

Understanding of Early Childhood Education Principals in Palembang City Regarding the Accreditation Mechanism

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ABSTRACT

The principals of early childhood education institutions are an important element in the education institutions and are responsible for improving school quality through early childhood education accreditation in teaching the eight educational standards. The purpose of this study is to describe the principals of early childhood education institutions in Palembang City comprehension of the early childhood education accreditation process. The approach used in the research is a quantitative approach through survey methods. Data collection uses Google Form. The respondents in this study were 41 principals of early childhood education institutions in Palembang City who came from 16 sub-districts. The study's findings demonstrate that the understanding of principals of early childhood education institutions in Palembang City is quite good, as shown by 41 principals of early childhood education institutions, there are 85.37% of principals of early childhood education institutions who have participated in accreditation outreach activities, 92.68% of principals of early childhood education institutions have understood the flow of applying for accreditation. Understanding the requirements for applying for accreditation, both specific requirements and general requirements, there are 78.05% of principals of early childhood education institutions who have understood the special requirements documents and there are 4 standards in the general requirements which have been understood by the principals of early childhood education institutions as a whole or 100%. There are 87.80% principals of early childhood education institutions who are able to use the Sispena application. However, it was still found that several principals of early childhood education institutions in Palembang City experienced problems in the accreditation application process, namely 24.39%. The principals of early childhood education institutions need to increase their understanding of the accreditation mechanism so that they can make the accreditation process optimal.

INTRODUCTION

Accreditation is a mark of excellence given to a program by an independent third party, which proves that the program meets certain criteria and requirements (Measure, Early, & Education, 2019). Academic program accreditation is a review process carried out by peers and carried out voluntarily, the results of which can be used by academics to assess and evaluate a program (Abbadeni, Ghoneim, & AlGhamdi, 2013). Urthermore, accreditation is also interpreted as a system for recognizing educational institutions and professional programs affiliated with these institutions as having standards of performance, integrity and

quality that provide trust to the educational community and society (*Council on Social Work Education & The Council on Social Work Education's Commission on Accreditation (COA) and Commission o Educational Policy (COEP)*, 2022).

Accreditation is also a widely accepted quality indicator for early childhood education institutions. Through the accreditation process, institutions are given advice to meet international quality standards regarding their structure and processes (Winterbottom & Piasta, 2015). The accreditation process is related to the formation of an educational structure and the creation of a quality learning environment for education users, namely students, parents including the community (Won & Adriany, 2020). Accreditation for early childhood education programs is a sign of the quality of that education (NAEYC, 2011).

Based on the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology Number 38 of 2023 which describes the Accreditation of Early Childhood Education, Basic Education and Secondary Education, Chapter 1 Article 1 states that accreditation is a series of assessments in determining the suitability of educational programs which determine the quality of educational services serve as the basis for assessment. Furthermore, in Chapter 2, Article 3, it is stated that early childhood education institutions that are targets for accreditation include Kindergartens, Raudhatul Athfal, Play Groups, Daycare, Extraordinary Kindergartens, or other equivalent forms (Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset Dan Teknologi Nomor 38, 2023).

The Indonesian government began implementing an accreditation system in 2008 to systematically guarantee and manage the quality of early childhood education institutions (BAN PAUD & PNF, 2018). Accreditation functions to provide recognition of the quality of educational institutions. The accreditation agency, in this case the National Accreditation Agency carries out assessments by referring to eight national education standards. Accreditation is also a guarantee of the quality of education. Accreditation can later encourage educational units to implement educational processes that are in accordance with performance aspects and also learning documents (BAN PAUD dan PNF, 2019).

Accreditation of early childhood education institutions in Indonesia is carried out by the National Accreditation Board for Early Childhood Education, Primary Education and Secondary Education. This institution was formed in 2023 as a merger of the National Accreditation Board for Early Childhood Education and Non-Formal Education with the National Accreditation Board for Secondary Schools (Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset Dan Teknologi Nomor 38, 2023).

The implementation of accreditation in early childhood education institutions in Indonesia has changed several times. In the early years the accreditation mechanism was carried out manually, and from 2018 until now the implementation of accreditation was carried out online via the Sispena application. The 2024 early childhood education accreditation mechanism begins with the selection of assessors determined by the National Accreditation Board for Early Childhood Education, Primary Education and Secondary Education with priority for early childhood education institutions that have never been accredited or that have applied for accreditation and have been accredited in 2008-2017 (for certain provinces), early childhood education institutions fill out the accreditation prerequisite assessment instruments according to the documents they have via the Sispena application.

The next stage is that the National Accreditation Board for Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary Education assigns assessors to carry out the classification process for accreditation applications through the Sispena application. After implementing the Accreditation Assessment Classification process, the National Accreditation Board for Early, Primary and Secondary Childhood Education assigns assessors to carry out visitation, validation and verification. The final stage is the determination of accreditation status by National Accreditation Board for Early Childhood. The instrument for accreditation of early childhood education and non-formal education from 2022 to date uses the instrument as stated in the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 71/P/2021 regarding the Accreditation Assessment Tool for early childhood education and non-formal education using the Sispena application 3.1. The Accreditation Prerequisite Assessment Instrument and Visitation Assessment Instrument conform to the policies of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and (BAN PAUD dan PNF, 2019).

Based on data from the National Accreditation Agency for Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary Education, the total target for accreditation of early childhood education and equality in 2024 is 45,777 institutions spread across 34 provinces. The accreditation targets are divided into 37,561 early childhood education institutions, 7,054 RA institutions and 146 SPK institutions. Meanwhile, equality is divided into 795 PKBM institutions and 221 PKPPS institutions. For South Sumatra Province, the target for early childhood education accreditation in 2024 is 1,051 institutions, consisting of 1,050 new targets and 1 reaccreditation target. Determination of targets for early childhood education in South Sumatra Province in 17 regencies or cities, consisting of 52 institutions in Banyuasin Regency, 51 institutions in Empat Lawang Regency, 26 institutions in Lahat Regency, 106 institutions in Musi Banyuasin Regency, 97 institutions in Musi Regency Banyuasin, 60 institutions in Musi Rawas Regency, 54 institutions in North Musi Rawas Regency, 70 institutions in Ogan Ilir Regency, 169 institutions in Ogan Ilir Regency, 7 institutions in Ogan Komering Ulu, 56 institutions in South Ogan Komering Ulu Regency, 61 institutions in East Ogan Komering Ulu Regency, 4 institutions in Penukal Abab Lematang Ilir Regency, 13 institutions in Lubuk Linggau City, 2 institutions in Pagar Alam Regency, 219 institutions in Palembang City and 4 institutions in Prabumulih City (BAN PDM, 2024). This shows that in South Sumatra Province there are still quite a lot of early childhood education institutions that have not applied for accreditation, especially in Palembang City. Apart from that, based on the review of accreditation documents carried out by researchers, there are still early childhood education institutions that have not completed the required documents for applying for accreditation.

Furthermore, in implementing accreditation, the understanding of the principals of early childhood education institutions regarding the accreditation mechanism is one of the success factors in implementing the accreditation. The principals of early childhood education institutions as the main leader in the school is responsible for improving the quality of the school according to national education standards through early childhood education accreditation (Sobah, Syafiqoh, Latiana, & Formen, 2022; Palettei, Sulfemi, & Yusfitriadi, 2021). Strengthened by the statement of Hoy & Miskey (2013), the factor that influences the quality of education is the leadership of the principals. Referring to the description of the data

above, the researcher wants to explore the understanding of the principals of early childhood education institutions regarding the mechanism for applying for accreditation so that later information can be obtained regarding problems occurring in the field.

METHODS

This research uses a quantitative approach using a survey research design. Survey research is a series of quantitative research processes that require researchers to administer surveys to samples or populations with the aim of describing attitudes, opinions, behavior or special characteristics of the sample being studied (Creswell, 2014). This research used respondents totaling 41 principals of early childhood education institutions in Palembang City. Sampling in this study used a purposive sampling technique taking into account the principals of early childhood education institutions whose units were not yet accredited and who would undergo accreditation in 2014 from 14 sub-districts in Palembang City. A questionnaire instrument was used to identify the understanding of school principals of early childhood education institutions regarding the early childhood education accreditation mechanism. This research uses data analysis techniques using percentage calculations.

RESULT

The results of filling out the questionnaire from 41 respondents showed that the distribution of respondents based on the district of origin of the principal of the early childhood education school is shown in table 1:

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents Based on District of Origin

No	Origin District	Number of Institutions	Percentage
1	Alang-Alang Lebar	6	14.6 %
2	Bukit Kecil	1	2.4 %
3	Gandus	2	4.9 %
4	Iilir Barat I	2	4.9 %
5	Iilir Barat II	2	4.9 %
6	Iilir Timur I	1	2.4 %
7	Iilir Timur II	2	4.9 %
8	Jakabaring	2	4.9 %
9	Kalidoni	3	7.3 %
10	Kemuning	1	2.4 %
11	Kertapati	2	4.9 %
12	Plaju	3	7.3 %
13	Sako	4	9.8 %
14	Seberang Ulu I	2	4.9 %
15	Seberang Ulu II	1	2.4 %
16	Sukarami	7	17.1 %
Totals		41	100 %

Furthermore, the results of the recapitulation of early childhood education principals' understanding of the early childhood education accreditation mechanism are described based on several indicators, namely: (1) following the socialization of early childhood education

accreditation, (2) understanding the flow of applications for accreditation (3) understanding the special requirements for accreditation , (4) understanding the general requirements for applying for accreditation, (5) the ability to use the Sispena application in applying for accreditation, (6) obstacles in the accreditation application process.

A description of the recapitulation results for each indicator is shown in the diagram below. Figure 1 shows the participation of school principals in socialization activities for early childhood education accreditation.

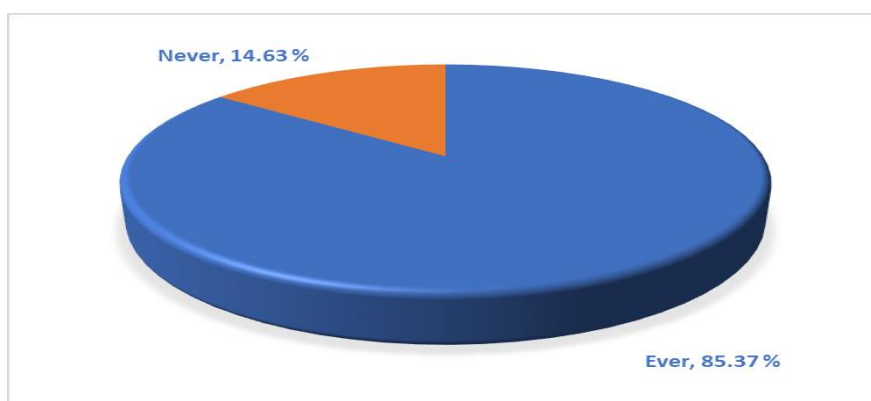


Figure 1. Participation of the principal of an early childhood education school in accreditation outreach activities

Figure 1 shows that of the 41 principals of early childhood education schools, there are 85.37% or 35 principals of early childhood education schools who have participated in early childhood education accreditation outreach activities, and as many as 14.63% or 6 principals of early childhood education schools who have never participate in early childhood education accreditation outreach activities. Regarding understanding the flow of applying for accreditation, it is shown in figure 2.

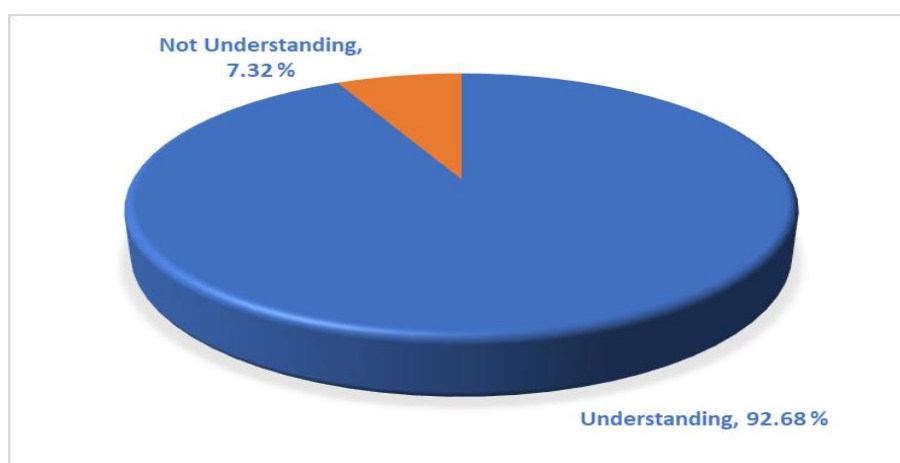


Figure 2. Early Childhood Education School Principals' Understanding of the Accreditation Application Flow

Figure 2 shows that of the 41 principals of early childhood education schools, there are 92.69% or 38 principals of early childhood education schools, who have understood the flow of applying for accreditation in 2024 by filling in the complete accreditation assessment prerequisite documents via the Sispena application, and as many as 7.32% or 3 principals of early childhood education schools, who do not understand the flow of applying for

accreditation in 2024 on the grounds that they did not take part in socialization activities and are not ready to take part in accreditation.

Furthermore, the indicators for understanding the accreditation requirements are shown in figure 3.

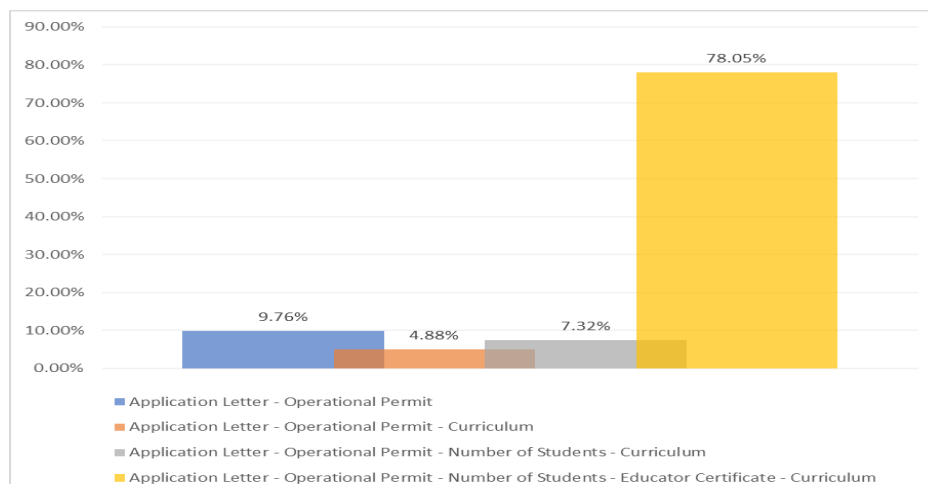


Figure 3. School Principal's Understanding of the Special Requirements for Applying for Accreditation

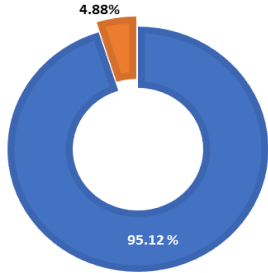
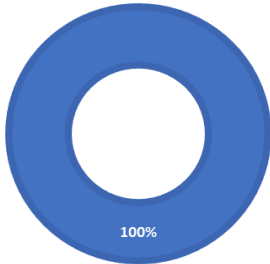
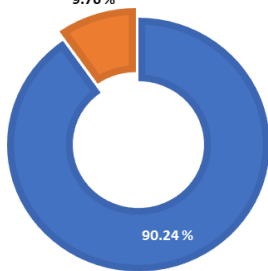
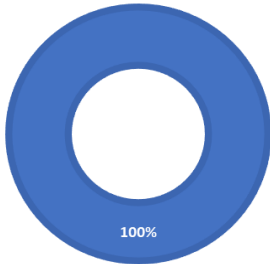
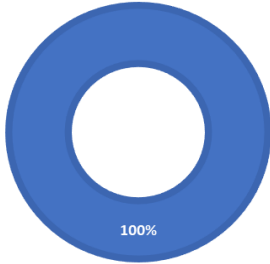
Figure 3 shows that of the 41 school principals, 9.76% or 4 school principals stated that the special requirements for applying for accreditation consisted of an application letter and operational permit. There were 4.88% or 2 principals of early childhood education schools who stated that the specific requirements for applying for accreditation consisted of an application letter, operational permit and curriculum documents. There were 7.32% or 3 principals of early childhood education schools who stated that the specific requirements for applying for accreditation consisted of an application letter, operational permit, list of number of students and curriculum documents. And there were 78.05% or 32 principals of early childhood education schools who stated that the specific requirements for applying for accreditation consisted of an application letter, operational permit, list of number of students, certificate of training the teacher had attended and curriculum documents. Based on the Accreditation prerequisite assessment instrument, the specific requirements for applying for accreditation consist of five points, namely a letter of application for accreditation submitted by an early childhood education institution, a valid operational permit for an early childhood education institution, a list of the number of active students according to basic education data, documents training certificates that have been attended by educators and curriculum documents used by early childhood education institutions. The results of the analysis show that there are still unit heads who do not understand the special requirements in applying for accreditation.

The understanding of early childhood education school principals regarding the general requirements for applying for accreditation is outlined in table 2.

Table 2. Early childhood education principals' understanding of the requirements for applying for accreditation

No	Accreditation Standards	Information	Principal's Comprehension Chart
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Understanding of Early Childhood Education Principals

1	Standard 1: Child Development Achievement Level Standards	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Detection of Child Growth 2. Detection of Child Development 	 <p style="text-align: center;">■ Understanding ■ Not Understanding</p>
2	Standard 2: Content Standard	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Curriculum 2. Curriculum Reference 3. Services According to Age Groups 	 <p style="text-align: center;">■ Understanding ■ Not Understanding</p>
3	Standard 3: Process Standard	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learning Planning 2. Learning Supervision 3. Parent Involvement 	 <p style="text-align: center;">■ Understanding ■ Not Understanding</p>
4	Standard 4: Standards for Educators and Education Personnel	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Educator Qualifications and Competencies 2. Qualifications and Competencies of Education Personnel 	 <p style="text-align: center;">■ Understanding ■ Not Understanding</p>
5	Standard 5: Facilities and Infrastructure Standards	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilities (Play Facilities, Public Facilities) 2. Infrastructure 	 <p style="text-align: center;">■ Understanding ■ Not Understanding</p>

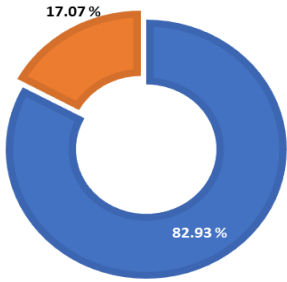

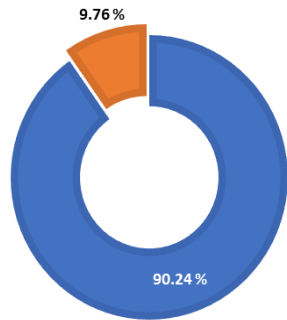

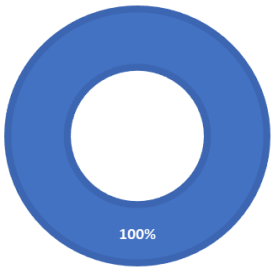

6	Standard 6: Management Standards	1. Unit Planning 2. Organizing Documents 3. Implementation	
			
7	Standard 7: Financing Standard	1. Budget Plan 2. Financial Administration	
			
8	Standard 8: Assessment Standards	1. Assessment of child development 2. Child Development Report	
			

Table 2 shows that there is still a lack of understanding by unit heads regarding several standards in the general requirements for applying for accreditation, such as in standard 1, there are still 4.88% or 2 school principals who still do not understand the standards for child development achievement levels. There are 9.76% or 4 school principals who still do not understand standard 3 relating to process standards. There are 17.07% or 7 school principals who still do not understand standard 3 relating to management standards. There are 9.76% or 4 school principals who still do not understand standard 6 relating to financing standards. Meanwhile, the principal's understanding reached 100% in standard 2, namely content standards, standard 4, namely standards for educators and education personnel, standard 5, namely standards for facilities and infrastructure, and standard 8, namely standards for assessment.

The ability of early childhood education school principals to use the Sispena application in applying for accreditation is shown in Figure 4.

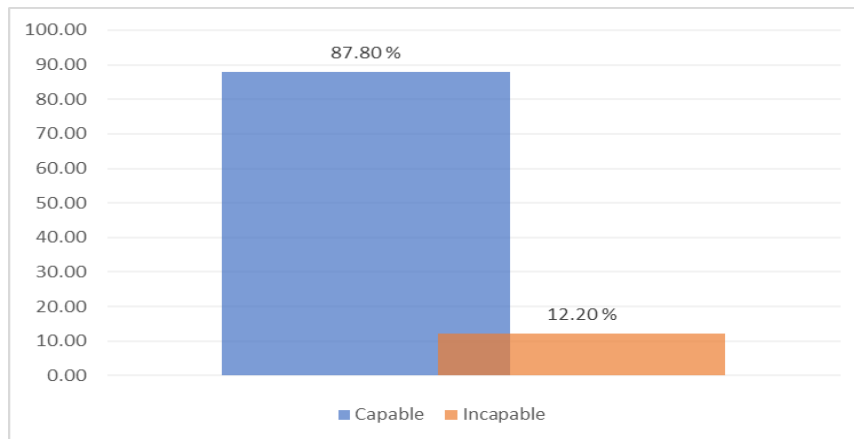


Figure 4. School Principal's Ability to Use the Sispena Application

Figure 4 shows that of the 41 principals of early childhood education schools, there are 87.80% or 36 principals of early childhood education schools who are able to use the Sispena application, and as many as 12.20% or 5 principals of early childhood education schools who are less able to use the Sispena application for reasons that applications for accreditation using the Sispena application are assisted by the school operator.

Furthermore, the obstacles experienced by school principals in the process of applying for accreditation are shown in Figure 5.

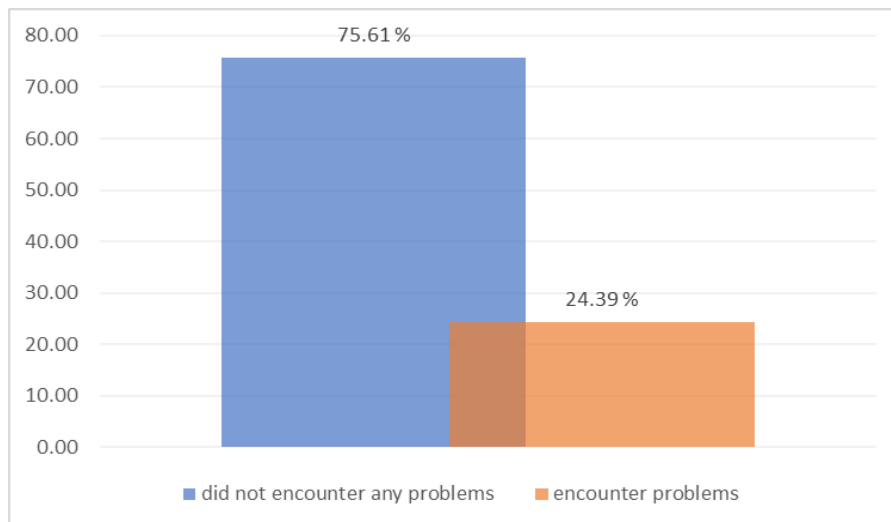


Figure 5. Obstacles in Applying for Accreditation

Figure 5 shows that of the 41 principals of early childhood education schools, there were 75.61% or 31 principals of early childhood education schools who did not encounter any problems in the process of applying for accreditation, and as many as 24.39% or 10 principals of early childhood education schools encountered problems in applying for accreditation. . The obstacles encountered include the lack of ability to use the Sispena application, compliance with documents in each accreditation application standard, and the Dapodik synchronization process which takes quite a long time.

DISCUSSION

Based on the description of the research results above, the understanding of early childhood education school principals in Palembang City is quite good. This is proven by the data that the majority of principals of early childhood education schools in Palembang City have participated in socialization activities for early childhood education accreditation and most already understand the flow of accreditation implementation. Yudiawan (2019) stated that accreditation outreach activities had a positive influence on the motivation of early childhood education managers, in this case early childhood education school principals. Accreditation outreach activities are carried out with the aim of disseminating information regarding the importance of preparing for accreditation for early childhood education principals, providing direction and how to apply for accreditation online, increasing knowledge about the latest early childhood education accreditation policies and mechanisms, providing direction on how to obtain good accreditation in early childhood education institutions (Masruron & Nasir, 2023; Masturoh & Ifadah, 2023). The more routine outreach activities or mentoring activities related to accreditation will have an impact on the increasing number of early childhood educators applying for accreditation.

Furthermore, the understanding of early childhood education school principals regarding accreditation application documents is also quite good, both specific requirements documents and general requirements documents. However, there are still several principals of early childhood education schools who do not understand the completeness of the accreditation application documents. Principals of early childhood education schools must understand the documents for submitting accreditation requirements to measure unit performance. Understanding each instrument assessment item will support the achievement of good assessment results (Daryati, 2021). The prerequisite instruments for accreditation are closely related to the fulfillment of eight educational standards. The unit head's understanding of the eight national education standards which are the main basis for the accreditation process so that he can find a strategy in fulfilling the accreditation application documents (Wewe, Noge, Awe, & Lawe, 2021). In line with what was conveyed by Cahyono, Wibowo, & Murwani (2015) said, school principals in collaboration with school residents need to implement eight national education standards starting from planning to evaluation so that it will have a positive impact on the educational institution.

The ability of principals of early childhood education schools in Palembang City to use the Sispena application is also good, although there are several principals of early childhood education schools who are still not able to use the Sispena application and need assistance from school operators. Based on the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 137 of 2014 concerning National Standards for Early Childhood Education (2014) one of the competencies that early childhood education school principals must have is managerial competency with sub-competencies using advances in technology and communication (ICT) in order to improve the learning process and management of educational units. The ability to use technology is very necessary today in the 21st century, because technology is used in almost all fields, including in the field of education (Al-Hamad, Rathwan, & Rababah, 2020). When technology becomes increasingly important

in the education system, the competence of school principals in mastering technology is very necessary to support their work (Mei Wei, Yan Piaw, & Kannan, 2016).

The role of the unit head in the accreditation process is very influential in building commitment with the aim of improving the quality of the institution (Fitrah, 2017). Apart from that, the school principal's understanding of the accreditation process is one of the determinants of the success of the accreditation process. Apart from that, the role of the unit head has an impact on the unit organization, educators and students. The impact on students is indirect, while the direct impact is seen in the school organization and teaching and learning environment. This shows that school principals create conditions that support improving the quality of education (Leithwood and Sun, 2018). The school principals have a big responsibility for the educational unit they lead (Daniëls, Hondeghem, & Dochy, 2019).

However, it was still found that several school principals still did not understand the overall flow of applying for accreditation and still encountered several obstacles in the process of applying for accreditation. These obstacles include the accreditation application process which is carried out online via the Sispena application. In line with the results of research conducted by Fahrani, Purniab, Tuzahra, & Wulandari (2022) are stated that the problem in the accreditation process is a lack of understanding of filling in complete accreditation data online. For this reason, school principals and educators need to continue to improve their competence regarding the accreditation process and there is a need to improve the quality of governance in educational institutions (Musi et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

Accreditation is a series of assessment processes carried out by accreditation organizations/bodies in determining the suitability of an educational unit based on predetermined criteria. The unit head is an important element in the process of applying for accreditation for a unit with the aim of improving the quality of education. Based on the results of research conducted, principals of early childhood education schools in Palembang City already have a fairly good understanding of the mechanism for early childhood education accreditation in 2024. However, school principals still encounter problems. Principals of early childhood education schools need to increase their understanding of the accreditation application process by participating in socialization and accreditation assistance activities so that they can prepare for accreditation optimally, as well as improving their ability to use technology so that it can make online accreditation applications easier.

DECLARATIONS

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