



IDENTIFICATION OF FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION UNIT

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Abstract: This research is motivated by the lack of family engagement participation in programs held by the institute of early childhood education. This research is aimed at discovering various family engagement programs in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) unit, supporting factors and barriers to the implementation of the family engagement program, and the benefits of the family engagement program in the ECE unit. The method employed in this research is literature review. Data were collected by studying various journals, books, and other relevant documents from various national and international web. The data analysis technique employed in this research is the Miles&Huberman's model by utilizing stages of analysis process consisting of data reduction, data organization, data display, and data interpretation. The research found that there are some family engagement programs, such as parents meeting to examine the science of parenting, communication development, volunteering in school programs, being involved in decision making, supporting learning at home activities, and collaborating with community. Factors supporting the implementation of the family engagement program in ECE are parents' commitment, solid parent-teacher relationships, parents' awareness, and parents' educational background. On the other hand, factors that become barriers in implementing the program are limited time, limited parents' financial capability, parents' low levels of education background, parents' insecurity, and parents' lack of understanding of the importance of the program. The benefit of family engagement program perceived by parents is gaining knowledge, information, and confidence in parenting. Furthermore, the program increases children's performance, learning motivation, discipline, and creates alignment between learning at home and in school.

Keywords: family engagement, parent partnership, early childhood education

INTRODUCTION

During early childhood, the development process grows more rapidly. This period can be a great opportunity to nurture and develop an individual's personality (Syaodih, 2004). Early childhood education needs not only the role of the school but also engagement and support from the family, especially the parents. Riana et al. (in Hatimah, 2016) stated that family has an important role in developing the basis of attitude, education, and skills, such as education in religion, character, attitude, manner, aesthetics, affection, sense of security, and discipline as well as nurturing positive habits. Hence, family engagement in early childhood education is very important because early childhood education program is holistic and integrated. Osadi (in Sumaryati et al., 2018) argued that family engagement in ECE unit effectively and consistently enhances children's learning development as school and family share the same goals in providing a good education for children.

However, there are some problems in the implementation of the family engagement program. For instance, many families fully transfer the responsibility of their children's education to the school, and there is no good cooperation between school and families. According to the research by Irma et al. (2019), lack of parents' role in children's education is caused by some parents are busy working so that they do not have enough time to review the lessons obtained by their children at home. Some parents also assume that teaching and educating children are the teacher's responsibility. Oktaviningsih (2018) appended that the lack of parents' participation in children's education is caused by a lack of cooperation between the two parties, such as schools that do not maximally involve parents in the school programs.

From all those problems, many experts have recognized that alignment and good cooperation among the ECE unit, family, and society in developing early childhood education are crucial factors that lead to the success of children's education thoroughly.

According to the research conducted by Raraswati (2016, p.2), parents' partnership or engagement plays a very important role in children's education since family is the children's first and primary teacher, and not all requirements of children education can be fulfilled by the school. School is the parents' partner in educating the children. The role of school in children's education is helping parents to provide more systematic, effective, formal, legal, and certified education for the children. Parents' partnership or good cooperation between school and parents is required to develop the best education for children. Cyrus and Kartini (in Sumaryati et al., 2018) also said that the responsibility of family (parents), school, and community is required to develop a qualified education. Those three components should unite and cooperate properly to promote a qualified children's education that is in line with the desired goals. The study conducted by the World Bank in 2013 concerning the effects of early childhood education and development program in 50 disadvantaged regencies shows that cooperation between parents and school resulted in a positive impact on promoting the early childhood development accomplishment level which is affected by the intensity of family support (in Hatimah, 2016). Diadha (2015) explained that some benefits for children gained from the parent engagement program in ECE unit are improving children's school attendance, enhancing children's achievement, and developing children's positive attitude and personality. Meanwhile, benefits perceived by parents are gaining confidence and satisfaction in parenting, broadening knowledge and experience in nurturing and educating children, and improving parents' skills in parenting. In addition, benefits perceived by the school are improving the school environment, improving parent-teacher relationships, and helping teachers lighten their workload in school.

In accordance with the findings explained above, the writers are interested in examining more on the real implementation of the family engagement program in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) unit that has been

conducted. The program implementation is very important considering the impacts and benefits that will be perceived by all related parties either children, parents, or school. Family engagement is very important to be applied in the ECE unit to align the education that children receive at school and with that they receive at home and to develop good communication between the ECE unit and family so that children obtain a high-quality education. By implementing family engagement, children are expected to develop better and become qualified human resources in the future (Ganevi, 2013).

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach with literature review method.

The literature review method was employed because much information or empirical data collected by the former researchers on the family engagement program in the ECE unit both in form of a research report, scientific journal, and books in the library are suitable as data resources for this research.

Fifty research works relevant to this research were used as the data resources to conduct the research.

The data analysis technique employed was the analysis model of Miles & Huberman (in Gunawan, 2013). Processes conducted in the qualitative data analysis were:

1. Data reduction (Organizing data)

In the data organization process, the researchers found out and collected data from journals and researches concerning the family engagement program in the ECE unit. Then, the data were examined and reviewed, and the relevant data were grouped and categorized in accordance with the research formulation.

2. Data display

Data display is part of the data analysis process (Harrudin, 2018). Data display aims to help readers to read and understand the content of this research easily. In this research, data were presented in narrative completed by charts, tables, or graphics described

narratively based on the conclusion explained.

3. Data interpretation

In this research, data interpretation was conducted in form of review and reanalysis of the categorized data according to the theoretical framework. After that, deduction, which results is expected to expand knowledge concerning family engagement in the ECE unit, was conducted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Family Engagement Activities in ECE Unit

According to the findings of the literature review process, the research conducted by Turnip et al., (2019); Putriarini (2019); Wijayanti (2018); Salma (2017); Amini (2015); Yuliasari et al., (2018); Bridgemohan (2001); Juwita et al., (2020); Rihatno et al., (2017); Asmawati (2018) found that there were 6 (six) family engagement activities, which are:

a) Parents Meeting to Examine the Science of Parenting

Based on the results data of the research conducted by Turnip et al., (2019); Asmawati (2018); Ulfah (2017); Suseno (2018), implementation of family engagement program in parenting activities in ECE unit reaches the percentage level of 47.5% to 86.8%.

Parenting activities are usually conducted in various methods, such as lectures, group discussions, role play, field trips, direct practice, or other methods following the policies of each school (Putri et al., 2018).

In line with the research by Putriarini (2019), parenting activities can be implemented through the activity of IPD (Islamic Personality Development), parenting seminar, psychology sharing session or consultation, and School of Parents and Teachers (SPT). Maimun (2016) stated that the results of the parenting implementation program show

that some parents have a good understanding of nutrition, health, child care, parenting, education, and children protection. Lestari (2015) also argued that the aim of parenting or nurturing education for parents is to help parents in gaining basic understanding concerning education for early childhood to be applied in educating and stimulating children's development.

b) Developing Communication

Communication development activities in ECE unit according to the researches by Putriarini, 2019; Wijayanti, 2018; Marzuki&Syamsuardi, 2017; Prabhawani, 2016; Ulfah, 2017; Salma, 2017; Juwita et al., 2020; Irma et al., 2017; Rihatno et al., 2017; Adrianti, 2011 are:

- 1) Parent-teacher meeting,
- 2) Creating proactive communication in conveying information to parents directly or indirectly through a personal message in social media,
- 3) Home visit
- 4) Parent and teacher club, parent-teacher association as a bridge between parent and teacher in communication.

The family engagement program through the activity of communication development has been successfully implemented in the ECE unit shown by the previous research with a percentage level of 63.60% to 75.6% (Turnip et al., 2019; Asmawati, 2018).

c) Volunteering

Based on literature review analysis, there are some volunteering activities, such as art performance, inspiration class or volunteer teacher class, thematic event, or field-trip (Putriarini, 2019; Prabhawani, 2016; Wijayanti, 2018; Salma, 2017; Irma et al., 2019; Rihatno et al., 2017; Suseno, 2018). (Turnip et al., 2019; Asmawati, 2018; Yuliasari et al., 2018, Putriarini, 2019). However, research conducted by Amini (2015) shows that parent engagement as a volunteer in kindergarten still needs improvement because many kindergartens

have not conducted inspiration class activity (Parents as a volunteer teacher).

d) Decision-making Involvement

Decision making engagement activities include active participation in school committee (Yuliasari et al., 2018; Juwita et al., 2020), involvement in curriculum-making, in certain school activities planning, in school budgeting planning, and in others similar activities (Putriarini, 2019). Meanwhile, Salma (2017) argued that parents can take an active role in decision making through parent-school discussion activity.

Concerning the intensity of parent engagement in decision making in the school, Turnip et al., (2019) stated that some parents have not taken an active role in the activity and there were many parents not attending the conference or meeting held by the school. On the other hand, Asmawati (2018) found that parents have actively participated in decision making in school. The intensity of parents' active role greatly depends on the location of the school, school's position, and parents' educational background.

A collaboration of parent and school in taking an active role in decision making is expected to expand perspective and help to achieve children's learning goals because of the multi-perspective gained.

e) Supporting Learning at Home Activities

Some parent engagement activities in supporting learning at home are having a willingness or desire to accompany children doing school tasks at home and having the ability to review the lessons learned in school (Salma, 2017; Irma et al., 2017).

f) Collaborating with Community

The activity example of collaborating with community is participating in a Creative Children Festival in order to mingle with the community (Salma, 2017), conducting a thematic event where

children are taken to visit Fire Department to learn about the firefighter profession (Irma et al., 2019), conducting social service, bazaar, free medical checkup, and *Qurban* (Putriarini, 2019).

Based on the literature review process, it was found that there are 6 (six) forms of family engagement program in the ECE unit. This is in line with the theory of Epstein & Salinas (2004) which stated that the family engagement program in school is divided into six forms which are parenting education, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, collaborating with the community.

However, the findings by Bridgemohan (2001) argued that even though some schools have conducted some parent engagement program activities, not all schools involved parent in all of their programs. There are some unpopular programs in some ECE units, such as volunteering or being a volunteer teacher (Amini, 2015). On the other hand, Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 30 of 2017 Article 6 on forms of family engagement program activities in the ECE unit stated that one of family engagement program activities in the ECE unit is having a parent as a guest speaker in education unit activity. It means that parents should take an active role in activities conducted by the school.

2. Supporting Factors and Barriers to the Implementation of Family Engagement Program in ECE Unit

Research conducted by Putriarini (2019) and Juwita et al. (2020) expressed that the supporting factors in promoting parent engagement in every family engagement program in the ECE unit are making a commitment for parents since the first time and providing an opportunity for parents to be actively participated in family engagement program in school. Furthermore, Lestari (2015) also stated that school-parent closeness

and the availability of facilities and infrastructures in the ECE unit are the supporting factors of the family engagement program. In addition, the program also requires awareness of parents and schools concerning their involvement in children's development education (Yuliasari et al., 2018). Moreover, Jamilah (2019) argued that the factor supporting parent involvement in school programs is the parent's educational background.

According to Turnip et al. (2019), family engagement activity in the ECE unit has not always worked well because there are some barrier factors. Barrier factors according to the research conducted by Jamilah (2019); Sumaryati et al. (2018); Turnip et al. (2019); and Juwita et al. (2020) are:

- 1) Factor of time since each parent has different activities,
- 2) Economic factor which causes many parents to feel they have limited material or expense to participate in every family engagement program,
- 3) Factor of different educational backgrounds which causes parent with low levels of education feel they do not have the competency to be involved in the program. This is in line with the statement of Hornby (2011) and Jafarov (2015) which explained that lack of parents' confidence in participating in school is caused by parents' feeling of not having the proper ability in academic competency which can effectively help their children's education.
- 4) Lack of parents' understanding which causes them to put demand only on school to give positive results without them being engaged.

3. Benefits of Family Engagement Program in ECE Unit

According to the research conducted by Prabhawani et al. (2016), the implementation of various family engagement programs in the ECE unit makes parents feel more broad-minded on parenting skills, on ways of proper learning for children, and gain new

information on children development as well as boost parents' confidence in parenting.

Meanwhile, indirect benefits obtained by children are increased learning motivation and achievement (Prabhawani et al., 2016; Jamilah 2019; Juwita et al., 2020). Furthermore, children become more disciplined and have higher motivation in going to school (Jamilah, 2019; Edi et al., 2018; Ismail et al., 2018). Therefore, children will obtain better learning because there is an alignment of what they obtain in school and at home. Children will grow and develop in a good environment and good parenting that are aligned and support each other (Lestari, 2015).

CONCLUSIONS

According to the analysis of the result of the literature review and the discussion in the previous chapter, family engagement program activities in ECE unit are generally categorized into 6 (six) forms which are parents meeting to discuss parenting, communication development, volunteering, decision-making involvement, supporting learning at home activity, and collaborating with the community.

Supporting factors to implementation of family engagement are the commitment of and opportunity for parents to take an active role; Good and comfortable environment, open attitude, and teacher-parent closeness; Parents' educational background; Awareness of parents and school. On the other hand, factors that become barriers are a factor of limited time; economic factor; lack of parents' understanding; parents' educational background differences. However, the benefits of family engagement program implementation in the ECE unit can be perceived by all parties including parents, children, and school.

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