

# The Development of an Integrative Holistic Program in Early Childhood Care and Education: A Policy in the Indonesian Context

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## Abstract

Policies on early childhood care and education in Indonesia continue to grow. One interesting policy to discuss is integrative holistic early childhood development. The HI-ECD program is considered effective in ensuring the fulfillment of early childhood development rights. HI-ECD in early childhood education unit includes education, health and nutrition services, care, and protection. The aim of HI-ECD is to fulfill the essential needs of early childhood, both physically and psychologically so that they can become healthy, intelligent, and noble persons, and ready to enter the next level of education. In addition, the long-term goal is to prepare and succeed the Indonesian gold target by 2045. This study was based on an analysis of government-issued HI-ECD documents as well as various relevant literature.

**Keywords:** *Integrative holistic programs, education, health and nutrition, care, protection, early childhood.*

## Introduction

Early childhood is the next generation of the nation that will bring change in the future. They have very rapid growth and development, both physically and intellectually.<sup>(1)</sup> It is estimated that when a child enters kindergarten, his brain weighs almost 90% of the brain of an adult.<sup>(2)</sup> Various studies show that the first five years of children's life are the most valuable period where the child's brain and intellectual development occurs very rapidly.<sup>(3,4)</sup> Bloom explained that 50% of children's intellectual development occurs at the age of four and reaches 80% at the age of eight.<sup>(5,6)</sup> Therefore, early age-from birth to eight years-is called the golden age. Care, education and practice of the environment greatly influence the next development of the child.<sup>(1,4)</sup>

This priceless early age attracts the attention of various parties around the world, including Indonesia. Various policies and programs are offered to optimize the development of early childhood. Early childhood care and education (ECCE) has been studied by researchers in recent years.<sup>(7-10)</sup> ECCE is not only for preparation to elementary school level, but also to fulfill and develop children's needs holistically in terms of social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs.<sup>(8,11)</sup> ECCE helps children obtain optimal language, math, and social-emotional skills.<sup>(9)</sup> In addition, ECCE can be used

as a means to reach and meet the needs of children who are less fortunate.<sup>(11)</sup> The ECCE program must continue to be developed and improved in order to provide the best service for early childhood. ECCE is one of the best investments a nation can make to prepare for better human resource development.<sup>(1)</sup>

In Indonesia, ECCE is one of the strategic programs in preparing Indonesia's golden targets in 2045. The Directorate General of Early Childhood, Non-formal and Informal Education (Dirjen PAUDNI) asserts that starting from 2012 each village must have at least one early childhood education (ECE).<sup>(12)</sup> This shows the government's seriousness in paying attention to ECCE. Although the role in ECCE is still far from what is expected. This is because most of the implementation of ECCE still relies on and is dominated by private parties. As a result, facilities and infrastructure supporting the ECCE are very limited, even the welfare of teachers is very alarming. This condition does not only occur in Indonesia but it is also experienced by other countries.<sup>(8)</sup> Another problem is that only around 7.3 million children out of approximately 26.2 million children aged 0-6 years received ECCE services through various program.<sup>(13)</sup>

As a form of government's attention and support in ECCE, a policy on integrative holistic early childhood

development (HI-ECD) was issued. This policy is very much needed as a law shelter for an integrated holistic program for early childhood, as well as standardization in implementing the program at school and in the community. HI-ECD policy is set forth in the Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia (*Perpres* RI) Number 60 of 2013. This policy is intended to guarantee the fulfillment of the right to early childhood development. With this policy, the HI-ECD program must be implemented in ECE unit. Unfortunately, the policy of implementing HI-ECD in ECE unit has not been much analyzed. How is the development of the HI-ECD program in ECE unit? How is the technical implementation? and What are the obstacles to HI-ECD in ECE unit? This article aimed to examine and analyze HI-ECD policies in ECE unit.

### Method

**Type of research:** Qualitative explorative method was used in this study. The researcher wanted to understand and review the policies and implementation of HI-ECD development programs in ECE unit. The exploration method was used to reveal new knowledge about HI-ECD policies issued by the government. Jacobsen explains that exploratory research questions aim to reveal new knowledge about a phenomenon that occurs.<sup>(10)</sup>With this method, the researcher could find out how far HI-ECD was applied in ECE unit, including development concepts, implementation techniques, and constraints found in ECE unit.

**Data Collection:** In order to gain an understanding of the integrated holistic development program in ECCE, the researchers documented the data. The data that have been documented were then understood, reviewed, and analyzed using the hermeneutic approach. Hermeneutics is an approach to theory and practice of interpretation.<sup>(14)</sup> That is, this approach is intended to interpret how people understand the construction and practice of a particular policy. Skjaeveland explains that a hermeneutic approach can be used to analyze certain documents and policies.<sup>(10)</sup> In this study, hermeneutic approach was used to study ECCE policies. The documents that *Perpres* RI Number 60 of 2013 concerning HI-ECD; technical instructions for implementing HI-ECD in ECE unit; Minister of Education and Culture Regulation(*Permendikbud*) Number 137 of 2014 concerning National Standards for Early Childhood Education; and *Permendikbud* Number 146 of 2014 concerning ECD Curriculum 2013.

### Results and Discussion

HI-ECD is a strategic policy of the Indonesian government in improving the quality of ECCE services. In addition, its purpose is to meet the essential needs of children so that they can achieve optimal growth and development. These essential needs include health and nutrition, educational stimuli, moral-emotional fostering and nurturing.<sup>(15)</sup>

This step is a breakthrough for the government to prepare smart, healthy, and noble human resources as we know that the government has a golden target for Indonesia in 2045. Darman mentions that the target of golden Indonesia 2045 can only be achieved through quality education.<sup>(16)</sup> With quality education, it will produce quality human resources. Mulyani reveals that there are four conditions to manifest golden Indonesia in 2045, one of which is to improve human quality.<sup>(17)</sup> Indicators of the progress of a nation are highly determined based on the quality of its human resources.<sup>(18)</sup> *Perpres* RI Number 60 of 2013 was issued by the government as a form of attention and encouragement so that children as the next generation of the nation can be well served and guaranteed their needs.

**Model of HI-ECD Program in ECE Unit:** HI-ECD program in ECE unit is an early childhood education plan that contains comprehensive and integrated services on all aspects of children development. The development essences are physical and non-physical which include health, nutrition, psycho-social, and mental fulfillment.<sup>(19)</sup> HI-ECD is also meant as a form of early childhood development that is diverse and interrelated simultaneously, systematically, and integrated.<sup>(18,20)</sup> HI-ECD program includes education, health and nutrition services, care, and protection.<sup>(21)</sup> All services must be carried out in an integrated manner in ECE unit. That is, every ECE unit is required to organize HI-ECD program. HI-ECD model in ECE unit can be seen in Figure 1.

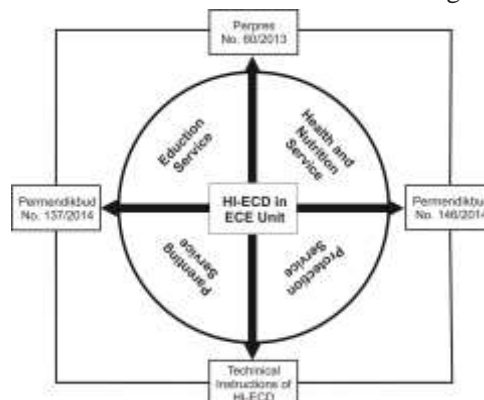


Figure 1: Model of HI-ECD program in ECE unit

Since the issuance of the *Perpres* RI Number 60 of 2013 concerning HI-ECD, legally the policy must be applied in various ECCE programs. In the ECE unit, the HI-ECD program is implemented and developed in an integrated manner with reference to the *Permendikbud* Number 137 of 2014 concerning national standards for early childhood education, Regulation of the *Permendikbud* Number 146 concerning 2013 ECE Curriculum, and technical guidelines for the implementation of HI-ECD in ECE unit.

### **Implementation of HI-ECD Program in ECE**

**Unit:** HI-ECD is applied in ECE unit through four forms of services, namely: education, health and nutrition, care and protection.<sup>(18)</sup> All of these services must be obtained by each child simultaneously.<sup>(22)</sup> ECE unit must be able to provide programs for services education, health and nutrition, care, and protection to ensure that all children live well.<sup>(23)</sup> Programs and forms of HI-ECD activities in ECE unit can be seen in table 1.

HI-ECD in the form of educational services can be implemented by providing educational stimuli to stimulate various children's developments, both physically and spiritually. Six spheres of child development that need to be optimized are religious and moral, physical-motoric, cognitive, linguistic, social-emotional, and artistic. With this education service, it is expected that children will be better prepared to enter further education.

HI-ECD in the form of health and nutrition services is carried out by giving children nutritious food and conducting regular health checks, as well as inviting children to behave in a healthy life. Mulyani said that 25% of Indonesian children experience malnutrition.<sup>(17)</sup> Health and nutrition are essential factors for children's growth and development, but the nutritional status of pre-school-aged children in Indonesia is still worrying.<sup>(24)</sup> Even though health and nutrition are one of determinants in preparing high-quality human resources. For this reason, health and nutrition services are inseparable programs in HI-ECD.

Parenting services in HI-ECD are collaborative activities between schools, teachers, and parents. This parenting program is intended to provide information on each child's needs and development, both from parents to school and from the school to the parents. In addition, to maintain good relations between schools, teachers, parents, and children. As explained by Olson,

DeFrain, Skogrand the role of educators in parenting is ideally done together, because parents and children have different roles.<sup>(25)</sup>

HI-ECD in the form of protection services is carried out to provide a sense of security and comfort for children in participating in ECD activities. This protection covers two things, physical and psychological. Maslow in the theory of human needs hierarchy explains that there is a need for security or comfort that must be obtained by children in order to achieve further needs.<sup>(4)</sup> Protection services also prevent children from bullying and discrimination from teachers and peers. If children feel safe and comfortable, they can learn to the fullest. Programs and forms of HI-ECD activities in ECE unit is described below:

HI-ECD program in the form of educational services includes: learning of religious and moral values, physical-motor learning, cognitive learning, language learning, social emotional learning, and art learning. The activity model of religious and moral values at the ECE Unit, among others: doing worship, being honest, maintaining personal hygiene and the environment, respecting other, and knowing religious holidays. Physical-motor learning for example: doing coordinated body movements, doing physical games, drawing, cutting, and sticking. Kognitif learning in the ECE unit includes: getting to know shapes and textures, know letters and numbers, knowing big and small sizes, and getting to know more and less number. Language learning can be either communicating verbally, arranging simple sentences, reading and listening to stories, and reading and writing your own name. Social emotional learning includes playing with peers, sharing with peers, and respecting the rights of others. Finally, the activity model of art learning for example: humming and singing, playing a musical instrument, drawing and painting objects, and making various works/crafts.

HI-ECD in the form of health and nutrition services can be either early detection of children's development, having meals together, and clean living behavior. Early detection activities of child development include weighing the body, measuring height and head circumference, examining eyes, ears, and teeth, getting periodic immunization. Eating together can be done with getting nutritious food every morning, drinking milk every morning, and getting vitamins. As for, clean life behavior activities include getting used to wash hands and throwing garbage in its place.

HI-ECD in the form of parenting services can be either forming a group of parents and parenting seminar. The activity model of forming a group of parent for example: holding consultations and activities with parents, and involving parents in the school program. While parenting seminars are done by way conducting counseling and socialization of child development.

Finally, HI-ECD in the form of protection services can be done in a way safeguarding the school environment, for example making a guardrail and providing tools and materials to play based on the age of the children and free of chemicals. As for, the activity model of supervision of learning activities include being friendly to children and monitoring children while playing.

The form of HI-ECD programs and activities in each ECE unit can vary according to the ability. This is because in designing a HI-ECD program, it must be in accordance with the needs of the children. In addition, the facilities and quality of human resources also affect programs and forms of activities. According to Unicef, the barriers to HI-ECD that are often experienced are the problems of low cost, quality and motivation of teachers, ECE programs that have not led to integrative holistic, as well as the lack of community participation.<sup>(23)</sup>

To realize a HI-ECD program that is of high quality and can reach all early childhood, collaboration from various parties is needed. Parents, schools, community leaders, and the government must be fully involved in the HI-ECD program. Parents have the role of implementing HI-ECD in the family through parenting activities. Schools can play a role in providing stimulation of education, guidance, supervision and carrying out cooperation with relevant parties to support HI-ECD. Community leaders can play a role by providing assistance, guidance, and work partners for ECE unit, and if possible they can provide facilitation, advocacy and counseling related to HI-ECD. The government can provide various assistance through related agencies, such as the education office, health services, and social services. These offices can be partners to meet the needs of ECE unit in implementing HI-ECD programs. Through strong collaboration from various parties in the HI-ECD program, the government has been able to run optimally.

### **Conclusion**

Integrative holistic early childhood development policy issued by the government through the Republic

of Indonesia Presidential Regulation Number 60 of 2013 has made a major contribution to ECCE in Indonesia. The implementation of HI-ECD in ECE unit is realized through education, health and nutrition services, care, and protection. Through the HI-ECD program, the essential needs of children can be fulfilled so that children can grow and develop optimally, smart, healthy, cheerful, and noble.

**Additional Informations:**

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