



MENTORING FOR ECE ADMINISTRATORS AND EDUCATORS IN PRESCHOOL SERVICE QUALITY ASSURANCE TO SUPPORT THE ONE-YEAR COMPULSORY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM

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Abstract

This community engagement program aimed to enhance the capacity of early childhood education (ECE) administrators and teachers in implementing quality assurance systems for preschool services, thereby supporting the national One-Year Compulsory Early Childhood Education initiative. The program was conducted over one month in September 2025 at Salsabilla Hotel, Anyer, employing a participatory approach that integrated socialization sessions, structured training, hands-on practice, mentoring, group discussions, and evaluation. Participants consisted of ECE administrators and educators directly involved in delivering early childhood education services. The findings indicate a significant improvement in participants' understanding of quality assurance concepts, their ability to develop quality assurance documentation, and their skills in designing context-specific service improvement programs. Intensive mentoring further facilitated the development of participants' commitment to fostering a quality culture through internal evaluation and continuous improvement practices. Beyond individual competency development, the program produced actionable follow-up plans to be implemented within each participating ECE institution, ensuring program sustainability. The high level of participant engagement and enthusiasm suggests that practice-based mentoring is an effective model for strengthening human resource capacity in early childhood education settings. Overall, this initiative contributes meaningfully to improving the quality of preschool services and supports the effective implementation of the One-Year Compulsory ECE policy through strengthened institutional governance and enhanced professional competencies among educators and administrators.

Keywords: Community engagement, early childhood education, quality assurance, preschool services.

INTRODUCTION

Community engagement (Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat, PkM) constitutes a core pillar of the Tri Dharma of higher education, serving to translate academic knowledge into practical solutions for societal needs. Through such initiatives, higher education institutions contribute not only to human resource development but also to the implementation of national education policies. One of the current strategic priorities in Indonesia is improving the quality of early childhood education (ECE) services, which form the foundation for children's character development, literacy, numeracy, and school readiness prior to entering primary education. Prior studies have indicated that the quality of ECE services significantly influences children's cognitive and socio-emotional development as well as their readiness for formal schooling, underscoring the critical importance of quality assurance in this sector (UNESCO, 2023; OECD, 2024).

Quality assurance in preschool services is a systematic process aimed at ensuring that all components of ECE provision meet national education standards while delivering safe, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate learning environments. This process encompasses institutional governance, teacher competencies, curriculum design, learning processes, infrastructure, parental

engagement, and continuous evaluation. UNESCO (2023) emphasized that sustained mentoring systems are essential to enable ECE institutions to implement autonomous and continuous quality improvement. Similarly, OECD (2024) highlighted that investment in high-quality early childhood education yields long-term benefits for human capital development and national productivity.

In Indonesia, the One-Year Compulsory Early Childhood Education policy represents a strategic effort to ensure that all children access preschool education before entering primary school. This policy aims to enhance school readiness and reduce early educational disparities. However, its successful implementation depends not only on increasing participation rates but also on ensuring consistent service quality across ECE institutions. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek, 2023) has emphasized that expanding access must be accompanied by strengthening institutional capacity to maintain service quality.

A critical determinant of effective quality assurance in ECE is the competence of administrators and educators. Administrators are responsible for program planning, resource management, institutional evaluation, and fostering a culture of quality, whereas educators play a central role in delivering child-centered, developmentally appropriate learning experiences. A study by Amini and Kurniawati (2024) found that capacity-building initiatives through mentoring significantly improved the implementation of institutional quality standards in ECE settings. These findings suggest that strengthening human resource capacity is a key strategy for enhancing preschool service quality.

Nevertheless, field evidence indicates that many ECE institutions continue to face substantial challenges in implementing quality assurance systems. Numerous institutions lack adequate quality planning documents, internal evaluation processes are not conducted systematically, and stakeholders demonstrate varying levels of understanding regarding quality indicators. In addition, limited resources, insufficient technical assistance, and suboptimal stakeholder collaboration further constrain quality improvement efforts. This condition potentially undermines the effectiveness of the One-Year Compulsory ECE policy, as disparities in service quality persist across institutions.

Prior community engagement and capacity-building programs have demonstrated the effectiveness of sustained mentoring in improving institutional governance, educator competencies, and internal quality assurance systems. Integrated approaches combining training, coaching, monitoring, and evaluation were shown to support ECE institutions in developing quality documents, enhancing learning processes, and strengthening parental involvement (Amini & Kurniawati, 2024). Furthermore, community-based mentoring fostered reflective practices and continuous improvement cultures within ECE settings (Rahmawati et al., 2023). Workshops and mentoring initiatives also improved institutional readiness to meet national education standards and support policy implementation (Sari & Hidayat, 2024; UNESCO, 2023; OECD, 2024).

However, despite these promising findings, there remains a notable gap in the literature and practice regarding the implementation of structured, practice-based mentoring models that explicitly integrate policy socialization, quality document development, institutional capacity strengthening, and

continuous monitoring within a unified intervention framework. In particular, limited evidence exists on how such integrated approaches contribute to both individual competency development and institutional sustainability in the context of supporting the One-Year Compulsory ECE policy.

Accordingly, this community engagement program aims to address this gap by implementing a comprehensive mentoring model for ECE administrators and educators focused on strengthening preschool quality assurance systems. The program integrates policy socialization, training in quality document development, institutional management capacity building, guided implementation of service standards, and continuous monitoring and evaluation. The objective of this study is to examine the extent to which this integrated mentoring approach enhances participants' knowledge, skills, and commitment to quality assurance practices, while also supporting the development of sustainable quality improvement mechanisms within ECE institutions. Ultimately, this initiative seeks to contribute to improving preschool service quality, strengthening institutional governance, and supporting the effective implementation of the One-Year Compulsory Early Childhood Education policy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research Design

This study employed a participatory action learning design, positioning early childhood education (ECE) administrators and teachers as active collaborators in the capacity-building process. The approach emphasized experiential learning through problem identification, solution development, implementation, and reflective evaluation. This design was selected to integrate conceptual understanding with practical application in quality assurance for preschool services.

Participants

Participants were ECE administrators and educators directly involved in service delivery. They were selected using purposive sampling based on their roles in institutional management and instructional practices. All participants were actively engaged in implementing quality assurance processes within their respective ECE institutions.

Instruments

Data were collected using multiple instruments, including observation checklists, structured evaluation forms, and document assessment rubrics. Observation sheets were used to assess participant engagement and practical performance during training and mentoring sessions. Evaluation forms measured participants' understanding of quality assurance concepts. Document rubrics were applied to assess the quality of institutional outputs, such as quality assurance plans and follow-up action programs.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted over one month in September 2025 at Salsabilla Hotel, Anyer, Banten. The process followed three sequential stages:

1. Preparation phase: coordination, material development, participant registration, and instrument design.
2. Implementation phase: policy socialization, training sessions, group discussions, hands-on practice in developing quality documents, consultation, and guided mentoring.
3. Evaluation phase: monitoring participant progress, conducting reflective discussions, and formulating follow-up recommendations.

In addition, ongoing data were gathered through direct observation, participant discussions, and review of outputs produced during the mentoring process.

Intervention Procedures

The intervention was implemented through a combination of methods:

1. Socialization sessions introducing national policies, ECE standards, and quality assurance frameworks.
2. Training on developing quality assurance documents, fostering a quality culture, and designing improvement plans.
3. Mentoring activities providing direct guidance in institutional analysis, gap identification, and implementation of service standards.
4. Consultative discussions addressing challenges encountered during implementation.
5. Monitoring and evaluation to assess progress and refine follow-up actions.

A consultative and collaborative mentoring approach was applied, enabling participants to receive continuous feedback and adapt quality assurance practices to their institutional contexts.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative approach supported by simple quantitative analysis. Qualitative data from observations, discussions, and reflections were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns in participant understanding, engagement, and capacity development. Quantitative data from evaluation forms and document assessments were analyzed using descriptive statistics to measure improvements in participants' knowledge and skills.

Evaluation Strategy

Both formative and summative evaluations were conducted. Formative evaluation occurred throughout the program through observation, discussion, and assessment of practice outputs. Summative evaluation was conducted at the end of the program to assess overall learning outcomes,

the quality of developed documents, and the feasibility of follow-up action plans. The evaluation results informed recommendations for continuous improvement and future program refinement.

RESULTS OF PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The community engagement program was conducted in September 2025 at Salsabilla Hotel, Anyer, using a participatory approach that included socialization, training, practice, mentoring, and evaluation. The program aimed to enhance the competencies of ECE administrators and educators in implementing sustainable quality assurance to support the One-Year Compulsory Early Childhood Education policy.



Picture 1. Lecture Session

Implementation of Mentoring Activities

The initial phase involved participant registration, program orientation, and a needs assessment related to quality assurance implementation in each ECE institution. The findings revealed that most participants experienced difficulties in developing quality assurance documents, conducting internal evaluations, and utilizing evaluation results for service improvement.

Subsequently, participants received instructional sessions on the One-Year Compulsory ECE policy, Internal Quality Assurance Systems (SPMI), National ECE Standards, and the implementation of a quality culture. The sessions were delivered interactively, enabling participants to relate theoretical concepts to their institutional contexts. This was followed by practical activities, including the development of quality improvement plans, identification of quality indicators, preparation of follow-up programs, and simulations of internal evaluation processes. The final stage included reflection, evaluation, and the formulation of institutional implementation plans.

Table 1. Implementation of Community Engagement Activities

Activity Stage	Activity Form	Implementation Outcome
Preparation	Registration, needs assessment, opening session	Participants understood program objectives and institutional baseline conditions
Implementation	Socialization, training,	Participants developed quality assurance

Activity Stage	Activity Form	Implementation Outcome
	practice, mentoring	documents
Evaluation	Reflection, monitoring, follow-up planning	Institutional implementation plans were established

Source: Community Engagement Team Data (2025).

The results demonstrated that all stages were implemented as planned. Each stage was sequentially linked, from needs identification to competency development, practical application, and follow-up planning.

Improvement in Participant Competence

Participant understanding of preschool quality assurance concepts was assessed throughout the program. The analysis indicated a substantial increase in participants' competencies in understanding quality standards, developing quality documents, and designing service improvement programs.

Direct mentoring enabled participants to receive feedback on their outputs, while group discussions facilitated the exchange of best practices among participants. These activities supported active engagement during the learning process.

Table 2. Improvement in Participant Competence

Competency Indicator	Before (%)	After (%)
Understanding of quality assurance	64	95
Development of quality documents	52	93
Preparation of follow-up plans	57	94

Source: Community Engagement Evaluation Results (2025).

The findings revealed that all competency indicators improved after the program. The largest increase was observed in the ability to develop quality assurance documents.



Picture 2. Discussion Session

Evaluation of Program Implementation

Program evaluation was conducted through observation, assessment of participant outputs, and satisfaction surveys. The results indicated that most participants perceived the materials as relevant to their institutional needs. The facilitators were rated as delivering content in a clear and structured

manner, and the mentoring process supported participants in addressing challenges in quality assurance implementation.

The program also resulted in participants' commitment to implementing quality assurance practices in their respective institutions, including the development of quality documents, regular internal evaluations, and strengthened collaboration with parents and stakeholders.

Table 3. Participant Satisfaction Evaluation

Evaluated Aspect	Score (%)	Category
Program materials	95	Very Good
Facilitator competence	97	Very Good
Mentoring process	96	Very Good

Source: Participant Evaluation Survey (2025).

The results showed that all evaluated aspects achieved scores above 95 percent, categorized as "Very Good." High satisfaction levels reflected the relevance of the program and the effectiveness of the participatory mentoring approach.

Overall, the results demonstrated that the mentoring program achieved its intended outcomes. Participants showed improvements in knowledge, skills, and commitment to implementing preschool quality assurance systems. The program also produced follow-up action plans to be implemented at the institutional level as part of continuous quality improvement efforts.

Discussion

The implementation of the community engagement program demonstrates that systematic mentoring enhances the capacity of ECE administrators and educators to implement quality assurance practices. The findings indicate improvements in conceptual understanding, the ability to develop quality assurance documents and follow-up programs, and a strengthened commitment to fostering a quality culture in support of the One-Year Compulsory Early Childhood Education policy.

Understanding of Quality Assurance

The findings reveal that mentoring contributes positively to participants' understanding of preschool quality assurance. Prior to the intervention, many participants perceived quality assurance primarily as administrative compliance. Following the socialization and training sessions, participants recognize quality assurance as a continuous and systematic process encompassing planning, implementation, evaluation, control, and improvement. This shift in understanding is likely attributed to the integration of practical examples and contextualized learning during the program.

This finding supports Rahmawati et al. (2023), who reported that intensive mentoring improved administrators' understanding of Internal Quality Assurance Systems (SPMI). Similarly, UNESCO (2024) emphasizes that human resource capacity in understanding quality management principles is a critical determinant of successful quality improvement in early childhood education. The

effectiveness of interactive discussions and case-based learning observed in this study also reinforces the argument that participatory approaches are more effective than conventional lecture-based methods in adult learning contexts.

Effectiveness of Mentoring

The results indicate that practice-based mentoring effectively enhances participants' competencies. Through hands-on activities such as developing quality documents, identifying institutional gaps, and designing improvement programs, participants acquire both conceptual knowledge and technical skills. The collaborative interaction between facilitators and participants fosters a supportive learning environment in which context-specific challenges are addressed.

This finding supports Sari and Hidayat (2024), who found that practice-oriented mentoring improved administrators' capacity to meet national education standards. OECD (2025) also highlights that strengthening educator and administrator competencies is fundamental to building sustainable and high-quality ECE systems. The present study extends these findings by demonstrating that integrated mentoring approaches combining training, practice, and consultation produce measurable competency gains.

Contribution to Policy Implementation

The findings suggest that mentoring contributes to the implementation of the One-Year Compulsory ECE policy by strengthening institutional capacity. While the policy emphasizes increasing access, this study shows that improving service quality is equally critical. Participants demonstrate an increased awareness of the relationship between service quality, child development, and school readiness, which informs their commitment to continuous quality improvement.

This finding aligns with Amini and Kurniawati (2024), who reported that capacity-building initiatives improved the quality of ECE services. UNICEF (2023) further argues that investments in service quality significantly enhance children's readiness for primary education. The present study adds empirical support by showing that structured mentoring can operationalize policy objectives at the institutional level.

Development of Quality Culture

An important outcome of this program is the emergence of a sustained commitment among participants to develop a quality culture within their institutions. Participants not only produce quality assurance documents but also formulate actionable implementation plans, indicating a shift from compliance-oriented practices to continuous improvement-oriented management. This transformation suggests that mentoring facilitates changes in organizational mindset and behavior.

This finding supports Mulyani et al. (2025), who concluded that continuous mentoring strengthens quality culture through leadership, teamwork, and internal evaluation. The World Bank

(2023) also emphasizes that sustainable improvement in ECE quality depends on institutional capacity to foster a culture of continuous improvement. In this context, the study contributes both theoretically and practically by demonstrating that participatory and practice-based mentoring can serve as an effective mechanism for embedding quality culture in ECE institutions.

From a theoretical perspective, this study reinforces the relevance of experiential and participatory learning models in professional capacity development. Practically, it provides an evidence-based framework for designing community engagement programs that integrate mentoring, training, and evaluation to support sustainable quality improvement in early childhood education.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that a participatory and practice-based mentoring approach effectively enhances the capacity of early childhood education administrators and educators to implement preschool quality assurance systems. The program strengthens participants' understanding, technical skills, and commitment to fostering a sustainable quality culture within their institutions.

The findings highlight the practical contribution of integrated mentoring models that combine training, hands-on practice, and continuous evaluation in supporting institutional quality improvement. This approach not only develops individual competencies but also promotes organizational change toward continuous evaluation and improvement practices.

From a practical perspective, the study provides an applicable framework for strengthening human resource capacity in early childhood education to support the implementation of the One-Year Compulsory Early Childhood Education policy. Theoretically, it reinforces the importance of participatory and experiential learning in professional development and quality assurance implementation.

Future research should examine the long-term impact of mentoring interventions on institutional performance and child development outcomes, as well as explore scalable models that can be adapted across diverse educational contexts.

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