

PAUD is My Second Child: How Early Childhood in Indonesia Strives to Develop

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Abstract

This research is aimed to investigate how the teachers of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Indonesia or Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini (PAUD) have been struggling to sustain and develop their schools. The data was collected through a focus group discussion with teachers in Kelompok Bermain (KB) from four sub-districts in Kendal, Central Java. It is followed by individual interviews and the teachers' document analysis. The government policies are also gathered and analyzed to know to what extent the government supports the teachers and their schools. The research found that despite the different reasons for being PAUD teachers, they established (ECE) from 'zero' and put their schools as a priority over themselves; being proactive and communicative the only ways to develop both their professionalism and institutions; Dana Desa and Dana Kelurahan are two desired financial resources; and they hope that the government could raise their status from non-formal educators to be formal and bring equality. In conclusion, the teachers have struggled to advance their professionalism and institutions despite disadvantaged circumstances and expecting that in the future they will gain more government support.

Keywords:

Early Childhood Education, PAUD Teachers, Dana Desa, Women Workers in Early Childhood Education, Dana Desa, and Dana Kelurahan.



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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education around the world has different characteristics and uniqueness. Indonesia as a developing country has the policy that each urban village/village should have at least one PAUD. This policy has spread to all provinces and areas in Indonesia, including Kendal. This policy, of course, has an impact on the communities, especially women in Kendal to participate. This paper would explain the early childhood education (ECE) in Indonesia and the condition of Kendal Regency briefly.

Early Childhood Education in Indonesia

Indonesia is a country with the fourth-largest population in the world. The population of young

children age between three and six years old is high. The government itself maintains that 33 million young children need Early Childhood Education or PAUD (Kemdikbud, 2017a). It is argued that children develop their brains very fast during their early ages and they should be supported by a positive learning environment.

Indonesian government's commitment to early childhood education (ECE) got stronger since Indonesia ratified the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000. The government has agreed to expand and improve early childhood care and education comprehensively through families and more structured programs, and it should reach all children

from ages 3 to 6 years old by 2015 (UNESCO, 2000).

The definition and the categories of ECE are then explained based on the National Education System Act no. 20/2003. This act states that early childhood education or PAUD is the activities done by stimulating the children age zero to six years old to develop their physical growth and psychological development before they study at elementary schools. Further, it states Taman Kanak-Kanak (TK) and Raudatul Athfal (RA) are formal early childhood education, while Kelompok Bermain (KB) and Tempat Penitipan Anak (TPA) are nonformal. The government mandates the program of *Satu Desa/Satu Kelurahan, Satu PAUD*, meaning that each village (desa) or each urban village (kelurahan) should have at least one early childhood education centre (PAUD) in 2011. After several years of the program, the Ministry of Education and Culture states that recently twelve million of seventeen million children have got access to early childhood education (Kemdikbud, 2017b). The government would continue its commitment that every child should experience early childhood education.

In Kendal Regency there are 631 kindergartens or TK/RA (3 public and 628 private), 347 playgroups or KB (private), 14 child cares or TPA (private), and 38 early childhood run by posyandu or SPS (private). In total, there are 1,030 early childhood schools in Kendal with 55.5% is TK, 33.7% KB, 5.7% RA, 3.7% SPS, and 1.4% TPA (Lambung Data Pendidikan, 2019). Most of the schools are private with limited government financial assistance. The teachers are also mostly high school graduates.

Kendal Regency

Kabupaten Kendal is one of 35 regencies in Central Java. Kendal is located in the north coastal line of Java with around 46% of its land is the agricultural area (Pemerintah Kabupaten Kendal, n.d.). Geographically, it has beaches in the north

part and mountains in the south, with 20 sub-districts and 286 areas consisting of kelurahan and desa (BPS Kendal, 2014). Its population in 2015 was 952,966 people (BPS Kendal, 2015).

The expense of per capita per year for one person in Kendal is around ten million rupiahs (BPS Kendal, 2016). Among 952,966 people, there are 11.10% of the total population or 106,070 people living in poverty with the poverty line IDR 335,497 (USD 24) per capita per month (BPS Kabupaten Kendal, 2017). Most people work as farmers and rely on agricultural products, while others have various occupation. To obtain a higher wage, many parents especially women work in abroad as migrant workers.

BNP2TKI or the Bureau of Placement and Protection for Indonesian Migrant Workers states that Central Java is a province with the second highest number of migrant workers in Indonesia (Badan Nasional Penempatan dan Perlindungan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia, 2018b). Kendal is a regency with the highest number of Indonesian migrant workers or Tenaga Kerja Indonesia in Central Java with 11,216 workers in 2014 (Badan Pusat Statistik Jawa Tengah, 2018). The number of migrant workers from Central Java in 2018 is 56,100 people (Badan Nasional Penempatan dan Perlindungan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia, 2018a). The Department of Manpower and Transmigration (Disnakertans) stated that between January and June 2017, Kendal sent 4,038 informal migrant workers and 528 formal migrant workers (Pujangga, 2017). The migrant workers often leave their children for years and let their relatives usually the grandparents to take care of their grandchildren. Therefore, Early Childhood Education or PAUD plays important roles in Kendal, especially in poor areas.

Research Question

By considering that many Early Childhood Education schools are surviving in difficult conditions, the research questions would be "Despite their limitation, how could the teachers in Early Childhood

Education in Kendal develop both their competencies and their schools?"

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The number of researches focusing on early childhood teachers is very limited. Some researchers argue that PAUD relies too much on low-income communities, especially the national housewives association or PKK, the group of mothers who work voluntarily with the value of self-sustaining and egalitarian cooperation within the community (Newberry, 2017; Octarra & Hendriati, 2018). It is undeniable that the financial problems varied among communities could highly bring impact on the availability of the schools' funding. PKK, widely known as a group of women who actively get involved to the community is a key actor to build and sustain the early childhood institutions in the communities both in metropolitan and rural areas.

The women's roles in community-based development itself are caused by post new order, democratisation, and the increase of the middle class (Newberry, 2017). The demand to increase the family income raises the number of women working in industry, leaving the children at home with minimum supervision. Thus, there is a change of responsibility in educating the children which are previously by a mother at home to early childhood teachers at schools.

In addition, there are pressures for PKK women to contribute, the intention to have a better chance, and the intention to improve children's development and all of three (Newberry & Marpinjun, 2018). Still, they have an extremely limited chance to obtain higher education or to be certified teachers and trapped in this job. The previous research found that these women are 'trapped'. Nevertheless, there should be another story to tell that might bring different stories and motives of why many women decide to continue their participation in early childhood education. Then, it is necessary to investigate whether teachers in Kendal have the same experiences or have slightly different conditions.

Like other qualitative research, this study puts the positionality to bring the teachers' voices focusing on the lense of socio-cultural aspects (Crotty, 1998). The teachers' experiences and opinions about their job including the demands were captured and interpreted as the people struggling for not only the development of the society but also justice for teachers' contributions. The issues related to the government are also discussed as a form of advocacy to the early childhood teachers. Therefore, this study attempts to share the stories understanding of what happens in the early childhood in Indonesia and teachers' expectation to raise the people awareness and support for them.

A case study was then conducted in Kendal Regency, Jawa Tengah by having a focus group discussion with six Bunda (teachers) in Kelompok Bermain (KB), followed by individual interviews through *WhatsApp*. The teachers are coming from four different sub-districts ranging from four to eleven years working experiences: Bunda Ayun and Bunda Yati from two *kelurahan* in Kota Kendal, Bunda Ana from KB run by a Yayasan (foundation) located in a village South Kaliwungu, Bunda Ziya from a village in Ngampel, and Bunda Hesti and Bunda Isma from the same village in Kangkung. Some names in the interview, however, have been changed due to confidentiality. The focus group discussion and interviews were done from January to early February 2019. Some teachers' documents and the government policy are analysed to both confirm and add information. The triangulation was done, and the themes were constructed to build know what the PAUD teachers have done to sustain their institutions while developing their teaching professions.

CONTEXT: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research has some findings related to the process of starting the schools, the financial problems, the effort in networking, the desire to use Dana Desa and Dana Kelurahan, and the demand for justice. The explanation is as followed.

Starting from 'zero'

All teachers who were interviewed have reasons to teach in Early Childhood Education. Bunda Ayun has a passion in early childhood education (ECE) and has taught in PAUD since 2004 in Ambawara before moving to Kendal and started her KB (Play Group) with her neighbour in Kendal in 2011. Another teacher, Bunda Yati, feeling regret that her five-year-old son started elementary school too early, she agreed to build a KB and teacher her neighbours in 2014. Bunda Ziya, after returning from Kalimantan, joined her neighbour's KB in 2011 after being convinced that children whose parents working abroad needed support from adults. Bunda Isma and Bunda Hesti were cadres in Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga (PKK) since 2003 and started a new KB in 2011 due to one village one PAUD policy. The most experienced teacher is Bunda Ana, a posyandu cadre who started her KB in 2007. All of them, except Bunda Ziya, had experienced working with children and established KB.

Establishing schools was a difficult task especially if there was no available infrastructure. Bunda Ayun previously rented a house one year before moving to a new building lent by the department of irrigation. Bunda Isma and Bunda Hesti were lucky enough that their neighbor lent her house to be used as KB for years. Then they moved to a building that has also been used for Taman Pendidikan Quran (TPQ), A place for young children to learn Qoran in 2013. They have shared the same building where KB ran the morning and TPQ in the afternoon for five years while waiting for a new building funded by dana desa. Bunda Ana used a building provided by the kindergarten of her Yayasan, while Bunda Yati was very lucky that her *kelurahan* built a new building funded by PNPM. Only Bunda Ziya who did not need to find a new building since her KB building belongs to her neighbor. Only some of them received the government's stimulant funding while the others did not. While establishing a

school need infrastructure, educational human resources are very limited.

The requirement of being an early childhood teacher, based on Permendiknas Number 16 in 2007 PAUD (TK/RA) is at least Diploma IV or a bachelor of either early childhood education or psychology. Since the recruitment of their, KB relied on the volunteerism and it was not surprising that they did not have a linear educational qualification. Bunda Ayun graduated from Bachelor of Economics Education from a university in Surakarta, while Bunda Ana had Diploma III in Economics Management from a university in Yogyakarta. The other teachers were high school graduates. Now Bunda Ayun, Bunda Ana, Bunda Isma, and Bunda Hesti had obtained the bachelor's degree of PAUD, while Bunda Yati and Bunda Ziya are doing the study the fourth and the eight semesters. The other teachers in their schools also still have various educational backgrounds. It takes time, and more importantly financial ability to study in university. From 600,000 PAUD teachers in Indonesia, only 20% of them have qualified the bachelor of early childhood education (Kemdikbud, 2017b). This number seems small but appreciated appreciation by the government. The teachers in FGD are proud that despite limited financial ability, they could study in universities and are qualified based on the government's regulation.

Regarding the teachers' quality, Octarra and Hendriati (2018) state that the government has policies that the teachers of early childhood education should obtain formal qualifications although the research done by Bapennas in 2014 found that there was no direct correlation between the teachers' educational qualifications and their interactions with children. However, the national policy ignores the uniqueness of each ECE schools and the inequality of teachers' professionalization, leaving the teachers questioning themselves about their professional identity (Yulindrasari & Ujianti, 2018). The 'educational malpractice' is a scary

nightmare for the teachers in dealing with their educational background and the challenges to teaching early childhood students.

“My Salary is *Yen* in Bank Central Akherat”

It is widely known that the teachers' wage is the main problem in PAUD. There is a (sad) joke that PAUD teacher's salary is '*sajuta*' in West Java (Ruang Guru PAUD, 2018). It is almost spelled as '*sejuta*' (one million), the considerably acceptable salary for a teacher, but the true meaning is the acronym for *sabar*, *jujur*, and *tawakal* (being patient, being honest, and be letting God do the rest). The teachers in this research also brought their own (sad) joke that their salaries are *yen* in BCA. *Yen* is not Japanese currency but Javanese word for 'if' meaning that 'if any' or 'if it is available', while BCA is not the name of a famous bank Indonesia (Bank Central Asia) but Bank Central *Akherat*, meaning that the reward would be in the hereafter life. Their salaries were extremely low ranging from USD 10 to 50 per month. Even they mostly should pay for the school expenses due to the low students' school fees. KB teachers ever received USD 15 per month in 2014 from Kendal Regency (Wiyono, 2014) but it was temporary due to the limited budget.

The teachers admit their salaries are not paid professionals but still to bear different tasks. They have organizational structures such as the school principal, the secretary, the treasurer, and the school operator for the national school database or *Dapodik*. Some of them also do the cleaning while others hire another person. In fact, sometimes they share the job together due to limited computer skills and times. Those who have babies do fewer responsibilities and the other teachers help her. The 'kinship' system is more suitable for them because they cannot pay a higher salary.

Related to this issue, Marpinjun and Ramsey (2017) maintain that gender, culture, and religion influence the policy in early childhood education. The gender divisions have put men as breadwinners while women are more likely to participate in

domestic works, mostly unpaid (Hoyt & Simon, 2017). Indeed, the dichotomy between male and female jobs put women to 'feminise' PAUD with poor payment (Marpinjun, 2009, as cited in Newberry, 2012), especially women in poor areas pay the cost of the policy (Newberry & Marpinjun, 2018). Javanese culture encourages more on community and family, instead of focusing on individualism (Adamson, 2007), encouraging them to contribute more than it should be. The religion also affects them to continue volunteering for the sake of worshipping God. Indonesia is the most generous country in the world with the highest participation in volunteering (Heriyanto, 2018). Indeed, the Indonesian government has put women have a central position to national change (Jones, 2010). However, they do not receive enough compensation. They rely much on self-supported funding in running the school.

Networking as An Advancement's Factor

Women leaders usually experience barriers in having role models, networking, and sponsors (van Esch, Assylkhan, & Bilimoria, 2017 cited Ibarra et al., 2013). During the FGD, the teachers state that they see senior teachers as role models, especially those who experience the same conditions but could survive and have developed schools. The networks that they approach are including the teachers' forums, the community gatherings, and the parents' group. The sponsors are uneasy to find but they prefer to communicate with the village leaders to support the schools.

The teachers register themselves to different groups of PAUD to improve their leadership capabilities and have more access to obtain information such as Himpunan Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini (HIMPAUDI), Pedoman Pembinaan Gugus (PKG), and Kelompok Kerja Guru (KKG). These organisations provide information related to available training, seminars, and the possibilities to get the government's funding. They also share their teaching experiences and skills. Their participation in

these organisations, especially those who are actively involved would have the possibility to get a grant to attend a free workshop.

The seminars, pieces of training, and workshops are available every year in Kendal. However, it cost about USD 8 per day, while the teachers' income is very low. They cannot depend on the government to provide free training due to limited quota. Usually, one sub-district only has a quota for one or two teachers. Besides, it does not guarantee that the speakers are capable enough to deliver the topic. The facilities of the venue are also limited and might not be comfortable for them to do sessions in a whole day. They share their experiences when they got an invitation to attend training by the government, but they found that the chairs were almost broken or there was no air conditioning in the room. The very good training is usually funded by the central government but only for those who lucky, that could be selected to participate. Hence, they prefer to self-fund their pieces of training in order to increase their teaching competencies.

The other networks are attending community gatherings to promote their schools as well as to raise the neighbours' awareness. The regular participation in PKK, posyandu, and pengajian (Islamic religious gatherings) could strengthen the emotional bonding and sometimes influence the activity of fundraising especially when they know that KB in their villages needs financial assistance. The amount of money donated is helpful. The teachers should spend the money frugally.

Some parents also have sympathy for the teachers. Bu Ayun and her teachers are given uniforms and hijabs by the parents, while the kindergarten (TK) teachers in the foundation where Bu Ana and her teachers working also buy them uniforms. All teachers through individual interviews also stated that every year the parents buy them keepsakes such as carpets, cupboard, fan, and books. Since the school fee per month is only

between USD 2.5 and USD 7 paid by 23 to 40 students, it is not surprising that the rest of the school budget might not be able to afford the worn-out equipment. Thus, being open about discussing school problems is important.

Dana Desa and Dana Kelurahan are New Hopes

The government funding to PAUD is called Biaya Operasional Pendidikan (BOP). The amount of it received by schools are varied according to the number of students. Each student will receive IDR 600,000 (USD 43) annually (Purwadi, 2017). To receive the funding, every KB in Kendal should submit a BOP proposal each year and make an annual report. This funding is helpful to at least to purchase stationaries and daily necessities of the school. However, it can only be used to fund the teachers' transportation cost such as to attend the teachers' forum or training session. It cannot be used to buy electronics such as a television, a printer, or a VCD player either. Hence, the teachers should tightly manage the school budget to purchase the equipment.

The teachers shared experiences in reporting the BOP. It is an annual report that makes them so busy that they should work overtime. The format of reporting is complicated and changed a lot every year. What makes them annoyed is that the government staff usually do not explain the clear draft or layout in doing the report. Many times, they should do multiple revisions because of the unclear procedure. it is not efficient and wasting both paper and their own money. It is also time-consuming and burdening especially those who live in very rural areas and should go back and forth to Dinas Pendidikan Kabupaten, the department of education and culture government reGENCY office. Consequently, the teachers usually rely on the leader of HIMPAUDI to help them. The BOP is helpful but also burdening. Fortunately, the KB in desa (village) has more chance to receive much more funding from this grant.

Dana Desa is the grant given to villages by the Ministry of Village, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration (Kemendes PDRT) since 2015. The amount of this grant has increased from 20.67 trillion rupiahs in 2015 to 60 trillion rupiahs in 2017. It means that a village received 280 million rupiahs in 2015, and 800 million rupiahs in 2017 (Kemendes, 2017). The use of Dana Desa based on the Ministry Rule (Permen) Number 21 in 2015 prioritises the infrastructure, economic development, and basic services (Kemendes, 2016b). Based on Permendes Number 2 in 2016 on Developing Village Index, there should be at least one PAUD in each village (Kemendes, 2016a). Therefore, between 2015 and 2018, Dana Desa has been used to establish 50,854 PAUD (Kemendes, 2018). Desa that do not implement the regulation will have the sanction of punishment from the government.

The government are optimistic that Dana Desa and Biaya Operasional Pendidikan (BOP) can increase the young children's participation at schools (Ruang Guru PAUD, 2018). Recently, around 27% of children have no experience in ECE (Kemendikbud, 2017b). Indonesian Ministry of Education is also ready to cooperate with the Kemendes to give 300 hours training to the teachers by considering that it should as qualified as the graduates of diploma III or bachelor degree (Kemendikbud, 2017b).

According to Kendal Regent's Rule Number 6 in 2018 on the Procedure for Dividing and Determining the Amount of Dana Desa, Dana Desa is prioritised to develop poor villagers and the amount is based on the calculation of the number of residents, the level of poverty, the extent of the village, and the difficulty index to reach the village (Bupati Kendal, 2018). In the FGD, only KB of Bunda Hesti and Bunda Isma (they work in the same KB), and that of Bunda Ziya that receive Dana Desa, while Bunda Ayun and Bunda Yati said that their KBs are located in kelurahan and did not receive it. Bunda Ana also said that despite its location in Desa, her KB did not

deserve that. It was not specifically mentioned how much money they receive but Bunda Hesti and Bunda Isma said that they were waiting for the finishing of their KB building construction, while Bunda Ziya's school was looking for a location to expand the school's building.

On another hand, Bunda Ayun and Bunda Yati need to be more patient because Dana Kelurahan is not as much as Dana Desa. According to the Government Regulation (PP) Number 17 in 2018 on Kecamatan (sub-district), it is stated that each regional government has responsibility to fund kelurahan and it should be allocated by each sub-district (Setkab, 2018). Kelurahan located in a city with less than 5% of its area is rural village deserves 5% of Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Daerah (APBD) Kendal, or the regional budget for income and expenditure, after the APBD is deducted by Dana Alokasi Khusus (DAK), of the special allocation fund (Silalahi, 2018). It is also not mentioned how much money they received from Dana Kelurahan.

The government plans to raise the amount of Dana Kelurahan. It is expected that in 2019, one kelurahan would receive around 350 million to 380 million rupiahs (Sunariyah, 2018). Therefore, Dana Kelurahan granted by the Indonesian government is only to support the regional government. However, this new regulation needs Kemendagri's explanation in details (Kusuma, 2018). However, the three trillion rupiahs of Dana Kelurahan is taken from Dana Desa, which was previously 73 trillion rupiahs becomes 70 trillion (Sitepu, 2018). It means that each village will only receive 100 million rupiahs because there would be more desa receive this grant. The PAUD teachers should be more proactive to access the funding.

"We Need Equality"

PAUD teachers, especially those working in KB are underprivileged despite their efforts to develop both their institutions and professionalism. Moreover, KB teachers feel the gap between them and TK (kindergarten) teachers. KB is non-formal

ECE while TK is formal. The status of TK teachers as civil servants or PNS also makes KB teachers less confident. In Kendal, there is a custom that PAUD teachers wear *keki*, a civil servant uniform. KB teachers sometimes feel disapproved when they wear it because people may assume that they are already promoted, whereas they still have to strive to survive and sustain their enthusiasm to be PAUD teachers.

In December 2018, on behalf of 385 thousands of PAUD teachers, Yusril Ihza Mahendra, a well-known lawyer sues to change the Act No 14 in 2015 on Teachers and Lecturers (Aji, 2018). He and PAUD teachers demand the same status for the non-formal early childhood teachers due to the underpayment compared to other teachers in formal education institutions. Each PAUD teacher in Kendal contributes IDR 10,000 (USD 0.71) to pay the process.

It is undeniable that PAUD teachers experience both pride and exhaustion in self-sustaining their schools (Newberry & Marpinjun, 2018). Their sacrifices for early childhood education should be paid off. Anything is done by KB teachers for the sake of their schools, while they hardly receive the financial support that specifically purposed to raise their wages. Indonesian people are generous to help but it does not mean that they are allowed to be neglected. KB teachers are not lower in the spirit of educating young children. As many of them have graduated from the bachelor of PAUD and attended various pieces of training, it is reasonable that they deserve equality, and more importantly, the reward.

The teachers are hoping that someday they will receive certification, the government compensation for their teaching profession. It would take a longer time, but these teachers are always optimistic. They believe that, according to their religion, their dedication to education would be granted by God; they still receive Bank Central *Akherat*. They are

hoping and struggling that someday *yen* would change into the real rupiah.

CONCLUSION

The existence of PAUD in Kendal is crucial, not only because of its responsibility to educate children, but also the limitation of many aspects, especially in the funding and the teachers' salary. The teachers should sacrifice themselves for the sake of the schools. They pay more rather than receive acceptable salary; they still put their efforts to handle their schools' expenses and more importantly to educate themselves. The teachers' intention to continue the study is highly appreciated and deserve more government attention. The networking is their strength; the contribution of the communities is appreciated yet insufficient. Therefore, it is the government's responsibility to do more not only to fund the village but start to increase the teachers' welfare.

The research confirms the previous research about the condition of the early childhood schools and teachers. It also brings more picture about how the teachers put huge effort to both increase their teaching competencies and develop their own institution. Yet, this research is limited to the number of interviewees in few sub-districts in Kendal Regency. Its funding is therefore cannot be used to generalise the condition of other *Kelompok Bermain* in other areas. There should be more investigation related to the teachers' difficult experiences in running *Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*. However, many teachers in poor areas are relatively experiencing financial problems.

This research is also limited to the access to interview the government officers in order to clarify and add detailed information about the policies related to Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Indonesia and Kendal Regency. It is suggested that upcoming research have a better investigation. *Dana Desa* and *Dana Kelurahan* are influential in sustaining PAUD in Indonesia. Further research

about the impact of this funding would be interesting and important to evaluate the success of the program for both the teachers and the schools.

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