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Global Issues in Early Childhood Education at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia Bandung Toward World Class Education

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Abstract. This study explores the strategies and readiness of the Early Childhood Education (PAUD) Program at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) in developing a global-standard education model rooted in local and national values. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through observation, interviews with educators and administrators, and document analysis at TK-KB-DC Lab UPI Bumi Siliwangi. The findings reveal that UPI's laboratory school implements a contextual learning ecosystem by integrating child-centered pedagogy, holistic-integrative early education, and multicultural values, while incorporating national curriculum regulations. The learning environment fosters creativity, empathy, and independent thinking through thematic, play-based, and multisensory activities. Strategies such as the BKBB (Culture, National Character, and Play) model, international partnerships, digital learning integration, and active parent involvement highlight the institution's adaptability to global education demands. This research concludes that UPI successfully builds a prototype of early childhood education that is globally competitive yet deeply rooted in Indonesian cultural and educational values, supporting the vision of World Class Education.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Global-Local Integration, Holistic Learning.

1. Introduction

Early childhood education serves as a critical foundation for shaping a child's character and intelligence [1]. This stage, often referred to as the golden age, plays a vital role in determining the quality of a child's future development. At this stage, optimal and continuous stimulation of cognitive, socio-emotional, language, and motor skills is essential. Countries around the world, including Indonesia, have placed significant emphasis on the quality of early childhood education (ECE) services as a long-term strategy for enhancing human resource quality [2]. Global issues in early childhood education are becoming increasingly complex with the progression of time [3]. Disparities in access to education, gender inequality, varying qualifications of ECE teachers, and the challenges of digitalization in education are key concerns at international forums [4]. Globalization has brought new expectations to ECE services, pushing educational institutions to align their curricula, methodologies, and policies with international standards.

The Indonesia University of Education (UPI) in Bandung plays a strategic role as a higher education institution in preparing professional ECE teachers who can compete globally [5]. Through its academic programs and research initiatives, UPI aligns its vision for early childhood education with the spirit of World Class Education. This effort demonstrates the institution's commitment to addressing global ECE challenges through a competency-based approach that integrates national values and local wisdom. Despite progress, the quality of ECE services remains a major challenge across many regions of Indonesia. Many ECE institutions face limitations in infrastructure, human resources, and access to training that is aligned with current scientific and technological developments.

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International studies have shown that the quality of early childhood education largely depends on the capacity of its educators. UPI Bandung has initiated a globally oriented curriculum innovation by integrating multicultural values, digital learning, and international collaboration in training and research, thereby strengthening Indonesia's position in global ECE discourse and realizing its World Class University vision through contextual and globally competitive learning models [6].

The digital transformation in education demands that ECE educators be prepared to adapt to various technological tools and platforms [7]. Children growing up in the digital era have different learning patterns and needs compared to previous generations. Hence, conventional teaching methods in ECE are no longer sufficient to shape a future generation that is adaptive and innovative [8]. Higher education institutions like UPI must take the lead in producing tech-savvy ECE teachers who are also attuned to children's developmental needs. UPI's commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—particularly the fourth goal of quality education—underscores the urgency of developing globally relevant ECE. Strengthening curricula, research, and international partnerships are key aspects of this endeavor. Collaborations with foreign universities and global organizations enable knowledge exchange and the adoption of best practices in early childhood education [9]. These steps help accelerate the internationalization of ECE in Indonesia [10].

Attention to children's welfare and health is also an integral part of early childhood education. Issues such as malnutrition, child abuse, and the psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to pose significant challenges. ECE cannot be separated from the socio-economic context of society, as children grow up within a broad and complex ecosystem. Therefore, ECE teacher development at UPI must also include interdisciplinary understanding to respond holistically to children's realities [11]. International standards in ECE require benchmarks that can guide quality improvement. One way to achieve this is through research and scientific publications that are relevant to global trends. Through its Faculty of Education and ECE Study Program, UPI plays a significant role in producing scientific findings that enrich the international discourse on early childhood education. The quality of research and academic contributions is a key indicator in achieving the World Class University status [12].

The internationalization of ECE also faces language and cultural challenges, as global education does not mean disregarding local identity [13]. Strengthening cultural values and regional languages is a crucial foundation for shaping children's character. In responding to global dynamics, UPI is required to continuously innovate, adapt, and engage stakeholders to create a sustainable and contextual ECE system [14], [15]. The urgency of this mini research lies in the effort to deeply understand the dynamics and global challenges of early childhood education, as well as the strategic role of the Indonesia University of Education in internalizing the vision of World Class Education into its ECE programs. The study aims to produce a factual and reflective overview that can serve as a foundation for developing policies, curricula, and learning strategies that are contextual, relevant, and of high quality.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the readiness and strategies of the Early Childhood Education (PAUD) program at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) in responding to global education challenges within the framework of World Class Education. The research was conducted at TK-KB-DC Laboratory UPI Bumi Siliwangi and involved in-depth observations, photo documentation

analysis, and interviews with school administrators and teachers. The data were collected to understand how global pedagogical standards are integrated with local cultural and national values in curriculum, learning practices, and institutional policies [16]. The findings were analyzed thematically to capture the synergy between global demands and local educational identities reflected in classroom environments, instructional strategies, and collaborative programs.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 The Readiness of UPI's Early Childhood Education Program in Addressing Global Issues within the Framework of World Class Education

The Early Childhood Education (PAUD) Study Program at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) continues to demonstrate progressive steps in responding to global challenges through a variety of strategic approaches aimed at achieving World Class Education. One concrete manifestation of this readiness is evident in the management of UPI Bumi Siliwangi's Laboratory School—encompassing Kindergarten (TK), Playgroup (KB), and Daycare (DC)—which has been developed as a school-based laboratory to support research and innovative practices in early childhood education. This institution not only serves as a practicum site for students but has evolved into a center for curriculum development, teacher training, and a global pedagogical testing ground rooted in local values [17].

Direct observations at the site reveal that the infrastructure and learning environment are designed in a modern and integrative manner, including themed classrooms, multisensory rooms, and playgrounds that stimulate both gross and fine motor skills. Each component is crafted to encourage exploration, creativity, and positive social interaction. The learning environment not only meets national standards but also embraces child-centered learning principles and a holistic-integrative education approach, as recommended by UNESCO for inclusive and equitable early childhood learning [18]. In an interview with one of the administrators, Mrs. D, the Principal of UPI Laboratory Kindergarten, explained that the institution actively adapts national policies while incorporating relevant international insights. She stated, "We don't only refer to the national curriculum, but also integrate international approaches such as character-based learning and play. Our children are not only taught academic knowledge but are also shaped to be global citizens grounded in local values."

She added that the institution also functions as a dynamic space for experimenting with the implementation of the latest curriculum [19]. For example, the curriculum guided by the Ministry of Education regulations (Kepmendikbudristek No. 56 of 2022 and Permendikbud No. 12 of 2024) is applied through thematic learning activities integrated with the BKBB model (Culture, National Character, and Play). "We create activities like *Market Day* or *Mini Assembly*, which are not only fun but also foster independence, empathy, and natural social skills in children," she said. The readiness of UPI's PAUD program in building a world-class educational framework is inseparable from the active contributions of this laboratory institution in designing a contextual, sustainable, and globally oriented educational ecosystem. The experiences gained by students—whether in teaching practice, research, or inter-program collaboration—reflect how this institution has become a model for developing early childhood education that excels academically while remaining adaptive to global dynamics. It creates synergy between theory and practice, global and local values, and the campus and broader community [20].

Documentation shows that the institution consistently implements a curriculum aligned with current regulations, including Kepmendikbudristek No. 56/2022 and Permendikbud No. 12/2024. The curriculum not only emphasizes achieving early childhood core competencies but is also adapted with the Holistic-Integrative ECE approach outlined in Presidential Regulation No. 60/2013. Classroom observations revealed that teachers use the PAIKEM approach and the BKBB model in thematic activities, such as "Me and My Environment," presented through exploratory play and social engagement.

The BKBB model plays a vital role in fostering global character among children while preserving local cultural roots [21]. In the interview, the principal explained that values such as empathy, care, sharing, and cooperation are emphasized through social play and thematic activities. This aligns with Vygotsky's theory of the importance of social interaction in cognitive development, and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory that highlights the role of micro and macro environments in shaping a child's character. The institution's achievement of an "A" accreditation from the National Accreditation Board for PAUD (BAN PAUD) stands as clear evidence of its readiness to meet both national and international standards. Furthermore, strategic partnerships with the Indonesia Heritage Foundation (IHF) enhance the global dimension of its educational practices, particularly in teacher training, curriculum development, and the use of character-based educational resources. This collaboration forms part of the PAUD internationalization strategy that remains grounded in local context, aligning with Robertson's glocalization theory [22].

Additional documentation highlights flagship programs such as "My Parent My Teacher," "Market Day," and "Disaster Mitigation," which not only enrich children's learning experiences but also strengthen the involvement of families and communities in education. These activities embody the principles of future-oriented education—collaborative, contextual, and sustainable—consistent with the 21st-century learning framework proposed by Trilling and Fadel. The following are Figure 1 of several activities.

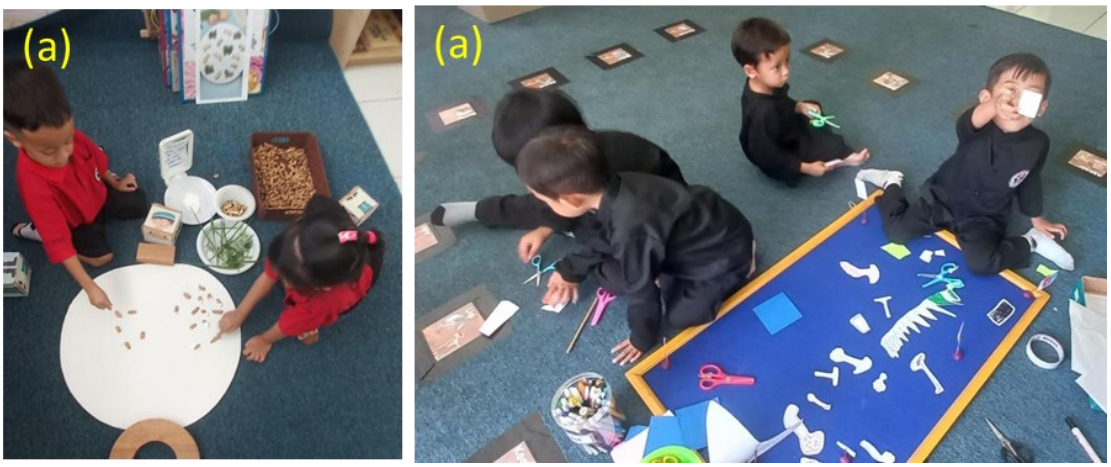

Figure 1. (a) Children Playing with Natural Materials, and (b) Children Participating in Learning Activities

Based on observations of early childhood learning activities documented in the photo, it is evident that the learning process takes place in an exploratory atmosphere using a play-based learning approach. Two children appear to be actively interacting with learning media such as seeds, cotton, grass plants, and illustrated images of insects arranged on a carpet. This activity demonstrates a scientific and multisensory approach applied concretely in thematic learning, likely related to the life cycle of plants or insects.

The use of concrete materials such as seeds and natural elements shows that UPI's Laboratory Kindergarten has implemented contextual learning principles rooted in the *PAIKEM* approach (Active, Innovative, Creative, Effective, and Joyful Learning). Children

are given the freedom to observe, touch, sort, and interact directly with objects, allowing them to build understanding through hands-on experience rather than mere verbal instruction. In addition, the visual aids displayed in the background enrich the visualization of concepts, which is crucial in early childhood education [23].

In the context of this mini-research on institutional readiness in addressing global issues and developing early childhood education models based on international standards, these findings reflect an integration between local values (use of natural materials, real-life environments) and global practices (constructivist approaches, observation- and experiment-based activities). This also reflects the implementation of the BKBB Model (Culture, National Character, and Play), which emphasizes kindness, collaboration, and empathy.

The activity shown in the photo also illustrates how children are given space to be active, independent, and expressive—aligned with the principles of inclusive early childhood education that is sensitive to the individual needs of children. This indicates that UPI's Laboratory Kindergarten has developed a learning ecosystem that aligns with global standards in early childhood education while preserving contextual cultural and national values. These findings strengthen the evidence that this institution can serve as a prototype for a research-based early childhood education laboratory grounded in best practices within the framework of *World Class Education*. Through all of these aspects, the Early Childhood Education Study Program at UPI—via TK-KB-DC Lab UPI Bumi Siliwangi—has demonstrated its capacity to be a center of excellence in early childhood education capable of bridging global standards without abandoning national identity. This institution emerges as an ideal model that integrates global best practices in education with a spirit of nationalism, local values, and Indonesia's sociocultural sensitivity [24].

3.2 Challenges and Strategies in Developing a Global Early Childhood Education (ECE) Model Rooted in Local and National Values

Based on interviews with administrators and educators, direct observations of learning activities at UPI's TK-KB-DC Laboratory School, and documentation of institutional programs and policies, several key findings emerged under the theme *"Challenges and Strategies in Developing a Global Early Childhood Education (ECE) Model Rooted in Local and National Values."* These findings illustrate how Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI), through its laboratory unit, strategically responds to the challenges of globalization in early childhood education while remaining grounded in local identity and national values.

The main challenges faced by UPI in developing a globally standardized ECE model include discrepancies in implementing national and international curricula. Also limited human resources with expertise in multicultural and gender-sensitive pedagogy, and tensions between the demands of globalization and efforts to preserve local cultural values and nationalism. This was confirmed during an interview with one of the administrators, who stated, *"Our educators still need continuous training to develop a global perspective without losing the character of our nation."* Field observations also revealed that while global approaches—such as project-based learning and technology integration—have begun to be implemented, the application varies across classrooms.

Figure 2(a) captured during classroom activities shows a young child proudly displaying an imaginative drawing in a sketchbook. This observation, taken at UPI's Laboratory Kindergarten, reflects the child's freedom of expression in conveying ideas and imagination—an important indicator in developing creativity, a key component of global education standards. This activity also demonstrates a learning approach that

positions the child as an active subject, in line with the student-centered learning principle promoted by international curricula.

Figure 2. Creative Work-Based Learning

Through this artwork, it is evident that the child is given space for divergent thinking—developing characters and objects based on their own understanding without rigid thematic constraints. This signifies that the institution fosters freedom of expression, a hallmark of progressive pedagogy. The strategy aligns with the *PAIKEM* approach (Active, Innovative, Creative, Effective, and Joyful Learning) and supports gender-sensitive pedagogy, ensuring that children are not limited by stereotypes when expressing emotions or ideas.

Figure 3. Outdoor Learning Activities

Furthermore, the findings also indicate that local approaches are subtly integrated into the learning environment, such as classroom decorations featuring locally inspired crafts like student-made decorative trees and a warm, inclusive classroom atmosphere. Teachers act as facilitators rather than authoritative figures, reinforcing a humanistic educational approach that values local wisdom. Overall, these observations provide concrete evidence that the TK-KB-DC Lab School at UPI has implemented a global education strategy that is adaptive to the unique characteristics of Indonesian children. By providing space for children's artistic expression and imagination, the institution not

only meets global standards for developing creativity and visual literacy but also preserves local values through a familiar, inclusive learning atmosphere that respects individual learning processes.

In response to these challenges, UPI's strategy through its laboratory school has been to integrate global and local values simultaneously within the learning process. This strategy is embodied in flagship programs such as traditional dance extracurriculars, local games, and thematic initiatives like "Aku Cinta Indonesia" (I Love Indonesia), which are designed to cultivate nationalism from an early age. Program documentation shows that children are not only introduced to Indonesian culture but also to universal values such as collaboration, diversity, and empathy in ways that are accessible to young learners. Additionally, the Holistic Integrative Early Childhood Education (PAUD HI) approach—implemented through the PAUD HIBER program—serves as the foundation for balancing global demands with local realities. As one teacher explained during an interview: *"We apply the PAUD HIBER principles by incorporating health, nutrition, and character education into every learning activity—not just academic aspects."* This was evident in observed activities such as developmental screening, basic health education, and the use of learning materials that blend local culture with scientific approaches. Another key strategy is the strengthening of collaboration among educational institutions, families, and communities. Activities such as *My Parent My Teacher*, *Parent Get Together*, and *Mini Assembly* serve as real examples of parental involvement in the learning process. Observations revealed that children appeared more confident and expressive when their parents were engaged in classroom activities. These programs reflect Indonesia's cultural values of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) and familial bonds, while also supporting the development of soft skills and self-confidence—both essential elements of global education standards [25].

Internally, the institution has also implemented continuous professional development programs for teachers, with a focus on global literacy, inclusivity, and the use of information technology. One notable strategy is the use of digital media to document children's learning activities, alongside the integration of global content through storybooks and educational videos. This shows that the institution is not only rooted in tradition but is also adaptive to contemporary developments. Findings from this mini-research suggest that the development of a globally standardized ECE model at UPI's Laboratory School is not merely focused on enhancing international competitiveness but is also deeply grounded in cultural roots and national identity. The strategies implemented have positioned the school as a potential national reference model for developing a global education system that remains firmly rooted in local and national values.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the PAUD Program of Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI), through its TK-KB-DC Laboratory School, has effectively developed a contextual and globally responsive early childhood education model. By integrating international pedagogical approaches—such as play-based, child-centered, and inclusive learning—with local cultural values and national character, UPI successfully balances global standards with Indonesian identity. Strategic initiatives such as curriculum integration, holistic child development, teacher training, parental involvement, and the use of digital media illustrate the institution's commitment to preparing globally competent educators while preserving cultural roots. This synergy

positions UPI as a leading example in shaping globally competitive early childhood education grounded in local wisdom.

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6. Declaration

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