JURNAL PENDIDIKAN USIA DINI
2026, VOL. 20, NO. 2, 280-286
e-ISSN (Online Media): 2503-0566
P-ISSN (Print Media): 1693-1602
http://journal.unj.ac.id/unj/index.php/jpud

Parent Teaching: School and Family Collaboration Strategies to Support Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education

Nurul Shofiatin Zuhro [1*], Upik Elok Endang Rasmani [1], Jumiatmoko [1], Bambang Winarji [1], Anjar Fitrianingtyas [1], Novita Eka Nurjanah [1]

[1] Early Childhood Teacher Training Education Department, Sebelas Maret University, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Partnership programs between schools, families, and communities are currently a focus in the development of early childhood education. This study aims to describe the collaboration strategy between schools and families through the "Parent Teaching" model to support parental involvement in early childhood education. The research method used is qualitative with a case study approach, involving observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation at an early childhood education institution in Klaten Regency. The results of the study indicate that effective collaboration between schools and families to support parental involvement in early childhood education can be achieved through the Parent Teaching program. The strategies implemented include training for parents, active involvement in the learning process, and intensive communication between teachers and parents. These findings also identify several supporting factors, such as school openness, parental motivation, and a conducive learning environment. The "Parent Teaching" program is able to strengthen the partnership between schools and families, thereby contributing to the optimal development of early childhood, so it needs to be carried out continuously.

Article History
Submission: November 2, 2025
Received: October 7, 2026
Accepted: October 9, 2026

KEYWORDS
early childhood education, parent teaching, parents involvement

DOI. 10.21009/jpud.v20i2.61677

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Contact Corresponding: Nurul Shofiatin Zuhro
Email: nurulzuhro@staff.uns.ac.id
Contact person: +6285725009925

1. *Introduction*

Early childhood education (PAUD) is a crucial aspect in building a strong foundation for child growth and development. The government, as the institution responsible for the advancement of education in Indonesia, has recognized the importance of education at this level in creating quality human resources for the future. In line with this awareness, the government continues to strive to create policies and programs that can support optimal child growth and development, especially through collaboration between schools and parents. This collaboration is considered important to create an environment that supports holistic child growth and development. The government also facilitates collaboration between schools and parents through various community-based programs. One concrete example is the Program to Strengthen the Role of Parents in Education, initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture. This program aims to provide training for parents to better understand how to effectively support their children's development at home, including the aspects of social, emotional, and cognitive skills to create an educational ecosystem that integrates the roles of schools and parents to achieve optimal early childhood development.

Parental involvement in early childhood education is one of the fundamental factors that determine the success of the learning process and holistic child development. Many studies emphasize that active parental participation not only impacts cognitive aspects but also social, emotional, and behavioural aspects of children in the early stages of their lives (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Barger et al., 2019; Ommama et al., 2024). A supportive family environment and a close relationship between home and school are prerequisites for creating a conducive learning atmosphere for early childhood. Collaboration between schools and families is increasingly important to strengthen, given that the role of schools cannot fully replace the function of families as the first and primary institutions in educating children. Research shows that harmonious partnerships between parents and teachers can improve the quality of learning experiences and optimize children's potential from an early age (Andesta et al., 2023; Della Porta et al., 2022; Syuraini et al., 2022). Forms of collaboration, such as effective communication and parental involvement

in various school activities, are highly recommended in order to create continuity of roles between both parties in facilitating children's growth and development.

The program that involves parents as teachers (parent teaching) in early childhood classes is an initiative to directly involve parents in the learning process of children at school. The concept of Parent Teaching is presented as a strategic model to build a bridge of cooperation between schools and families. Through this approach, parents are given more space and roles in accompanying and simulating learning activities, both at home and at school. This model has been proven to improve the quality of interaction and communication, as well as strengthen parents' capacity to support their children's education (Hayakawa et al., 2013; Lau & Ng, 2019; Smith et al., 2020). A number of studies show that the implementation of Parent Teaching includes training, mentoring, and periodic provision of information about child development, learning methods, and challenges that may be encountered (Rahmadhini et al., 2023; Salim, 2025). In addition, parent development programs integrated with early childhood education curricula have been shown to broaden parents' understanding and skills in managing their children's learning at home (Andesta et al., 2023; Esafitri et al., 2023). This collaborative strategy can also reduce the potential for miscommunication and narrow the gap between schools and families. Information transparency, participation in educational decision-making, and a proportional division of roles between teachers and parents are key aspects that must be pursued in building effective partnerships. In addition, parental involvement in educational activities has been proven to benefit students, parents, teachers, and schools. For students, parental involvement can increase children's engagement in learning, emotional well-being, and academic readiness (Nurfadilah et al., 2025). The existence of parental involvement programs can increase parental support for children's learning at home, as well as improve communication between parents and schools. Teachers will also feel supported and motivated in educating children (Tresnatri et al., 2022). Meta-analytic evidence further confirms that parental involvement in schooling is associated with children's academic and socio-emotional adjustment (Barger et al., 2019), and that structured family–school partnership interventions produce measurable benefits for children's academic and social-emotional functioning (Sheridan et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2020).

The practice of collaboration between parents and schools in Indonesia varies. A common form of collaboration is the formation of parent associations (committees). These associations can be a means of open communication between teachers and parents. Literature studies show other forms of collaboration, such as parenting education, volunteer activities, communication between teachers and parents, and parental involvement in children's learning and collaboration with community groups. Schools play a role as planners, information providers, and program evaluators, while parents can become teacher supporters (parent interns), thereby enabling schools to provide comfort for parents to be involved in all kinds of activities organized by the school (Ilmiati, 2019; Kurnianto et al., 2024). Studies in Indonesian schools also show that school leaders and teachers play a decisive role in inviting and sustaining parental involvement (Yulianti et al., 2022), while parents' perceptions of teachers' invitations predict their home-based involvement and children's school readiness (Puccioni et al., 2020).

Despite this, fathers remain comparatively under-represented in school-based involvement. Contemporary research emphasizes that fathers make distinct contributions to children's development, including their cognitive development (Cabrera et al., 2018; Rollè et al., 2019), and that father involvement is related to fewer problematic behaviours in early childhood (Nafisah et al., 2023). In Indonesia, the limited participation of fathers in children's learning has received increasing attention (Setiawan et al., 2022). At the same time, parental participation in early childhood settings is frequently constrained by work schedules, limited time, and parents' perceived lack of knowledge or competence (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Lau & Ng, 2019; Wildmon et al., 2024). Programs that deliberately engage fathers and accommodate working parents are therefore needed (Lechowicz et al., 2019), yet empirical descriptions of how such programs operate in Indonesian kindergartens remain scarce.

Research on parent teaching programs in early childhood education institutions is crucial given the significant influence of parental presence on early childhood development. The research question identified in this study is: How is the parent teaching program implemented in early childhood education institutions?

2. *Method*

This research is a qualitative case study designed to gain an in-depth understanding of the practice of collaboration between schools and parents through parent teaching programs to support parental involvement in early childhood education, particularly at the kindergarten level. The research was conducted at Aisyiyah Sinar Fajar Kindergarten in Klaten Regency, Central Java Province. This PAUD institution was selected because it met the established criteria, namely:

1. It has a routine program that involves families, especially parents, in school
2. It is willing to be the subject of the study
3. The selected subjects had criteria for data collection using methods involving observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation.

The research was conducted over a period of 3 months, involving parents, teachers, and the principal. Data for this study was obtained through unstructured in-depth interviews and documentation. Unstructured interviews were conducted in depth with the aim of exploring ideas from parent teaching practices and their implementation, so that respondents were able to express more data in the field.

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2019), beginning with verbatim transcription of interview data, coding to find meaning, identifying themes according to emerging patterns, and interpreting between themes. Data validity was ensured using triangulation, by comparing interview results between different informants and conducting member checking.

3. Results

3.1. Views on the Parent Teaching Program

Respondents expressed their opinions during the interview process regarding their views on what the parent teaching program means. Respondents from the parents' side said that the Parent Teaching program is a program in which one of the parents (father/mother) of the child is asked to teach in class to encourage learning in the classroom. It was also conveyed that in this program, parents also can train themselves in accompanying their children to learn, as stated by Mr. ES:

> "... yes, as parents, we are asked to help teach in the classroom. They say that children will be more enthusiastic if they see their parents as teachers in their own classroom. Yes, that's fine, we can learn how to accompany our children in their studies at the same time."

The principal realizes that early childhood development goals can be achieved optimally if children have a high interest in learning. As a variation in learning, the school tries to bring parents into the classroom so that they can see how their children learn at school, as stated by Mr. AR:

> "Many children here have parents who work, so they may have less time with their children. After learning at school, they forget what they have learned when they get home. So, to make learning more meaningful, we try to bring in the children's parents as their teachers. Consider it a break or a variation in the classroom."

The high interest in learning among children when their parents are present in the classroom makes the learning process more meaningful and easier for students to remember, thereby optimizing learning outcomes.

3.2. Practice of the Parent Teaching Program at School

The Parent Teaching Program is not a stand-alone program. This program is a continuation of another school program called the "Father School" program. The Father School program is a special program for fathers to deepen their role in their children's education. The Parent Teaching Program is a follow-up reinforcement program. Mr. AR said that:

> "Previously, there was a program called the Father School Program. This is not a one-time parenting program. We hope that this will be a continuous program. Therefore, we also created the Parent Teaching Program so that there is a forum for parents to join in the learning process with their children."

Outside of the parent teaching program, teachers always share weekly learning plans with parents/guardians. This information is expected to help parents/guardians provide support for their children's learning. In the parent teaching program, the school does not simply leave it to the parents to teach. Just as teachers teach at school, parents are also provided with administrative materials such as teaching modules, learning media, and other supporting facilities. Through teachers, the school provides guidance to parents who are scheduled to fill in classes regarding the material that will be delivered in class, what needs to be done, and what parents need to prepare. During teaching, parents will also be accompanied by teachers in the classroom (see Figure 1). Mrs. ER said that:

> "We don't just let the parents go. Every week we provide them with lesson plans, and it's the same with the parent teaching program. We provide them with daily lesson plans. Then we also explain the material that needs to be delivered, and we prepare the teaching equipment, so the parents don't have to worry about anything, and the school can continue to carry out the learning administration according to procedure. We also accompany the parents while they are teaching."



Figure 1. A father demonstrating how to fold clothes in class

Parents can also implement the parent teaching program by sharing their experiences/expertise as learning materials (see Figure 2). This program makes parents enthusiastic about teaching, and parents also don't have to worry about preparing lessons when they are busy working because they are assisted by the school.



Figure 2. Parents implementing the parent teaching program by teaching in the classroom

3.3. The Parent Teaching Program supports family involvement, especially parents, in early childhood education.

This program has been proven to support family involvement, in this case parents, in the process of their children's education at school. For communities in rural areas, parents often leave their children's education/academic achievements and character building to the school. Parents' busy work schedules mean that they play less of a role in supporting their children's learning. Mr. AR said:

> "We want parents to know how we as teachers teach, so that parents can experience it. This is so that they also understand how children are at school and that their needs are not only academic. After learning at school, they also need reinforcement at home so that their learning is more meaningful."

Through this program, parents not only teach but also gain knowledge about how to educate children, and they hope this program will continue. Mr. ES stated:

> "…I have learned about the proper way to educate young children in order to create a golden generation."
>
> "My hope is that this program will continue so that in the future, more fathers will understand the responsibilities they should carry, especially in terms of educating children."

The Parent Teaching program has proven to support the creation of a more positive educational ecosystem: schools receive feedback from parents for curriculum and learning development and form a supportive social network that benefits all parties. The main findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Findings

Findings	**Summary Findings**	**Informant Quote**
Perception of the Program practices	The program is considered positive. Parents realize the importance of their presence in their children's education	"We are important figures for our children, so we must always accompany them during their golden age and set an example for them" (Mr. ES)
Parent teaching supports parental involvement in children's education	Parents are involved in their children's learning in the classroom and reinforce the material learned at school at home.	"Setting an example for children by praying together with them at least once a day" (Mr. ES)
Benefits of the Program	Parents receive guidance on how to educate their children Children become enthusiastic about learning	"…I learned how to properly educate young children" (Mr. ES) "…the children seem enthusiastic about learning" (Mrs. ER)
Challenges Faced	Limited coordination in preparing lessons	"There is insufficient time for coordination with parents because parents are also working" (Mrs. ER)
Program suggestions	The continuity of the program is the parents' hope	"My hope is that this program will continue" (Mr. ES)

4. *Discussion*

Findings from the interviews show that the informants understand the importance of balancing the roles of school and family in optimizing children's developmental achievements. This is in line with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Development Theory. Bronfenbrenner developed a Bioecological model which describes that development is influenced by various systems in the environment, one of which is the microsystem (family). The family is the smallest context in which children exist (Gonzalez-Mena, 2013). Parents, as part of the microsystem, have a significant role and influence on children's activity levels through parental role modelling and practices at home (Morgan et al., 2022). In addition, parental behaviour and involvement with children are related to children's performance in executive functions (Bernier et al., 2012). The Parent Teaching program in early childhood education institutions (PAUD) is one initiative that is increasingly recognized as important in supporting child development. Parental involvement in early childhood education can strengthen children's social, emotional, and cognitive skills.

Vygotsky's theory of *scaffolding* is also relevant in the context of Parent Teaching programs. Vygotsky emphasizes the importance of assistance or support provided by adults (in this case, parents and educators) to help children achieve higher levels of ability through the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). Adults (parents, teachers, educators) help through social interaction and guidance in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Yohanes, 2010). In this program, parents are not only observers but also play an active role in supporting their children's learning by providing knowledge, motivation, and reinforcement of the skills their children are learning. Through this approach, parents can function as *scaffolds* that help children build more complex skills, with guidance tailored to their stage of development.

In Bowlby's *attachment* theory perspective, parental involvement in early childhood education not only supports cognitive achievement but also strengthens children's emotional foundations (Mawaddah et al., 2024), which in turn influences the success of children's learning process. A secure attachment between children and parents can increase children's self-confidence, encouraging them to be more active and confident in interacting with the educational environment at school. Research on the role of parents in children's education shows that a positive relationship between parents and children has a direct impact on children's social and emotional development. Therefore, the Parent Teaching program, which emphasizes the role of parents in accompanying their children's education, can strengthen this emotional bond and improve children's learning success.

Piaget, through his constructivist theory, also provides a relevant foundation for the Parent Teaching program. Piaget argues that children learn through direct experience and interaction with their surroundings. Therefore, the role of parents in creating learning experiences outside of school is very important in helping children construct new knowledge and skills (Pitriani et al., 2023). The Parent Teaching program provides opportunities for parents to play a role as partners in the education process by providing relevant and interesting experiences at home. With this approach, it is hoped that parents will not only become a link between children and school, but also facilitators in shaping rich learning experiences for children, which will ultimately improve children's holistic development.

The prominence of fathers in this program deserves particular attention. Because the Parent Teaching Program grew out of the Father School initiative, fathers were actively present as teachers in the classroom. This is consistent with contemporary fathering research, which positions fathers as parents whose engagement uniquely shapes children's development and whose involvement is embedded in coparenting relationships within the family (Cabrera et al., 2018; Schoppe-Sullivan & Fagan, 2020). Fathers' visible participation in classroom learning may therefore model shared parenting responsibility and support children's cognitive and socio-emotional development (Nafisah et al., 2023; Rollè et al., 2019), particularly in a context where limited father involvement in children's learning remains a concern (Setiawan et al., 2022).

The main challenge identified in this study, namely limited time for coordination because parents work, mirrors barriers reported internationally, where work schedules and time constraints are the most frequently cited obstacles to parental involvement (Lau & Ng, 2019; Wildmon et al., 2024). The school's strategy of preparing lesson plans, teaching media, and in-class accompaniment reduces the preparation burden on working parents and resembles a co-teaching and mentoring arrangement in which teachers scaffold parents so that parents, in turn, can scaffold their children. Such deliberate school-initiated support is in line with recommendations for overcoming barriers to involvement (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Lechowicz et al., 2019) and with evidence that teachers' invitations and partnership-based interventions strengthen parents' involvement and children's outcomes (Puccioni et al., 2020; Sheridan et al., 2019; Yulianti et al., 2022).

In addition, respondents also suggested the continuation of collaborative programs between families and schools. This program is considered positive. Two-way communication between families and schools is necessary so that parental support can be truly effective in helping children reach the next stage of development (Etnawati, 2022).

5. *Conclusion*

This study shows that parent teaching programs support parental involvement in early childhood education. Parent teaching programs demonstrate that they can provide intervention in the formation of a positive educational ecosystem. There is a connected and continuous learning process between school and home. At school, parents who teach are able to encourage their children's enthusiasm and excitement in learning, while at home, children receive

reinforcement from their parents in the form of learning assistance and role modelling. This program is expected to create a closer relationship between parents and schools, so that both parties can support each other in optimizing children's development.

Practically, early childhood institutions are encouraged to embed parent teaching into their annual program, prepare ready-to-use lesson plans and teaching media for parent teachers, schedule sessions flexibly around parents' working hours, and provide brief orientation and in-class mentoring by teachers. Local education offices and policymakers may support such initiatives by integrating parent teaching and father-focused activities into parenting and family-engagement programs for early childhood education. This study is limited to a single kindergarten and relies mainly on interview and documentation data from a small number of informants; therefore, its findings cannot be generalized. Future research should examine parent teaching programs across multiple institutions and in urban and rural settings, use mixed-method or longitudinal designs to measure their effects on children's development and parents' competence, and explore more deeply the distinct contribution of fathers' classroom involvement.

6. Acknowledgement

This research was completed thanks to the support of various parties. Therefore, the authors would like to express their gratitude to Sebelas Maret University for providing financial support to facilitate this research process under grant number 371/UN27.22/PT.01.03/2025. The authors would also like to thank the Early Childhood Education Management Research Group for their contributions, guidance, and encouragement throughout this research. Their expertise and direction were very helpful in developing the research topic. The authors also thank all parties who have provided support, both directly and indirectly, in completing this research, especially the principal, teachers, and parents of Aisyiyah Sinar Fajar Kindergarten. Without their help and cooperation, this research would not have been possible.

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