



## The Implementation of Early Childhood Education (ECE) by the Community in West Praya Subdistrict

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to describe the implementation of Early Childhood Education (ECE) by the community in West Praya Subdistrict, focusing on program planning, implementation, governance, and evaluation. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with ECE administrators, teachers, and village officials, as well as through direct observation and document analysis. The findings reveal that ECE program planning in Praya Barat is conducted through participatory mechanisms involving village governments, community members, and institutional managers in developing the vision, mission, and annual activity plans. Program implementation runs effectively, supported by dedicated educators and a conducive learning environment, despite challenges related to limited facilities and infrastructure. Institutional governance is managed transparently and accountably through active community involvement in monitoring and decision-making, while program evaluation is carried out continuously through monitoring of children's development, institutional review meetings, and feedback from parents. Overall, the implementation of ECE by the community in West Praya Subdistrict reflects strong collaboration among various stakeholders in realizing inclusive, participatory, and sustainable early childhood education services.

**Keywords:** *Early Childhood Education; ECE Implementation; Community Participation; Governance; Program Evaluation*

### **Introduction**

Early Childhood Education (ECE) serves as a fundamental foundation for character formation, learning readiness, and long-term child well-being. The quality of educational services at this stage significantly influences learning outcomes in subsequent educational levels and future social mobility (UNICEF, 2023). In Indonesia, the commitment to strengthening ECE services has been continually reinforced in line with the "Golden Indonesia 2045" vision, which positions investment in early childhood development as a prerequisite for enhancing human capital quality (UNICEF, 2023). In this context, a study on the implementation of ECE by the community at the district level is crucial to ensure access, quality, and sustainability of early childhood educational services (UNICEF, 2024).

Recent national policies have clarified the direction and standards for ECE through the nationwide implementation of the “Kurikulum Merdeka” in 2024. The government emphasizes child-centred, contextual learning oriented toward character development and achieving the eight dimensions of the ECE graduate profile (Kemendikbudristek, 2024). These dimensions include faith and devotion to God, citizenship, creativity, independence, communication, health, collaboration, and critical thinking. The updated ECE curriculum standards provide a clear scope of materials and minimum learning outcomes that serve as a reference for all educational units, including community-managed ECE institutions (Kemendikbudristek, 2024).

Moreover, learning practices and assessments have undergone substantial revisions. The ECE Learning and Assessment Guidelines stress the importance of formative assessments focusing on children’s competency development, continuous observation, and meaningful feedback to support holistic child development (BSKAP Kemendikbudristek, 2022). These principles require educators to design learning experiences that foster creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking from an early age (Mansur, 2022). The implementation of these principles in community-based ECE is critical, as variations in resources, teacher training, and institutional support often affect learning quality (Musthofa, 2021).

The promotion of holistic-integrated ECE (PAUD HI), encompassing education, health, nutrition, caregiving, and child protection, has become an essential agenda at both national and regional levels. This approach aims to address the multidimensional vulnerabilities of early childhood, particularly in the post-pandemic context (Kemenko PMK, 2021). Studies indicate that integrating ECE services with family and community support can enhance school readiness, health, and child independence (Oktaviani & Dimyati, 2021; Rahmawati & Hidayat, 2022). Therefore, synergy among government, community, and family is a key factor in building a sustainable ECE system.

The local context of West Praya Subdistrict, Central Lombok, demonstrates dynamics in access equity and variations in ECE quality. West Praya Subdistrict data in Figures provides demographic and socio-economic profiles relevant for assessing local ECE needs, including the distribution of young children and available educational facilities (BPS Lombok Tengah, 2023). Similarly, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) data map ECE and kindergarten units per subdistrict, serving as a starting point to evaluate service availability. However, the quality, teacher capacity, and institutional sustainability require in-depth field study (Pusdatin Kemendikbudristek, 2024). Such analysis is essential to assess the ability of community-based ECE to achieve the eight-dimension graduate profile (Susanti, 2020).

Community-managed ECE through foundations, religious organizations, self-help playgroups, and local institutions represents the backbone of expanding ECE access in rural Indonesia (World Bank, 2023). According to Yuliani and Mulyasa (2021), community-based ECE has significant potential to nurture children’s citizenship, collaboration, and faith, provided that technical guidance, quality standards, and accountability mechanisms are well-established. Therefore, examining governance, management, and partnership models in community-led ECE in Praya Barat is a strategic step toward strengthening inclusive and sustainable services (Rahmawati & Hidayat, 2022).

The eight-dimension ECE graduate profile requires serious attention to curriculum planning and learning implementation in community-based institutions. The faith and citizenship dimensions emphasize the early development of moral and social values, while creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking serve as foundations for children to face 21st-century challenges. The health and independence dimensions’ highlight that ECE must address not only cognitive development but also physical and emotional well-being (Kemendikbudristek, 2024). Research shows that community-based ECE can successfully foster creativity and independence when curricula are designed participatively, involving parents and the local community (Suryana, 2023).

Nevertheless, post-pandemic learning recovery still presents challenges, particularly regarding the equitable provision of holistic services and early stimulation quality (UNICEF, 2024). Parental, caregiver, and community engagement is critical to enhancing the achievement of the graduate profile, especially in

independence, communication, and health dimensions (UNICEF, 2024). In Praya Barat, the active role of local communities is a decisive factor in the sustainability of community-based ECE programs (Musthofa, 2021).

From a quality assurance perspective, stronger synergy between curriculum policy, accreditation, and continuous mentoring is needed for community-managed ECE units to meet national standards and achieve the eight-dimension graduate profile (Kemendikbudristek, 2024). Enhancing teacher competencies to design creative, reflective, and character-based learning experiences is an urgent need to ensure that quality standards are implemented in practice, rather than remaining solely administrative requirements (Mansur, 2022).

Based on the discussion above, the relevance of this study lies in its contribution to contextual evidence on how communities in Praya Barat Subdistrict manage ECE, encompassing planning, governance, and evaluation to realize the eight-dimension graduate profile (Kemendikbudristek, 2024). The findings are expected to inform local government, ECE providers, and communities in formulating strategies to strengthen adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable ECE services tailored to local potentials and challenges (BPS Lombok Tengah, 2023). Thus, community-based ECE in Praya Barat can serve as a best-practice model for achieving educational equity from early childhood and preparing a generation that is faithful, characterful, healthy, creative, and critical (World Bank, 2023).

## ***Method***

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study method. This approach was chosen because it provides an in-depth understanding of the processes, meanings, and social dynamics involved in the implementation of early childhood education (ECE) by communities in West Praya Subdistrict. The case study method allows researchers to examine phenomena within their real-life context holistically, thereby providing a comprehensive depiction of social realities (Yin, 2018). Accordingly, this study aims to reveal patterns of community-based ECE implementation involving various stakeholders such as institution managers, teachers, parents, and community leaders in supporting early childhood educational services in the area.

The study was conducted in several community-managed ECE institutions in Praya Barat Subdistrict, Central Lombok. The research sites were purposively selected based on the consideration that this area exhibits a diverse range of community-based ECE institutions, including playgroups, kindergartens, and similar units. The study subjects included institution managers, teachers, parents, community leaders, and village officials who are directly involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of early childhood education programs. Informants were selected based on their level of involvement and knowledge regarding the ECE practices in their respective environments.

Data sources in this study consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis conducted directly in the field, while secondary data were obtained from official documents such as institutional activity reports, education office records, and publications from the Central Bureau of Statistics and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. The types of data collected included descriptions of planning, management, financing, and evaluation of community-run ECE activities (Sugiyono, 2019).

Data collection techniques were conducted through three main methods: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Interviews were used to explore the perspectives, experiences, and strategies of educational actors in managing ECE institutions. Participatory observation allowed researchers to directly observe learning activities, social interactions, and institutional governance, while document analysis complemented and strengthened the field findings. To ensure data validity, the researcher employed triangulation of sources, methods, and time to examine the consistency of data across different stakeholders and techniques (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Data analysis was performed interactively following the Miles and Huberman model, which includes three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting and focusing on data relevant to the research objectives. Data display was presented in a narrative form to facilitate interpretation, while conclusion drawing involved logically and systematically interpreting the analysed data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To ensure the credibility of the research findings, member checking with informants and peer discussions were conducted to verify the accuracy of data interpretation within the social context of the field (Creswell, 2018).

### ***Findings and Discussion***

The implementation of early childhood education (ECE) in Praya Barat has been carried out collaboratively and participatively, involving institution managers, teachers, parents, community leaders, and village officials (Anisa, 2022). Semester program planning is conducted through village deliberations, where activity priorities, allocation of responsibilities, and utilization of resources are discussed collectively (Yusup, 2018). Field observations indicate that needs-based planning takes into account the condition of local facilities and resources (Najamuddin, 2023).

Financial support from the Village Budget (APBDes) and Village Funds (Dana Desa) amounted to IDR 18 million for teacher salaries and improvement of playrooms, which were managed transparently and accountably (Direktorat Jenderal Perimbangan Keuangan, 2019). This aligns with national policy directives regarding the use of Village Funds for education (Pradhan, 2013). In terms of learning, programs are designed to enhance teacher competence and parent involvement through parenting activities, teacher training, and educational competitions (Kemdikbud, 2022). However, field realities show that institutional operational guidelines have not fully adapted to the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum (Sri, 2020).

Institutional governance demonstrates a balance between a simple organizational structure, financial management transparency, and community participation (Anisa, 2022). Functional organizational structures enable learning and administrative activities to run effectively despite a limited number of teachers (Najamuddin, 2023). Routine activities, such as “Clean Friday,” strengthen social interactions among teachers, children, and the community, creating a participatory and conducive learning environment (Sanusi, 2022). Coordination among stakeholders, through internal meetings and digital communication, facilitates activity monitoring, plan adjustments, and quality control of learning (Yusup, 2018). Community participation in facility improvement and learning support strengthens the social legitimacy of institutions (Imhar, 2022). Nevertheless, challenges remain in ensuring consistent implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and managing teacher workload (Rahman, 2021).

Evaluation of ECE implementation is conducted systematically and continuously, including monitoring daily activities, assessing child development, and evaluating semester and annual programs through written reports, observations, classroom visits, and internal meetings of institution managers (Aprilyani, 2021). Village authorities routinely monitor activities through quarterly reports and classroom visits (Safitri, 2025). Each child has a developmental report covering motor, social, language, and cognitive aspects, accompanied by a portfolio of works (Jannah, 2022). Internal meetings between managers and teachers are held at the end of each semester to review program achievements, formulate improvement strategies, and plan subsequent programs with the participation of parents and village authorities (Aulia, 2022). Observations indicate active community participation in facility improvement and child supervision, which has resulted in an increase in student enrolment from 28 to 34 kids (Anindita, 2023).

Overall, ECE implementation in West Praya Subdistrict has applied collaborative, participatory, and needs-based practices, integrated with village policies, and actively involving the community (Najamuddin, 2023). Emerging challenges, such as curriculum consistency, teacher capacity, and strengthening evaluation systems, are critical focal points for improving the quality of early childhood educational services at the village level (Rahman, 2021). The integration of practical implementation with policy and literature indicates that ECE provision in this area reflects participatory, accountable, and child development-oriented principles (Jannah, 2022).

## Conclusion

1. The planning of early childhood education (ECE) implementation in West Praya Subdistrict has been conducted collaboratively and participatively, with support from the village government and community involvement; however, further strengthening is needed in the areas of implementation, parental engagement, and curriculum alignment to achieve participatory, transparent, and sustainable ECE governance.
2. ECE governance in West Praya Subdistrict has functioned effectively through collaborative support among institution managers, village authorities, and the community; nevertheless, improvements are required in financial transparency, teacher capacity, and the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum to optimize and sustain the quality of early childhood educational services.
3. The evaluation of ECE implementation in Praya Barat has been systematic, continuous, participatory, and data-driven, involving multiple stakeholders; yet, it needs reinforcement in consistent record-keeping, monitoring learning quality, and conducting holistic assessments of child development to further enhance service quality.

## Recommendation

1. Increasing parental engagement through regular communication forums and collaborative programs is essential to ensure that the planning and implementation of the ECE curriculum in Praya Barat are more participatory and contextually relevant.
2. Continuous training for teachers and administrators is key to strengthening financial transparency, enhancing pedagogical competence, and optimizing the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in ECE institutions.
3. Developing a standardized evaluation system and data-driven monitoring involving village authorities, teachers, and parents is crucial to ensure the sustainable improvement of early childhood education service quality.

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