

## **Implementation of the School-Family Partnership Program to Support the Optimization of Preschool Children's Development in Purwakarta Regency**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Family and school collaboration is seen as an important factor in education, which has a big impact on children's development. However, there is potential for tension in school-family partnerships due to differences in opinions and expectations regarding goals, competencies and roles in education. The purpose of this research is to determine the form of school-family partnership in preschool. The research was conducted using a qualitative approach. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with preschool teachers in Purwakarta Regency. The results have shown that many educators and schools agree and support the concept of school-family partnerships. Supporting children's development is the responsibility of schools and families which can be achieved through priority programs implemented in all preschools. These programs include parent-teacher communication patterns, family education programs, institutional collaboration involvement, and family-school collaboration at home. School partnerships not only create communication between schools and families and involve parents in school activities, but also include school efforts in providing education to parents. Parental education can provide awareness regarding children's development so that they can develop a conducive (safe, comfortable and enjoyable) learning environment at home. The recommendation from this research is the need for action to encourage new strategies that help equalize the roles between parents and teachers, as well as improving the family-school interaction model in accordance with existing opportunities and challenges.

**Keywords:** *School Partnership; Family involvement*

### **ABSTRAK**

Kolaborasi keluarga dan sekolah dipandang sebagai faktor penting dalam pendidikan, yang berdampak besar terhadap perkembangan anak. Namun terdapat potensi ketegangan dalam kemitraan sekolah-keluarga karena perbedaan pendapat dan harapan mengenai tujuan, kompetensi dan peran dalam pendidikan. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui bentuk kemitraan sekolah-keluarga di lembaga Prasekolah. Penelitian dilakukan dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam kepada guru-guru prasekolah di kota Purwakarta. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa banyak pendidik dan sekolah yang setuju dan mendukung konsep kemitraan sekolah-keluarga. Mendukung perkembangan anak merupakan tanggung jawab sekolah dan keluarga yang dapat dicapai melalui program prioritas yang dilaksanakan di semua TK. Program-program ini meliputi pola komunikasi orang tua-guru, program pendidikan keluarga, keterlibat kerjasama kelembagaan, serta kolaborasi keluarga-sekolah di rumah. Kemitraan sekolah bukan hanya menciptakan komunikasi antara sekolah dan keluarga dan melibatkan orang

tua dalam kegiatan di sekolah, namun juga mencakup upaya sekolah dalam memberikan pendidikan kepada orang tua. Pendidikan orangtua dapat memberikan kesadaran mengenai perkembangan anak sehingga dapat mengembangkan lingkungan belajar di rumah yang kondusif (aman, nyaman dan menyenangkan). Rekomendasi dari penelitian ini yaitu perlunya tindakan untuk mendorong adanya strategi baru yang membantu pemerataan peran antara orang tua dan guru, serta meningkatkan model interaksi keluarga-sekolah sesuai dengan peluang dan tantangan yang ada.

**Kata Kunci:** *Kemitraan Sekolah; Keterlibatan Keluarga*

## INTRODUCTION

Family and educational institutions are two educational spaces that complement each other. Almost all religions and great thinkers from past to present have emphasized the role of the family in education. The family is the first and foremost educator but also the least prepared. Because they have to seek information and knowledge themselves about how to grow and support their children's education in positive conditions. When talking about education, the focus of the conversation is only about children and teachers. Meanwhile, parents seem to be neglected in education. In fact, parents have a very big role in children's education. The success of a child's education depends on family involvement. The family plays a role in creating a pleasant learning environment at home and fostering good character and a culture of achievement, establishing warm and loving interaction and communication with children, providing motivation that builds self-confidence in children, establishing active relationships with the school to create a learning environment conducive, and actively participate in family activities at school (Raraswati, 2016).

Schools cannot provide all the needs for children's growth and development, so meaningful involvement from parents/families is needed. Children learn better if the surrounding environment is supportive, including parents, teachers, other family members and the surrounding community. This means that schools, families and communities are very important pillars to ensure optimal child growth. According to the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, education is the responsibility of everyone between the family, community and government. In accordance with the opinion of Siswoyo (2011) that in education the term tri educational center is known, namely the educational environment which is divided into the family environment, school environment and youth organization environment (peers). Based on this, it can be seen that one educational environment contributes to the implementation of education in other educational environments. This means that when children start to enter the school environment, the family environment, especially parents, has a contribution and vice versa. Therefore, a

harmonious partnership between schools and families (parents) has a very important role in implementing children's education.

The harmony of education carried out at school and at home is recognized by education experts as one of the factors determining the overall success of a child's education, by aligning perceptions between home activities and school programs, children's growth and development will be effective. In this case, schools must be more active in socializing their educational programs to align them with children's activities at home. This is intended so that activities at home do not conflict with activities at school. Therefore, it is important for schools to facilitate the implementation of school-family partnership programs as an effort for harmony and continuity between education carried out in institutions and education carried out at home.

Technical Instructions for Partnerships between Early Childhood Education Units and Families and Communities, the Directorate of Family Education Development (2016) states, Tri-center educational partnerships are collaborative efforts between educational units, families and communities based on the principles of mutual cooperation, equality of position, mutual trust, respect, and a willingness to make sacrifices in helping an educational ecosystem that fosters character and a culture of student achievement. The aim of the partnership program is to establish cooperation and harmony between school and family education programs in building an educational ecosystem that is conducive to developing character and a culture of achievement in students. Meanwhile, specifically, the aim of the educational unit partnership program with families is to strengthen the partnership between schools and families in supporting a learning environment that can develop children's full potential and increase the involvement of parents/guardians in supporting children's educational success at home and at school.

The research literature indicates that successful home-school partnerships exhibit many of the following characteristics: 1) relationships in successful home-school partnerships are collaborative and respectful; 2) successful partnerships are multidimensional and responsive to community needs; 3) a successful home-school partnership is planned; embedded in the overall school development plan; is well resourced and reviewed regularly; 4) successful partnerships are goal-oriented and focused on learning; 5) effective parental involvement occurs mostly at home; 6) there is timely two-way communication between schools and parents in a successful partnership (A. Bull, K. Brooking and R. Campbell, 2008).

In 2015 the government has attempted various programs to increase parental and school involvement. Each educational unit is given tasks including: (1) Establishing communication with families about student learning progress and special events (carried out by the homeroom teacher); (2) Increasing family

capabilities through parenting programs and providing reading books; (3) Encourage parental involvement in helping children's learning activities at home, such as providing facilities and creating a supportive atmosphere; (4) Encourage parental involvement in school activities, for example as resource persons or helping with joint activities; (5) Motivate and encourage children's achievements, for example helping with homework and asking about what is learned and events at school; (6) Establish communication with teachers to find out about children's progress and special events that occur; (8) Participate in school activities that require parental involvement; (9) Encourage the habit of reading, writing and discussing within the family; and (10) Other positive habits at the family's initiative (Rihatno, et al 2017).

In implementing the family school partnership program, problems often occur in building interaction between the school and parents. This is due to many factors, whether due to differences in views or culture, differences in expectations, and others. Therefore, there is a need for a partnership program that can unite the understanding of families and schools, so that both can work together to contribute to children's education both at school and at home.

## **METHODS**

This research uses a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach is research that uses a naturalistic approach to seek and find meaning or understanding of phenomena in a context (Kirk & Miller, 1986). This research was conducted in Purwakarta Regency, which is located in West Java Province. The data source was determined using purposive sampling. The subjects in this research were 4 teachers at Raudhatul Athfal (RA) and kindergartens accredited A and B spread across Purwakarta Regency.

Data was collected through in-depth interviews. The interviews were structured in the form of open questions to find out (1) communication patterns between schools and families, (2) the role of schools in providing education to parents, (3) involvement of parents in school programs, (4) interactions between schools and families in implementing programs study at home. Open questions provide more in-depth information about the research subject (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005 in Pekdogan, 2017).

Interviews were used to obtain the experiences of the four participants, which made it possible to determine points of connection and difference, as well as the way each context operates the phenomenon under study. General and specific ethical norms applicable to the interviewed participants were applied during the interviews. First, the aim of the study was explained, then a signed consent form was

requested from each participant. After receiving answers from respondents, the data was analyzed descriptively using thematic techniques, namely analytical techniques that focus on preparing coding based on predetermined research questions so that the themes are arranged in accordance with the research questions and become a frame of reference in explaining the phenomena that occur (Heriyanto, 2018).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of in-depth interviews regarding the implementation of family school partnerships which include 4 important questions are as follows:

Question number 1 about "what is the communication pattern between the school and the family" is designed to see how the school and family communicate to provide each other with information and input about the child's development. The results show that most of the communication between schools and families has a two-way pattern, namely providing mutual information and input about children's development, both from the family to the school and vice versa. Each school has various forms and media for communication. There are schools that use short message communication media as a communication tool, parents and teachers send messages to each other via cellphone when there are problems with children's development.

*"We communicate via WhatsApp group, and sometimes through a committee formed by parents in a separate WhatsApp group. This communication is related to the agenda that the school will carry out in the future. Meanwhile, we usually provide information about children's progress when submitting report cards at the end of the semester."*

*"We communicate with parents via WhatsApp. If there is a problem, teachers and parents usually send messages to each other. When a child has special needs or is sick for a long time, we do a home visit. There is no special agenda to convey the child's progress to parents, but only during the distribution of report cards at the end of the semester. There is also a parent committee that helps convey information about the school agenda to parents."*

However, there are also schools that prefer to communicate directly with parents. They argue that communication via electronic media (text messages) gives rise to various perceptions and often leads to misunderstandings. Through direct communication, teachers and parents can convey their thoughts to each other more expressively and in detail regarding children's development. These direct meetings are scheduled regularly or incidentally or at any time when deemed necessary.

Apart from that, there is also a book to provide information on several special skills for children.

*"We hold direct meetings with parents every 3 months to share information, teachers report on children's progress and provide advice to parents. If there is a child who is having problems, from time to time we invite parents to come to school to communicate about this. "There is a link book (achievement book) to inform children's development in reading iqro' and the alphabet."*

*"At the start of school, we observe the child's development for 1 month, then we create a webbing of the child's development to communicate to parents. And when parents pick up their children, we always convey the child's progress and activities carried out that day. If there are problems with the child's development, the school will invite parents to meet directly at any time."*

Question number 2 about "what is the role of schools in providing education to parents" is designed to see how schools help parents/guardians in building awareness of children's education, including by developing a conducive (safe, comfortable and enjoyable) learning environment at home. The results show that all schools have made efforts to build awareness of children's education through parenting programs. This parenting program is carried out in different amounts at each school, including once a year, once a semester, and twice a month. There are also schools that complete parenting programs by developing digital parenting such as flyers that are sent to parents twice a year.

*"At school we hold parenting for parents once a year, as well as the umi parenting method of teaching iqro reading twice a semester."*

*"In providing education to parents, we hold parenting once every semester."*

*"In our school there is a parent class program which is held twice a year, there is also digital parenting in the form of flyers which are sent to parents twice a year."*

*"Our effort to produce smart parents is through a parenting program which we carry out regularly twice a month."*

Question number 3 about "how are parents involved in school programs" is designed to see how the school facilitates each parent's aspirations in supporting and assisting their child's educational progress. The results show that forms of parental involvement in school programs are facilitated in the form of parent committees. Through a forum consisting of parent/guardian representatives,

parents' aspirations can be conveyed. The committee is involved in several school agendas as part of the committee. The committee and all parents are also involved in several activities such as studying together at school, as well as as companions during learning activities outside the classroom.

*"At our school there is a parent communication forum (FOSITA) consisting of 12 parents/guardians. FOSITA is a parent representative who is a communication link between teachers and parents regarding various information. This forum is involved in helping implement several school programs such as Hajj rituals and outing classes. Meanwhile, several school activities do not only involve FOSITA, but also involve all parents/guardians, such as accompanying children on study tours or scheduling healthy menu preparations which are carried out alternately once a month."*

*"We have a parent representative committee called JAMIAH with 5 members. Jamia is involved in various committees on the school's activity agenda, such as accompanying theme peaks, healthy menus, graduations, commemorating national days and religious holidays. Jamia also has a role in conveying information from teachers to parents. Activities that involve all parents include accompanying educational tours and market days."*

*"A form of parental involvement in school programs is the existence of a committee which we involve in several activity agendas as representatives of the student's parents. "It also involves all parents who are involved as companions in learning activities outside the classroom."*

Question number 4 about "what is the form of interaction between the school and the family in implementing the home learning program" is designed to see how the school communicates with parents/guardians about material that should be enriched and deepened at home. The results show that some schools have regularly scheduled home learning programs. However, there are also schools that encourage learning activities at home with flexible or unscheduled times and adjusted to needs. The need to fill free time during holidays and the need to immediately follow up on child development problems.

*"Teachers always remind parents that children must memorize prayers, the alphabet and read iqro using the umi method. The school also has a routine program, namely studying at home once a week, the teacher determines simple learning activities that children can do with their parents at home."*

*"When it's a holiday, we sometimes inform parents to do activities with their children at home, with simple activities determined by the teacher. When distributing report cards, we also provide advice to parents to carry out learning activities at home with their children in accordance with the developmental conditions and problems experienced by the children."*

*"We don't have a home study program. Children's activities are focused only at school with teachers. However, during the routine parent meeting once every 3 months, we always provide recommendations for stimulation that parents can do with their children at home."*

*"There are no home learning programs prepared by schools, because the majority of parents/guardians are busy working. Our school has a long duration of activities until 14.00 and sometimes even until the afternoon for some children. Therefore, when you are at home, it is time to rest. However, when the parents pick them up, every day the teacher provides information to the parents regarding the child's development and the activities carried out that day. At that time, teachers and parents sometimes provide each other with information and suggestions regarding the child's development. The teacher conveys recommendations for activities that parents and children should do at home."*

### **School-Family Communication Patterns**

From the results that have been presented regarding the implementation of school-family partnerships which are described through four important questions, it was found that most school and family communication has a two-way pattern, namely providing each other with information and input about children's development, both from the family to the school and vice versa. However, there are also schools that have a one-way communication pattern, that is, only the school actively informs the family about the child's development. Some of the media used by schools to communicate with families include short electronic media messages, contact books, as well as communicating directly with parents, whether routinely scheduled or incidental or at any time according to needs.

Communication and information are the keys to success in establishing partnerships between schools, families and communities. Therefore, it is necessary to design media that can be used as a communication network between the three parties. Communication and information media that need to be established include: a) RAPK documents; b) achievement book between the school and parents; c) face-to-face meetings between the school and parents: (1) Meetings involving all parents, if there is information that all parents need to know. (2) Meeting between the



teacher/homeroom teacher or school principal and certain parents, if there is a specific problem regarding a student; d) Correspondence and/or circulars; e) Leaflets, booklets, banners, and others; and f) Social media: Facebook, short messages, Whatsapp, Twitter, pages, and others (Kemendikbud, 2016).

In Epstein's Framework of six types of involvement, effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication about school programs and children's developmental progress can be implemented in several strategies such as 1) meeting with each parent at least once a year, with appropriate follow-up need; 2) weekly or monthly documents of child activities sent home for review and comment; 3) taking report cards by parents, informing them about improvements in the child's development; 4) a schedule of regular notifications such as memos, telephone calls, bulletins, and other communications; 5) providing clear information regarding all policies, programs, reforms and school transitions.

Two-way communication has a positive impact on both parties, both the school (teachers) and parents. Good interaction patterns will enable parents to better understand school programs and policies, be able to monitor and be aware of their child's developmental progress, and be able to respond to their child's problems effectively. Likewise for teachers, there is an increase in the ability to communicate with families as well as awareness of their own ability to communicate clearly as well as an increase in the ability to obtain and understand the family's views regarding the program and the child's progress. However, communication often cannot run effectively. Barriers to creating effective communication can arise from differences in mind set or perception. Another cause is the wrong way of listening because it is more influenced by the communicant's perception, which will also have an impact on the response or meaning of the message conveyed (Gibson, James, et al. 2003). Therefore schools and parents need to build clear two-way communication channels from home to school and from school to home by always reviewing the readability, clarity, form and frequency of all memos, notices and other print and non-print communications as well as reviewing the quality of primary communications (bulletins, report cards, meeting schedules, and so on).

According to A. Bull, K. Brooking and R. Campbell (2008) schools that make communication with parents a priority are more likely to build successful home-school partnerships. Successful communication strategies can be very diverse. For example, this communication can involve face-to-face communication that occurs when parents drop off or pick up children from school, or the child themselves can be used to convey information to parents. More formally, a variety of written communications, including bulletins translated into the language of the community, may be used.

### **Family Education Program**

In terms of the role of schools in providing education to parents, all schools have made efforts to build awareness of children's education through regular parenting programs and digital parenting through the distribution of flayers. Some schools implement optimal parenting programs twice a month. However, there are still many schools that implement parenting only once a year.

Family education according to Epstein's Framework of six types of involvement, helps all families build a home environment to support children in their development and learning activities. Strategies that can be implemented include 1) providing suggestions for home conditions that support child-friendly learning activities; 2) holding workshops, video recordings, electronic messages on parenting; 3) designing parent education and other courses or training for parents; 4) family support programs to assist families with health, nutrition and other services; 5) home visits at transition points.

Family education provides parents with understanding and confidence regarding parenting styles, child development, as well as creating home conditions to support enjoyable learning activities for children. Through family education, parents have an awareness of their own role and a feeling of support from the school and other parents. By designing family education programs, schools will understand more about the background and culture of each family. Teachers also understand more about the diversity and needs of each child.

A challenge that schools often face is the difficulty in providing information to all families who want or need it, not just the few people who can attend workshops or meetings at school. Apart from that, sometimes families are not open to sharing information with the school regarding their child's culture, background, talents and needs. Another challenge is that teachers cannot ensure that all information for and from families is clear, usable, and related to the child's success at school. Therefore, new efforts are needed to be able to implement family education programs that are effective and efficient in meeting the various conditions of parents. For example, "workshop" means more than just a meeting on a topic held in a school building at a certain time. "Workshop" can also mean making information about a topic available in various forms that can be seen, heard, or read anywhere, at any time, in various forms.

### **Parental Involvement**

Furthermore, regarding the form of parental involvement in school programs, the school facilitates the aspirations of each parent in supporting and assisting the progress of children's education by forming a parent committee. The committee is a forum consisting of parent/guardian representatives who are involved in several

school agendas. The school also involves all parents in several activities such as joint learning activities at school, as well as as companions during learning activities outside the classroom. Parent involvement is a volunteer program to help teachers, administrators, children, and other parents. Schools provide space for parents or family forums for voluntary activities to hold meetings, share information, and use talents that are useful for the progress of school programs. Parents are involved in children's learning activities or other activities to help with the safety and operation of school programs. Parental involvement in class is carried out in the form of playing with children in class, assisting educators in the learning process in class, and monitoring the implementation of children's learning in class. Meanwhile, parental involvement in joint events is an activity that involves parents in carrying out learning support activities carried out outside the classroom. The aim is to bring closer the relationship between parents and children and parents and schools.

Collaboration between parents and educational institutions is grouped into two, namely: parental involvement and parent participation. Parental involvement is a minimum level of cooperation, for example parents come to educational institutions and help educational institutions only if invited. On the other hand, parent participation is a broader and higher level of cooperation. Parents and schools sit together to discuss various programs and activities for children. Parents come to school to help teachers carry out routine tasks, such as preparing food, preparing tools/media needed for learning, and providing security (Suyanto, 2005).

According to Rihatno, Yufiarti, and Nuraini (2017), parental involvement can be carried out through work programs designed by parent forums/committees such as regular meetings with themes determined by parents and the provision of healthy food every month whose arrangements are determined by the committee. Some examples of other activities that can be carried out are providing consumption of Hajj ritual activities, providing gifts for charity activities for orphans, preparing food to be sold at market day activities, being involved in family day activities, facilitating educational tourism activities, facilitating arts performance activities, facilitating open house activities. , preparing children for internal performances, as well as parental involvement in the class.

In parent involvement programs, there are challenges that often arise, busy working parents are one of the reasons for not being able to get involved. Therefore, schools need new ways to involve all parents, including those who do not volunteer at school. Efforts that can be made are creating flexible schedules for volunteers, meetings and events, so that working parents can participate. It is hoped that all parents can support school goals and children's learning or development in any way, anywhere, and at any time, not just during the school day and in the school building.

### **Study at Home with Parents**

As for the forms of interaction between schools and families in implementing home learning programs, teachers design simple activities that children can do with their parents at home. This program is carried out regularly on a weekly schedule or in flexible/incidental times according to needs. The need to immediately follow up on child development problems and the need to fill free time during holidays.

Home learning programs can be implemented by adapting home and school practices, which mostly include aspects of educating parents about school practices and providing suggestions regarding activities that families can do at home to support children's learning activities (A. Bull, K. Brooking and R. Campbell (2008). In implementing home learning programs, schools provide information and ideas to parents about how to support children in fun activities and learning at home so that they can support learning programs at school school and home, information about simple learning activities that can be done at home, as well as information about how to help children improve skills in various aspects of development. Schools can design a regular home activity schedule that allows children to interact with their families about what they do at school. Next, the school creates a journal containing activities for parents and children at home, including a home learning activity package during certain holidays.

### **CONCLUSION**

By knowing the implementation of school-family partnerships, it was found that many educators and schools agree and support the concept of school-family partnerships. Supporting children's development is the responsibility of schools and families which can be achieved through priority programs implemented in all preschools. These programs include parent-teacher communication patterns, family education programs, institutional collaboration involvement, and family-school collaboration at home. It is important to determine ways or strategies to improve school-family partnership programs. School partnerships not only create communication between schools and families and involve parents in school activities, but also include school efforts in providing education to parents. Parental education can provide awareness regarding children's development so that they can develop a conducive (safe, comfortable and enjoyable) learning environment at home. The recommendation from this research is the need for action to encourage new strategies that help equalize the roles between parents and teachers, as well as improving the family-school interaction model in accordance with existing opportunities and challenges. Simple learning activities with parents at home can help children improve their development based on the experiences gained from School. It is hoped that this research will provide awareness to educators to improve

their own skills in building interactions with parents regarding optimizing child development, as well as provide input to policy holders to be able to develop new strategies to support school-family partnership programs.

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