SCHOOL AND FAMILY PARTNERSHIP: INFORMAL LEARNING CONTEXT TO BUILD CHILDREN CHARACTER

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Abstract: This present study aims to describe the pattern of partnerships between schools and families in basic education as part of character building for students in the context of informal learning in primary schools. The study was conducted using a descriptive qualitative approach with 9 school principals and committee members as participants. Participants were recruited from both public and private schools based on regional representation. Data analysis was conducted inductively by linking of family involvement aspects with interactive analysis. The results showed that character building is the responsibility of both the schools and families which is achieved through priority programs implemented in all elementary schools. These programs involved institutional cooperation, family-school collaboration at home and family-teacher communication. The study also found that involvement in all elementary schools was mostly represented by mothers (85%). Character building can also be done by accelerating school-family partnership in a more informal learning context. Through this families and schools go hand in hand promoting culture of achievement, literacy related habits five principles which comprise smile, greeting, say hello, polite, well-mannered and five involvement which are corporation, community leaders in the villages, universities, family and city government. Involving families in children's education evidently provides confidence, comfort and enthusiasm in learning at home and at school.

Keywords: character, collaboration, informal learning, partnership

KEMITRAAN SEKOLAH DAN KELUARGA: KONTEKS PEMBELAJARAN INFORMAL DALAM MEMBANGUN KARAKTER ANAK

Building people’s personality and nobility is uneasy. Aside from the fact that science, technology, information, and globalization has progressed so quickly, a structured and massive infiltration in the fields of economics, politics and ideology have provided serious challenges. The waves of globalization and those challenges do not only bring positive but also certainly negative impacts, especially for the young generation, including children. Hate speeches publicly exhibited by adult even by the elites and intellectuals, consciously or unconsciously influence children’s personality to lose temper easily, even in an extreme case, it could evoke radical thoughts and attitude which potentially threaten the national unity. Creative and cheerful children and youth who experience cultural degradation could turn into bullying, drug abuse, irrational, radical, and temperamental individuals.

One third of Indonesia’s population are children. Therefore, appropriate policies are needed to improve children's welfare and save a better future for the nation's young generation. The Central Bureau of Statistics (2015) shows that number of Indonesian children aged 0-17 years were approximately 82.85 million, they are the prospective Indonesian generation who will contribute to national development. The complexity of the nation’s problems cannot be solved one-sidedly by the government as the one who establishes policy and attempt to implement it within the society. Measures to tackle those problems require involvement of education institution at all levels, communities, and religious institutions (Rusniati, 2015). It is through education that offers freedom, sincerity and fun atmosphere, violations could be reduced. Lengrand (1970) argues that education today should not be about "heaps of piles knowledge but individual development, achieving increased self-realization as a successive result experience. Faure et al. (1972) emphasized that democracy is of “everyone’s right to realize his or her own potential and to share in building your own time. It is also worth noting, as they champion life and living education (formal, informal, and non-formal) and learning, they share the changing relationship between educational practice and individual needs. Several studies have explained that education puts its interests on the social development of children’s personality and this focus has been derived from a humanist educational paradigm. This paradigm calls for education humanization.

Education humanization is interested in the process of education that helps people deals with humanitarian issues by integrating human values into educational activities, school artifacts, families and communities. Education is a humanitarian problem, so the involvement of families, schools and communities in the partnership model is a conflict resolution that can be applied in elementary schools (Tilaar, 2002; El Nokali et al., 2010). Many research studies in education concerning the involvement of families, schools and communities in fulfilling children's educational needs are evidence that the issue of education does not only involve government but all components of the nation. The findings of the study conducted by Hoover-Dempsey, K., Walker, J., Sandler, H., Whetsel, D., Green, C., Wilkins, A., & Clossen, K. (2005) have shown that the involvement of parents in the process of education in schools plays an important role in helping students in learning. Parents’ involvement also contributes to shape children’s behavior that support their schools, teachers and environment; as well as to adapt well
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to globalization impacts that can be influence on the character of the child (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) explain in detail the roles, forms, and patterns of parental involvement at school.

Research on humanistic education has been widely carried out by educational researchers. Integrating humanitarian values into the curriculum and religious activities could help children to develop humanistic behavior as dynamic and active individuals. Shan (2017), showed that using harmony as an ideal to address or divert attention away from social conflicts or ecological problems, as a result of modernization, how would a re-engagement with Confucian humanism. The value of humanistic education in developing their potential lies in the learning process and development of school culture. The humanistic values are categorized into two. The first is the humanistic value that exists in learning process and includes learning approach and methods, while the second humanistic value is comprised in the development of school culture, which includes inclusive school culture and its activities (Suswanto, et al., 2015). Humanistic education models with conflict resolution paradigm as described above become the reference accelerate partnerships between schools and families.

In 2017, based on the archived documents from the Office of Education Affair in Yogyakarta, there were 167 public and private elementary schools in 14 sub-districts in Yogyakarta. Almost every sub-district has 1 or 2 public or private schools classified as superior schools due to their quality teaching staff, high students’ achievement, learning processes, learning content, infrastructure, curriculum and other factors which go above national standards. Even so, since 2011, learning process in primary education levels in Yogyakarta uses culture-based curriculum as declared by the Governor of DIY. This is a proof that Yogyakarta is concerned with humanistic education in conflict resolution paradigm. Faure et al. (1972) pay particular attention to what he calls the ‘alienation of personality’ class conflict and division of labor. For him, it is important to build a learning society that embodies a complete human being, “in all the richness of his personality, the complexity of his forms of expression and commitment - as individuals, members of the family and community, citizens and producers, likewise, Dave (1976), besides that life education must be done in order to improve the quality of individual life. Both social community and family expect that humanistic education is integrated into school's programs thereby building children's character. To meet their expectation, a partnership-based education intervention is needed. Educational humanization has a conflict resolution paradigm in its implementation by involving schools, communities, and families who feel attached and attempt to collaborate for a national integrity. The opportunities of school–community partnerships pose for students’ learning continue to generate the attention of educational stakeholders (Williams & Gonzales, 2012).

Educational units such as families and educators in primary schools are strategic agents in building children’s character provided here is a collaboration in an accelerated pattern of partnership between schools and families on an ongoing basis. Armstrong (2006) asserts that the best schools respect student differences, by using appropriate practical examples and promoting a humanitarian approach to education. These elements include (a) play-based-learning for early young child, (b) thematic learning for elementary school students.

This article attempts to describe family involvement in primary education as a part of the accelerated partnerships between schools and families. Hornby & Lafaele (2011) showed that the gap between rhetoric and reality of family involvement because of the influence of factors at the parent and family, child, parent–teacher and societal levels which act as barriers to the development of effective activities. This study involved public and private primary schools, which ranged from the reputable schools which students come from upper middle family background and the suburban schools which most students come from poor families. The assumption is that families of the students who go to the reputable school could have higher involvement compared to those of the students who go to the suburban schools. Through family involvement indicators in attending school meetings such as annual meetings and parenting classes, parents could be the resource persons in school activities and actively participate in students’ art classes and self-development activities.
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**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Nine public and private elementary schools in Yogyakarta were selected as samples based on the district distribution system to achieve representativeness in building understanding of school, family and community partnerships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rayon</th>
<th>Elementary School criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>1. Primary/superior school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>1. Primary/superior school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>2. Suburban schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>1. Suburban schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Processed from the Yogyakarta Education Office 2017.

The study was conducted using a qualitative approach. The data was collected using series of focus group discussions in which family involvement in education and the possibility of accelerating partnerships between schools, families and communities were discussed. By purposive sampling technique, researcher determine subject research that will be main data. School committees, principals and class associations are those who are expected to assist researchers in developing ideas about this partnership. Aspects of family involvement in children education in school are deepened FGD into three including whether or not they (1) attend meetings held by education units; (2) parenting; (3) become resource persons in school activities; (4) have an active role in the stage activities at the end of the academic year. The data were collected then analyzed inductively to find the partnership patterns between school and family and the possibility of accelerating this partnership that can help building the character of elementary school children. Researcher using recorder to collect data and use interactive analyze to analyze data from audio into transcript. And also researcher use a note for member check the data.

This study is limited to urban areas in Indonesia and focuses on involving families and schools to accelerate the partnership to shape children's character in elementary school context. Although this study was carried out in Indonesia, the results of this study can be compared and developed in other countries with similar characteristics, especially in multicultural countries.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

**Findings**

**School – Family Partnership**

This study found the significance of partnership model in the elementary school level for the children. Not only in terms of their intellectual development but also in terms of the efforts to build their character. Positive habits, such as discipline, honest, responsible were achieved through the implementation of five principles (smile, greeting, say hello, polite and well-mannered). Those five habits are integrated into several school activities including positive habits at home to sustain its educational value. Fiecha (2012) argue that the benefits were not just for the parents. Of course they were for the children because the child self esteem grew, their ability to relate to their parents grew. To manage relationship, the actual skill of reading to your children, they were given the confidence and the skills to be able to do that.

All elementary schools have involved family and they determined the involvement divided into four activities, which are attending meetings held by schools, attending parenting classes, being resource persons in school activities and participating in children's self-development activities. So, it can be explained that all involvement aspects are expanded by the primary schools. The distinguishing results lie in the percentage of involvement such as type of schools and percentage of family involvement.

In general, the data shows that the percentage of family involvement in all schools in terms of attending school meetings reached above 85% in the reputable schools, while the involvement in the suburban schools reached 70%-85%, regardless fathers or mothers who collected the academic report.

**Table 2.**

**Family Involvement Education at School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involvement</th>
<th>Description of activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attending schools meetings</td>
<td>Discussing school problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preparing efforts to improve school's quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improving the quality of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Devising plans to develop infrastructure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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As shown in table 2, the involvement of fathers appears to demonstrate a lower percentage in all aspects, especially in spiritual activities. The fathers’ involvement in religious aspects is much smaller compared to mothers. The data related to family involvement in terms of building character through informal learning can be seen in the following table.

Table 3. Family Involvement in Elementary Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of Engagement</th>
<th>% of family involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attending schools meetings</td>
<td>Father 50 - 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother 80 - 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending parenting classes</td>
<td>Father 10 - 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother 80 - 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a resource person at school activities</td>
<td>Father 10 - 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother 80 - 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in art performance at the end of academic year</td>
<td>Father 80-90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother 80 - 90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From table 3, the participation of both parents in elementary schools is quite high. This condition is likely due to parents’ care in giving children greater confidence, pride, joy and enthusiasm in character development through arts.

**Accelerated Partnership Pattern**

According to Epstein & Sheldon (2002) that school, family and community cooperation is a multidimensional concept which together have the responsibility to improve and develop students’ academics so that it will affect children’s education and development. Multidimensional means that cooperation is carried out in various ways or dimensions. Cooperation is not only a parent-teacher meeting, but also involves parents in various roles. The study found 3 partnership patterns in the context of informal learning. This means that all activities were developed from children’s educational needs at school, at home and in the community were intended to build children’s character. This finding was also found in several studies in different countries. The involvement patterns include institutional cooperation, family-school collaboration at home and family-teacher communication patterns. Parents’ involvement had implications for children's academic performance and school quality (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Topor et al., 2010). It was also mentioned that family involvement may depend on socioeconomic status, parents’ expectations, and parenting styles. A myriad of research studies on school improvement suggests that involving all members of the school community provides an important foundation for successful school improvement efforts (Cotton et al., 2006).

The complexity of the role, task and function of school-family bond in building children’s character through accelerated partnerships in education results in a patterned cooperation. The partnership between school and family is achieved through institutional partnership, such as school committee meeting, parent meeting, parenting groups or parenting forums. School priority programs which include 4 aspects of involvement were organized with a partnership model to improve school quality and learning quality. The school and learning quality were integrated into the curriculum and the curriculum was built together by the family and school to shape the children’s character. This model of institutional partnership is a basic pattern developed by all investigated elementary schools.

### School – Family Collaboration at Home

The pattern of family-school partnership was designed simply to fulfil children's educational needs at home, especially in supervising as well as accompanying children studying and doing school assignments. This partnership further highlights aspects of the consistency of educating children at home in the context of informal learning. This kind of learning takes account of being disciplined, honest, caring for the environment, and other positive habits which might be developed along primary school ages. According to Keith & Girling (1991) it provides an understanding that there are three models of
relationships between schools and their stakeholders, namely professionals, advocacy and partnerships. The professional model is more in the service of school employees and experts. So that the relationship is more one way. Then the advocacy model places more on the role of opposition efforts to education policy in general and schools in particular. The partnership model contains the division of responsibilities and initiatives between families, schools and communities that aim at achieving educational targets. So that all parties will participate in activities related to school. Thus the partnership focuses more on involvement based on personal interests, so that parents are voluntarily involved in making decisions based on the needs of the child.

![Parents](image1)

**Figure 1. Family-school Collaboration at Home**

**Collaboration with Supervising Schools and Sub Urban Schools**

![Supervising School](image2)

A good partnership pattern in elementary school employed a supervising school which served as a coach and was responsible for helping other schools that have lower quality in terms of infrastructure, teacher, students, learning process and school culture. Supervision and academic monitoring are likely to be provided for the elementary schools which are located within the same district.

The partnership pattern between schools and families at school and at home has general implications for the schools’ quality, learning quality, and children’s behavior. The school’s priority programs which were performed through accelerating involvement of various parties showed the school policy with decentralization. It implies that education program cannot be separated from those parties who promote character building.

Partnership acceleration developed by schools and family involves the Yogyakarta sultanate to explore noble values and to involve the surrounding community. It also engages universities, which served as a partner in developing ideas for schools’ and corporation’s advancement and supporting funding as well as other facilitation installment. In general, the partnership built by the school can be seen in the following figure.

![Schools](image3)

**Figure 3. The Pattern of Developing School-Parents Partnerships**

**Discussion**

It is clear and indisputable that parental involvement has a very broad positive impact. Greenwood & Hickman (Gürbüztürk & Sad, 2010) showed that involvement of parent at school give a positive effect, it can be observed from learning acts as a gel that helps to make learning for children pleasant and encourages them to work even more as they seek to make those closest to them proud. Although many educators and schools agree with and support the concept of parental involvement and its impact on children from preschool to high school, many also do not convey knowledge or guidance in planning, implementing, and achieving outcomes.
The national-level school partnership network formed by Joyce Eipstein (2002) develops six types of parental involvement based on the overlapping spheres of influence theory model. Each type of engagement consists of many different activities to promote and forge partnerships. Each type produces different outcomes for children, parents, educators, and schools, depending on how well each type of parental involvement is designed, planned, and implemented. But what is certain is that each school must pay attention to the needs of its surroundings. Partnerships that are based on long-term, warm, responsive, and consistent cooperation, become the strongest predictors of academic achievement of elementary school children. Studying at home could help students to enhance understanding upon the lessons and experience gained at school. Continuous exposure might construct their knowledge, positive habits, and academic achievements. (Fiecha, 2012; Hatimah, 2016). It could also be supported by the school atmosphere, teachers' attitudes and teachers' attention to provide encouragement and appreciation for children. In this context informal learning, the Directorate General of Early Childhood Education and Community Education (2015) suggests the importance of family partnerships, education units and the community to build an educational ecosystem that fosters students' character and culture of pursuing achievement. Besides, Wilder (2014) also reviewed from nine meta-analyses, then the result showed that relationship between parent involvement and academic achievement was positive. The findings in this study have similarities in terms of acceleration of partnership patterns with school management and the community needs. The stages of building partnerships with parents according to Molloy, et al (1995) are as follows:

1. Starting a partnership
   Schools provide initial stimulants in analyzing both students, parents and schools. The needs of the three parties form the basis for starting a partnership. Schools in this stage also do not leave the partnership culture that has existed before. So that it can be a reference for further activities.

2. Forming partnerships
   The formation of a parent-school partnership requires a different pattern from the others. Persuasive patterns are an option in attracting parents' attention to children's problems. Informal packaging is a way of building partnerships before leading to formal forms of activity. The effectiveness of partnerships in building children's abilities is further sharpened by the presence of facilitators who are skilled and neutral who are tailored to the needs. The place of implementation is not only at school but outside of school is an option so that implementation can have a more informal atmosphere. Forming a partnership is not easy, but the impact of this partnership is huge for various parties.

3. Develop a shared vision
   Parents and schools then make an agreement on a vision that becomes a common goal. Both parties think about the goals to be achieved and the means used to achieve these goals. From the thoughts that have emerged, it is expected that they will be fully responsible for the implementation, continuity and linkage of activities.

4. Collaborative action
   Activities that are carried out must be able to show real interactions between children and parents and schools. So that the activities carried out involve various parties so that cooperation can really be felt. Collaborative action can be linked to existing programs from the school or new ones planned according to the agreements that have been made. In addition, creating cooperation between parents and children can also be seen from homework and assignments given by the teacher by the child.

   In addition, also reminds us that partnerships cannot be separated from the principles of accountability and independence. The independence in question is related to politics in that as much as possible not to side with certain groups. Then it is also related to financial independence which also even though it will get assistance from various parties but still holds the principle of accountability. Partnership groups that have been formed cannot be separated from the background in strengthening one of the groups. As James, A.G., Rudy, D. & Dotterer (2019) showed about the important to understand some aspect from outside

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school, such the enriching experiences parents provide, influence the academic success of students. This is as explained by White & Wehlage (1995) which emphasizes professionalism and a program to start a partnership. This means that in starting a partnership using a political strategy by inviting other parties or institutions that are more in favor of the group that needs strengthening.

Partnership acceleration activities vary among schools and should represent the unique needs of each school. The common community partners consist of ten categories: businesses/corporations; universities and educational institutions; government and military agencies; health care organizations; faith organizations; national service and volunteer organizations; senior citizens’ organizations; cultural and recreational institutions; other community-based organizations; and individuals within the community. Most partnership activities were reported to be student-centered, family-centered, school-centered, and community-centered. Furthermore, the activities that provided the greatest impact were student-centered activities, which were focused on building relationship and promoting a greater understanding of life beyond the classroom (Strickland, 2016).

Building character of elementary school-aged children is not a simple job. Family involvement in educational activities at school as well as learning activities at home indicates that building children’s character is a shared responsibility. Through the acceleration of a systematic partnership between families, schools, the community and other educational institutions that concern children’ education and their future, partnership models are increasingly developing.

Collaboration between schools and families has been carried out based on the knowledge development and the community needs. This kind of partnership was also developed by several parties, such as community leaders in the villages, the Sultanate people, universities and corporations, who strengthen its partnership network. The ideal conditions cannot always be realized due to several factors.

**CONCLUSION**

Parental involvement has a very broad positive impact. Although many educators and schools agree with and support the concept of parental involvement and its impact on children from preschool to high school. Partnerships that are based on long-term, warm, responsive, and consistent cooperation, become the strongest predictors of academic achievement of elementary school children. Studying at home could help students to enhance understanding upon the lessons and experience gained at school. Partnerships cannot be separated from the principles of accountability and independence. The independence in question is related to politics in that as much as possible not to side with certain groups. Building character is the responsibility of schools and families which was achieved through priority programs implemented in all elementary schools. These programs involved institutional cooperation, family-school collaboration at home and family-teacher communication patterns. Involving families in children's education evidently provides confidence, comfort and enthusiasm in learning at home and at school.

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