuliantina et al.'s \(2023\)](#) advocacy for hands-on technical guidance, alongside facility upgrades achieved via grant applications and government budget support; and Kindergarten C prioritises curriculum-relevant teacher training, blended-learning media workshops, and comprehensive classroom management coaching, complemented by targeted renovation grants and infrastructure improvements. These combined initiatives—underpinned by regular monitoring, accreditation processes, and joint socialisation activities—ensure that high-quality, inclusive, and sustainable one-year ECE services are delivered, thereby elevating early childhood education standards across Semarang City.

## CONCLUSION

The implementation of the one-year Early Childhood Education (ECE) policy in Tembalang Sub-district, Semarang City, plays a pivotal role in enhancing children's overall development. When effectively executed, the policy supports inclusive education and ensures equitable access to quality learning opportunities. By employing a thematic curriculum and a holistic approach that integrates cognitive, social, emotional, and religious values, the policy has been shown to improve children's readiness for primary education while also fostering strong character development. Key to this success are robust teacher training programmes, the provision of adequate learning facilities, and active involvement from parents and local communities.

However, the success of the policy is heavily dependent on consistent and comprehensive implementation. Challenges such as limited facilities, insufficient educator training, and inadequate community awareness can significantly hinder the achievement of policy objectives. The research highlights that variations in resource allocation and operational support may hinder the smooth transition of children from kindergarten to primary education, ultimately impacting the overall quality of early childhood education. Therefore, addressing these challenges through sustained collaboration between government entities and educational institutions is critical.

To further strengthen the impact of the one-year ECE policy, it is recommended that local governments enhance operational support for PAUD institutions by providing improved facilities, up-to-date educational tools, and comprehensive teacher training programmes, along with ensuring sufficient budget allocation and regular monitoring. ECE institutions are encouraged to develop comprehensive strategies to bolster teacher capacity and foster closer

relationships with parents, who should play an active role in their children's educational journeys. Future research is also advised to explore the success factors in ECE policy implementation and to develop innovative learning models that further enhance the quality of early childhood education.

### Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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