



## A Comparative Analysis of Early Childhood Education Standards in Several East Asian Countries

Femi Widyawati<sup>1</sup>, Hapsa Pariboko<sup>2</sup>, Juraidah<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Universitas Muhammadiyah Palu

<sup>1</sup> [femiwidyawati1@gmail.com](mailto:femiwidyawati1@gmail.com), <sup>2</sup> [hapsapariboko73@gmail.com](mailto:hapsapariboko73@gmail.com), <sup>3</sup> [juraidahidah89@gmail.com](mailto:juraidahidah89@gmail.com)

### Article Info

#### Article history:

Received 20-01-2025

Revised 04-02-2025

Accepted 12-02-2025

#### Keyword:

Early Childhood Education;  
Education Standards; East  
Asia

### ABSTRACT

This study discusses the Early Childhood Education (ECE) standards in six East Asian countries: Japan, South Korea, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Mongolia, based on a total of [jumlah referensi] references to underscore the research scope. It explores various aspects of ECE, including curriculum, educator qualifications, educational facilities, and child development assessment methods. The results show that the approach in each country reflects local culture, societal needs, and national priorities. Japan stands out with a holistic curriculum integrating moral and social values, while South Korea emphasizes structured learning supported by information and communication technology (ICT). China places traditional values like hard work and obedience at the core of early education, while Taiwan prioritizes children's socio-emotional development through bilingual programs. In Hong Kong, educational subsidy policies have improved access to quality ECE, while Mongolia has introduced mobile learning centers to reach nomadic communities. Despite these strengths, the study also identifies challenges, such as disparities in educational quality between urban and rural areas, especially in China and Mongolia. To address these, policies focusing on educational equity are needed. This study employs a qualitative document analysis methodology and recommends several strategies for Indonesia, including the development of curricula based on local values and global needs, improved educator qualifications and training, and the adoption of a holistic assessment approach. The findings provide insights for the development of inclusive, innovative, and sustainable ECE policies in Indonesia.



©2025 Authors. Published by PT Mukhlisina Revolution Center.. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

## INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (ECE) plays a crucial role in laying the foundation for children's development. During early childhood, physical, cognitive, social, and emotional growth occurs rapidly, making quality educational interventions at this stage critical for long-term impacts on children's lives. The importance of ECE is recognized globally, as stated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly target 4.2, which calls for all children to have access to quality early childhood education (Ertz et al., 2022).

However, while global recognition of ECE's importance exists, significant gaps remain in understanding the variations in ECE standards across different regions. Specifically, the unique approaches adopted by East Asian countries in terms of curriculum, educator qualifications, facilities, and assessment methods have not been systematically compared. This study aims to address this gap by focusing on the distinct strategies and challenges faced by six East Asian countries: Japan, South Korea, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Mongolia.

East Asian countries adopt different approaches in managing ECE, influenced by various factors like government policies, cultural values, economic levels, and national educational priorities (Park, Jang, and Park, 2017). For example, in Japan, ECE is designed to support children's holistic development with an emphasis on moral and social values (Miwa, 2020). In contrast, South Korea

focuses on structured learning and the integration of information technology in early education (Kim, 2015).

At a global level, the ECE curriculum is designed to provide enjoyable learning experiences that optimally support children's growth and development. However, in East Asia, the curriculum is often tailored to reflect local culture and national priorities. For instance, in China, the curriculum emphasizes traditional values such as hard work and obedience (S. Hong and Howes, 2014), while in Hong Kong, the ECE curriculum adopts a bilingual approach to prepare children for global challenges (Note, 2023).

In addition to the curriculum, the quality of educators is a key factor in the success of ECE. ECE educator qualification standards in East Asia tend to be high, with strict formal education requirements, training programs, and certifications (Fujimura and Mistilina, 2020). In Japan, for example, ECE educators are required to have a bachelor's degree in education (Saito, 2009), while South Korea has intensive training programs for ECE teachers (Yang and Tan, 2022). Conversely, Mongolia still faces challenges in improving educator quality in remote rural areas (Morgan and Sengedorj, 2023).

Facilities and learning resources also play an essential role in supporting the success of ECE. A safe, comfortable, and creativity-stimulating learning environment is one of the indicators of a successful ECE program. In South Korea and Taiwan, ECE facilities have high standards, with modern classrooms equipped with the latest technology (Kuo et al., 2023). In contrast, in Mongolia, ECE facilities remain limited, especially in rural areas, although local governments have made efforts to improve them (Morgan and Sengedorj, 2023).

Moreover, the assessment of children's development in ECE is a crucial focus in East Asian countries. Assessments typically cover cognitive, socio-emotional, and physical aspects. The assessment methods used reflect each country's educational philosophy. In Taiwan, for instance, assessments emphasize children's socio-emotional development more than academic outcomes (X. Hong et al., 2015).

However, challenges remain in managing ECE in East Asian countries. The disparity in quality between urban and rural areas is a major issue, particularly in countries like China and Mongolia (Schelzig and Newman, 2020). On the other hand, supportive government policies, such as early childhood education subsidies in Hong Kong, have helped improve access to and the quality of ECE (Ma et al., 2005).

This study aims to explore and compare ECE standards in six East Asian countries: Japan, South Korea, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Mongolia. The study focuses on curriculum, educators, facilities, and child development assessments. It is expected that this research will identify each country's strengths and challenges in implementing ECE standards, and provide insights for the development of ECE policies in Indonesia. Furthermore, this study aims to contribute ideas for strengthening regional collaboration to improve the quality of ECE in East Asia.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a document analysis method, a qualitative descriptive approach, to investigate the Early Childhood Education (ECE) standards in six East Asian countries: Japan, South Korea, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Mongolia. A thematic analysis framework is employed to systematically compare key aspects of ECE across the selected countries. The research is conducted in several stages:

### **Data Collection**

Primary data comes from relevant literature, including academic journals, reference books, policy reports, and articles published by international organizations related to early childhood education. Key references include publications focused on ECE curriculum, educator qualification standards, facilities, and child development assessment methods. The literature used comes from sources accessible through academic databases such as Springer, Elsevier, and Taylor & Francis, as well as official government websites and educational institutions from each country.

### Literature Selection Criteria

The selected literature meets several criteria:

- a. Published in the last five to ten years to maintain relevance to current conditions.
- b. In-depth discussions on ECE, including aspects of policy, implementation, or evaluation.
- c. Written in English or translated to ensure direct understanding and analysis.

### Data Analysis

Data is analyzed using a thematic comparative approach, which focuses on identifying key themes related to ECE standards across the six countries. This approach helps categorize and compare the differences and similarities in curriculum design, educator qualifications, facilities, assessment methods, and policies. The analysis covers:

- Curriculum design and content,
- Educator qualification requirements,
- Educational facilities and resources,
- Child development assessment methods, and
- Government policies on ECE.

After identifying the main components in each country's ECE system, the analysis draws comparisons and identifies strengths and challenges faced by each country.

The inclusion of Japan, South Korea, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Mongolia is justified based on their significant representation of diverse approaches to ECE in East Asia. These countries have varied socio-cultural, economic, and political contexts, which provide a rich basis for comparison. Additionally, each country has distinct educational policies and practices that contribute to the understanding of regional trends and challenges in ECE. By focusing on these six countries, the study aims to provide a comprehensive regional analysis that offers insights relevant to policy development in Indonesia and similar contexts.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study reflect the diverse approaches to ECE in the six East Asian countries. The results indicate that Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan focus heavily on high standards for educator training and curriculum development. Hong Kong has leveraged government policies to make ECE more accessible, while Mongolia continues to face challenges in providing equal access to quality education.

### Japan

Japan has a holistic approach to early childhood education, emphasizing moral, social, and intellectual development. Miwa (2020) highlights that Japan's ECE practices are highly relevant in supporting Society 5.0, where technology and traditional values merge to create innovative learning. Fujimura and Sato (2020) explain that Japan's education policy views teacher training as an integral part of improving education quality, including ECE. Japan sets high standards by requiring ECE educators to have at least a bachelor's degree in education.

Japan's curriculum emphasizes child-centered learning, integrating moral values and life skills. The holistic approach promotes the development of social responsibility and empathy.

Educational facilities are of high quality, and Japan's well-trained educators provide a strong foundation for children's growth.

#### South Korea

South Korea demonstrates a strong commitment to integrating technology in ECE. Kim (2015) notes that ECE educators' ICT competency significantly impacts the creation of modern learning environments. Park et al. (2017) add that South Korea's education policy also emphasizes structured learning, supported by technology, to enhance children's cognitive skills. Intensive teacher training is key to maintaining high educational quality in the country.

South Korea's structured approach to ECE focuses on cognitive development. The integration of ICT in early education has helped create modern learning environments, improving accessibility and student engagement. Intensive teacher training ensures high-quality education delivery.

#### Taiwan

Taiwan's approach to ECE emphasizes socio-emotional development. Kuo et al. (2023) note that Taiwan's ECE curriculum often includes bilingual programs to prepare children for global challenges. Taiwan's ECE facilities are of high standard, offering safe and modern learning environments to support children's creativity and exploration.

Taiwan's focus on socio-emotional development reflects its educational priorities of preparing children for globalization. The bilingual approach enables children to develop language skills in both Chinese and English, making them competitive in an increasingly interconnected world.

#### Hong Kong

Hong Kong offers a unique approach by adopting an educational voucher policy to support access to and quality of ECE. Ma et al. (2005) reveal that this program helps bridge the gap between private and public educational institutions. Additionally, Hong Kong's bilingual curriculum aims to prepare children to be competitive in the global market.

Hong Kong's ECE system is characterized by a robust policy framework that includes educational subsidies for low-income families, thus improving access to quality early education. The bilingual curriculum is a unique feature that helps prepare children for global challenges.

#### China

China focuses on traditional values like hard work and obedience in its curriculum. Hong et al. (2015) highlight the government's efforts to reduce the educational gap between urban and rural areas through subsidy policies and infrastructure improvement programs. Additionally, Hong and Howes (2014) show that Confucianism heavily influences parental expectations regarding early childhood education, creating early academic pressure.

China's ECE system is rooted in traditional Confucian values, emphasizing discipline, hard work, and obedience. The focus on academic rigor can create pressure for children, particularly in urban areas. Despite efforts to bridge the rural-urban divide, disparities remain in terms of resources and facilities.

#### Mongolia

Despite facing geographical and economic challenges, Mongolia continues to strive for improvements in ECE, particularly in rural areas. Schelzig and Newman (2020) mention the government's inclusive initiatives to ensure access to education for nomadic children. However, Morgan and Sengedorj (2023) highlight challenges in policy implementation, such as limited facilities and insufficient teaching staff.

Mongolia faces the unique challenge of delivering education to its nomadic population. Government initiatives to provide mobile learning centers have helped improve access to ECE in rural areas. However, challenges persist in terms of educator training and infrastructure.

#### Discussion of Findings and Limitations

This review shows that each country in East Asia has a unique approach to ECE standards, influenced by cultural, economic, and governmental factors. Japan and South Korea excel in teacher training and technology integration, while Taiwan and Hong Kong place significant focus on preparing children for globalization. Meanwhile, China and Mongolia still face challenges in achieving educational equity.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. First, the reliance on secondary data—primarily academic journals, policy reports, and other published materials—means that the analysis may be influenced by the availability and bias of existing literature. Furthermore, the interpretation of literature may reflect the perspectives and contexts of the original authors, which could introduce some degree of subjectivity. Additionally, the study does not incorporate primary data, such as direct field research or interviews with local educators, which could provide a more nuanced understanding of the ECE systems in these countries.

Despite these limitations, this study provides valuable insights for Indonesia in formulating adaptive and inclusive ECE policies.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study shows that while East Asian countries share common features in their commitment to early childhood education, each country's approach reflects its unique cultural and national contexts. Japan and South Korea emphasize structured learning and teacher training, Taiwan and Hong Kong prioritize socio-emotional development and bilingual programs, and Mongolia is working to improve access to education in rural areas.

For Indonesia, it is essential to consider the diversity of these approaches and adapt them to local needs. Recommendations include strengthening teacher training programs, adopting a curriculum that reflects local and global needs, and improving educational equity, especially in rural and underserved areas. To operationalize these recommendations in the Indonesian context, the following steps could be considered:

**Teacher Training:** Develop comprehensive professional development programs for ECE educators, focusing on both pedagogical skills and ICT competencies, similar to those implemented in South Korea. Local universities could collaborate with international institutions to offer specialized training and certifications.

**Curriculum Development:** Design a curriculum that combines local cultural values with global competencies, as seen in Taiwan's bilingual programs. This could involve integrating Indonesia's rich cultural diversity and regional languages, while also preparing children with the foundational skills required for a globalized world.

**Improving Equity in Education:** To address disparities between urban and rural areas, the government could prioritize investment in educational infrastructure and mobile learning initiatives, inspired by Mongolia's efforts to reach remote areas. Partnerships with NGOs and international agencies could support the development of mobile or online learning platforms tailored to rural communities.

These recommendations, when applied, could enhance the quality of early childhood education in Indonesia and better prepare children for future challenges in an interconnected world.

Potential areas for future research could include examining the effectiveness of ICT integration in ECE settings across different regions in Indonesia, as well as exploring the impact of bilingual education on children's cognitive and socio-emotional development. Furthermore, research could focus on the long-term outcomes of early childhood education policies in rural Indonesia, with a focus on educational equity and access.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

**REFERENCES**

- Ertz, Myriam, et al. (2022). "Pathways to Inclusive and Equitable Quality Early Childhood Education for Achieving SDG Goal: A Scoping Review." *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13: 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.755392>.
- Fujimura, Yuko, and Sato Mistilina. (2020). "How Japanese Education Boards Frame Teacher Education as a Training, Learning, and Policy Problem." *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 46(1): 20–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2019.1682904>.
- Hong, Shaohua, and Andrew Howes. (2014). "Influences of Confucianism on Chinese Parents' Experience with Early Childhood Education." *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(7): 39–49. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2014.27007>.
- Hong, Xiumin, Peng Liu, Qun Ma, and Xin Luo. (2015). "The Way to Early Childhood Education Equity: Policies to Tackle the Urban-Rural Disparities in China." *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 9(1): 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40723-015-0008-5>.
- Kim, Shinyoung. (2015). "Analysis of Early Childhood Teachers' Level of ICT Competency." *Indian Journal of Science and Technology*, 8(21): 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.17485/ijst/2015/v8i21/87609>.
- Kuo, Bor-Chen, et al. (2023). "Educational Policies and Practices in Taiwan's Early Childhood Education." *Journal of Educational Policy and Management*, 18(2): 145–159.
- Ma, Mingguo, Xuemei Wang, Frank Veroustraete, and Lixin Dong. (2005). "Pursuing Quality in Early Childhood Education with a Government-Regulated Voucher: Views of Parents and Service Providers in Hong Kong." *Journal of Education Policy*, 19(3): 31–37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930500114875>.
- Miwa, Chiaki. (2020). "Early Childhood Care and Education Practices in Japan for the Era of Society 5.0." *Proceedings of ICECCEP 2019*, 503: 27–32. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-3313-3\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-3313-3_5).
- Morgan, Julia, and Tumendelger Sengedorj. (2023). "Practitioner Perspectives on the Challenges of Implementing 'Alternative' Early Childhood Education (ECE) Provision for Nomadic Children in Mongolia." *Children and Youth Services Review*, 147: 106848. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2023.106848>.
- Note, Information. (2023). "Recent Enhancements in Early Childhood Education Policy in Selected Places." *Asian Education Policy Review*, 12(2): 1–27.
- Park, Eunhye, Minyoung Jang, and Seenyoung Park. (2017). "Early Childhood Education Policies in Korea: Advances in Theory and Practice." *Education in the Asia-Pacific Region*, 35: 47–59. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-3055-3\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-3055-3_4).
- Saito, Yasuo. (2009). "Education in Japan: Past and Present. Policy and Practice of Early Childhood Education and Care Across Countries." *Asian Education Policy Review*, 10: 27–30.
- Schelzig, Karin, and Kirsty Newman. (2020). "Promoting Inclusive Education in Mongolia." *ADB East Asia Working Paper Series*, April: 0–49. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/654801/eawp-28-inclusive-education-mongolia.pdf>.
- Yang, Jeonga, and Charlene Tan. (2022). "Initial Teacher Education in Singapore and South Korea." *Educational Review*, 1–15.