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## Implementation of Partnership and Cooperation Programs In Early Childhood Education

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**Abstract.** The aim this study was to determine the implementation of partnership and cooperation programs in early childhood education. The research approach used is descriptive qualitative. Data collection was carried out through interviews, observation and documentation. The data analysis technique used is an interactive model analysis which is checked through triangulation techniques. Based on the analysis, findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the implementation of the partnership program in PAUD Islam Terpadu Wihdatul Ummah Makassar is based on its principles and application. The partnership principle implemented is support and cooperation between families (parents) and the school. The partnership model developed is the 5C's which includes communication (either direct or indirect), connection (linkage between family and school), community (parent's association), consultation (guidance and complaints) and collaboration (cooperation in various matters). Opportunities and challenges in terms of implementing the partnership program cannot be separated from the support of various parties including the community and government as an important part of the education system including early childhood education.

**Keyword:** Partnership, early childhood education

### INTRODUCTION

Parents are a child's first and most enduring teachers. It is in the home environment, before a child even enters school, where the foundations for a child's future learning are first established. Children learn how to communicate, form opinions, develop attitudes toward learning; and it is in the home context where literacy begins and continues to develop. Teachers expect children to enter school with skills in oral language, and some knowledge about books, letters, and phonetics; yet many children begin their journey of school already below the teacher's expectations (Carr, 2013). In order to meet the diverse needs of children, educators need to examine their relationship with parents, especially those parents whose children require additional support in developing literacy.

Examining this gap between the actual and desired level of parental involvement for both parents and schools reveals complex and varied barriers to parental involvement and advocacy (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). There may be a discrepancy



between the views of a parent and a school regarding the role of schooling and the role of families in the broader context of a child's education and development. A school may assume ultimate responsibility and authority over a child's education and expect parents to support the school's mandate, while a parent may believe they are primarily responsible for their child's learning and development, and expect the school to play a supportive role. A parent and a teacher may not share an opinion about who is responsible for a child's education, which leads to differing ideas and expectations regarding advocacy.

These beliefs are rarely discussed between school personnel and families, and a discrepancy in understandings can create a complex barrier between a parent and a teacher.

In connecting family and school culture, educators must give careful consideration to the perspectives and experiences children bring to school. "...learning is not only about taking on new knowledge structures, but it is about personal transformation – about becoming" (Nasir & Hand, 2006). In this sense, "cognitive development becomes fundamentally intertwined with culture". Each child brings their own unique life experiences, interests and abilities to school; and a child's new learning is oriented from this perspective. In order for learning to occur, children must connect new knowledge and skills to what they already know and understand. Building upon a child's experiences that teachers do not share, or even understand, can pose a great challenge. Timmons (2009) suggests a "family-centered" school model where educators view families with dignity and respect, using practices that are individualized, flexible, and responsive. The practice of listening to families to inform teaching can promote agency for families of children who are exceptional learners, and foster student learning.

An environment that is literacy-rich provides many diverse opportunities for a child to explore and experience oral language and written language. The term family literacy pertains to the home environment in which a child's literacy develops, and family literacy programs seek to improve the parents' ability to support literacy development for their children within the home. Family attitudes toward literacy are an important part of family literacy, as adults and other children in the home are powerful role models for a child (Parr, 2013). Family literacy programs are more commonly offered to families of pre-school aged children, perhaps because there tends to be more flexibility in government funding for children before they enter the school system. However, family literacy programs that target families of school-aged children have had a large impact on literacy acquisition, along with other socio-emotional benefits for both children and adults. Timmons (2009) notes that "parents want to support their children's learning"... "many parents are seeking direction from their children's schools about how to help their children at home, and they want to feel valued and respected". This suggests that a family literacy initiative could be an effective means of meeting the needs of families of school-aged children.



2 Different expectations on the part of both teachers and parents may also affect the parent-teacher partnership. Often teachers and parents place different emphases on factors central to developing confidence in their relationship. For example, parents may emphasize teachers' knowledge and skills. They want teachers to know and care about teaching, about their children, and about communicating with them. Teachers have more confidence in parents who have similar ideas about teaching issues, and child rearing practices, and who freely share important things about their children (Powell, 1998; Rich, 1998). Closely related to roles and efficacy are personal attributes. According to the research, several characteristics appear to positively influence parent-teacher partnerships. The relationships are enhanced when teachers' personal attributes include warmth, openness, sensitivity, flexibility, reliability, and accessibility (Swick, 1992; Comer & Haynes, 1991). The partnerships are positively influenced when parents' personal attributes include warmth, sensitivity, nurturance, the ability to listen, consistency, a positive self-image, personal confidence, and effective interpersonal skills. While neither teachers nor parents may have all these positive personal attributes, teachers, who are armed with this knowledge, may be more effective at bridging.

One of the categories of parent involvement identified by Epstein (1995) is communication. This communication includes teacher invitations, first meetings with parents, conferences, and adapting communication to meet the diverse needs of parents. Two aspects of communication, first meetings and teacher invitations, have significance because they influence how roles will be enacted as partnerships develop. First meetings with parents, often the first personal connection that is made, set the tone for the subsequent relationship, making it critical to be aware of issues of cultural styles in conversation, space, and eye contact. Research suggests that the teachers' invitations to parents are also a critical factor in promoting more extensive parent involvement.

The decisions parents make have influenced their children's growth and development and led to either positive or negative outcomes (Respler-Herman, Mowder, Yasik & Shamah, 2012). Parenting behaviors are often reflective of their beliefs (Mowder, 2005), which are partially shaped by the parents' knowledge of child development (Respler-Herman, Mowder, Yasik & Shamah, 2012). A parent's knowledge is their understanding of behaviors appropriate to fulfill the biological, physical, safety, socio-emotional, and cognitive needs of children as they develop (Bornstein, Cote, Haynes, Hahn & Park, 2010). Greater understanding has reaped more positive outcomes for the family. For example, parents who had a greater breadth of knowledge about child development were associated with higher rates of parental satisfaction and competency (Bornstein, Cote, Haynes, Hahn & Park, 2010). When parents better understood why children behaved the way they do, then they were more likely to have a positive outlook on parenting and more apt to engage in positive parenting behaviors (Bornstein, Cote, Haynes, Hahn & Park, 2010).



A strong social support network for the family was also associated with more positive parenting behaviors (Respler-Herman, Mowder, Yasik & Shamah, 2012). This social network often included families, friends, and neighbors, but early childhood programs strived to make teachers a part of that support system by forging positive relationship between families and teachers (Baumgartner & McBride, 2009). Most quality standards for early childhood programs required or strongly encouraged communication and partnership between teachers and families.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The type and approach used in this research is descriptive qualitative because it intends to examine and describe the subject in a social context. According to Mack et. al (2005) that qualitative research has characteristics that can reveal a number of meanings in values, culture and social contexts. It was stated that qualitative research was richer in terms of exploration and exploration of an object.

This research was conducted at the TK Pertiwi DWP Setda in South Sulawesi Province through a research procedure that refers to the Creswell stage (1994: 147) which is broadly divided into three parts, namely; 1) Stages of preparation / before going to the field, 2) Stages of field work, and 3) Stages of data analysis. When seen, it is no different from the stages carried out in a quantitative approach. However, what distinguishes it is in the contents of each of these stages, especially in fieldwork and data analysis.

To obtain data, the instruments used are data collection techniques through observation and documentation. In terms of observation, the implementation is based on the supply of research instruments both to the teacher and observation of children in an observation sheet that can capture the data or information needed. In this case, Jorgensen (1989: 23) provides a sign that in this case observation should be done carefully and carefully so that the results of observations obtained can answer the anxiety of researchers.

In addition, data collection is also carried out in the form of documentation techniques. This approach is carried out in an effort to dig up detailed information specifically related to the focus of research, namely the history of children during their education at the PAUD Islam Terpadu Wihdatul Ummah Makassar. Especially those related to multicultural learning and local wisdom as well as those related to data regarding the learning process of children related with multiculturalism.

The data analysis technique used in this study is to use steps as stated by Miles and Huberman (1994), the data collection stage. In this case data collection is an integral part of data analysis activities. Data collection activities in this study were interviews and observation. The next stage is data reduction, which is defined as the selection process, focusing on simplifying and transforming rough data that arises from written records while in the field. Reduction is done since data collection begins by making summaries, coding, tracing themes, creating clusters, writing memos and so on with the intention of setting aside irrelevant data. Next is done in terms of



presenting data. The next step is to describe a number of structured data that gives the possibility of drawing conclusions and taking action. Presentation of qualitative data is presented in the form of narrative texts.

Presentations can also be in the form of matrices, diagrams, tables and charts or figures. The final step is verification and conclusion as the final activity of data analysis. Conclusions drawn in the form of interpretation activities, namely finding the meaning of the data that has been presented. A brief description of the steps for analyzing interactive model data can be seen in the following figure:

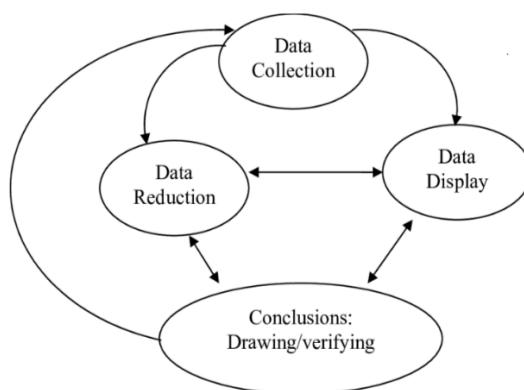


Fig. 1. Data Analysis Interactive Model (Miles dan Huberman, 1994)

Furthermore, the results of the data analysis are checked to test the validity of the data. The checking method used is through the method of triangulation in the form of source triangulation or technical triangulation so that the data obtained matches the problem being tested.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Partnership Principles and Support

Family-school partnerships are collaborative relationships and activities involving school staff, parents and other family members of students at a school. Effective partnerships are based on mutual trust and respect, and shared responsibility for the education of the children and young people at the school. Families are the first educators of their children and they continue to influence their children's learning and development during the school years and long afterwards.



Fig. 1. Family Engagement

<sup>3</sup> Schools have an important responsibility in helping to nurture and teach future generations and families trust schools to provide educational foundations for their children's future. At the same time, schools need to recognise the primary role of the family in education. This is why it is important for families and schools to work together in partnership. Research demonstrates that effective schools have high levels of parental and community involvement. This involvement is strongly related to improved student learning, attendance and behaviour. Family involvement can have a major impact on student learning, regardless of the social or cultural background of the family.

Principles which underpin effective Family-School Partnerships:

1. All families and schools want the best for their children.
2. All children have the right to the opportunity to reach their full potential.
3. Families are the first and continuing educators of their children.
4. Effective schools provide a nurturing and supportive learning environment.
5. Families and schools value quality teaching and respect teachers' professional expertise.
6. Families and schools value the diversity of families and use this as a resource for building partnerships and communities.
7. Family-school partnerships are based on mutual responsibility, respect and trust.
8. Leadership is critical to building, maintaining and renewing partnerships.
9. Family-school partnerships improve student motivation and learning.
10. Family-school partnerships strengthen the connections between schools and their communities.
11. Partnerships can involve all organisations that support families and schools.



Fig. 2. Authentic Partnership

In order to create the conditions that enable effective family-school partnerships to be developed and sustained, the following supporting structures need to be in place at both systemic and school levels:

1. family-school action teams to plan, organise, implement and evaluate partnerships;
2. School policies and procedures which explicitly state and clearly integrate the principles and practices of effective partnerships;
3. Support networks, to enable school communities to share ideas, issues and best practice; and
4. Accountability to the community, to report on successes and drive improvement in partnerships.

School communities are encouraged to review their current supporting structures, policies and procedures and develop new ones where necessary. This may include establishing a dedicated family-school action team of school leaders, teachers and parents (appointed by the parent body) – or using an existing working group that includes parents – to develop and coordinate partnership plans and activities. Any successful partnership will involve parents, carers and families in preparation, planning, implementation and review. A dedicated family-school action team of teachers, school leaders and parents to develop and coordinate partnership plans and activities can provide the basis for improving partnerships more broadly.

This family-school action team would: audit existing arrangements and practices and collect information on the views, experiences and wishes of teachers, parents, school leaders and students; confirm that the school leaders and the parent network endorse the concept of partnership and inform the school community; develop plans for implementation, setting goals, timelines and success indicators against the Key Dimensions of the Family-School Partnerships Framework; arrange training for action team members; implement agreed activities; evaluate the effectiveness of the partnership activities; continue to improve and coordinate





practices against the Key Dimensions of the Family-School Partnerships Framework; and explore options for new partnerships.

The parents we interviewed in the empirical research component of this project were clear that if they are to be able to support their children's learning, they need to have good communication with the school, accurate information about their children's progress and information about school programmes in general. It seems there are some current practices such as homework and parent-teacher interviews that could, with slight modifications, give the parents this information while at the same time allowing teachers to draw on the expert knowledge parents have about their own children. Where home-school partnerships seemed to be working well, teachers were aware of the extent to which they could learn from parents and there was genuine two-way communication.

All children benefit socially and emotionally from positive parent involvement in schooling (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Driessen & Slegers, 2005; Epstein, 1995; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Sormunen, Tossavainen, & Turunen, 2011; Timmons, 2009; Wearmouth, 2004), and it is the students who are at risk of experiencing learning difficulties who have the most to gain from an authentic parent-teacher partnership. Parents may offer the school insight into their child's unique background, personality, interests, and past experiences upon which new literacy skills can be built; and the school may offer the family strategies and insights into literacy development that might be useful in the home environment (Wearmouth, 2004). Pushor & Murphy (2004) describe how student home visits can provide a meaningful and authentic context for teachers and parents to share knowledge that may benefit a child. Although the home and the school will always be two unique environments, it is important that each environment reflects a shared understanding of what literacy is and how it develops. To examine this possibility, a deeper understanding is needed of how each partner facilitates literacy development in young children.

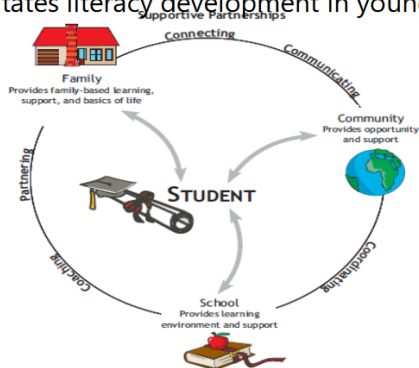


Fig. 3. Supportive Partnership

### 5 C's Partnership Implementation

Developing family-school partnerships may not always be easy. It requires commitment and time. Because of pressures and circumstances, many families will need special arrangements, or extra support, to enable them to become actively



involved in their children's school lives, and to help their children get the most from school. The results of this effort will be significant. Families that understand the education system and the difficulties schools face are a valuable source of support which schools cannot afford to underestimate. Schools that engage families in their children's learning are tapping in to a rich source of information and expertise and can help build communities.

The Family-School Partnerships Framework identifies seven dimensions as guidelines for planning partnership activities. These seven dimensions are:

1. Communicating;

Family-school communication needs to be taken seriously and must be valued, recognised, and rewarded by schools and education systems. It is essential to provide teachers and school leaders with education and training programs to prepare them to communicate effectively with families in an approachable manner. It is equally important to empower and encourage families to communicate effectively with schools.

2. Connecting Learning at Home and at School

Understanding by families and schools of the overlap between the home and school environments. The connection between successful partnerships and the child's learning, including the importance of high expectations from both teachers and parents to the child's success at school. Families and schools working together to create positive attitudes to learning in each child. Ensuring families are informed about and understand their child's progress and families and schools valuing and using the skills and knowledge children bring both from the home to the school and from the school to the home. Families and schools recognising and using learning opportunities in the home environment. Parents working with teachers in the educational decision-making process for their individual child and schools becoming a venue and agent for parental.

3. Community and Identity

This key dimension emphasises activities that improve the quality of life in a community while honouring the culture, traditions, values and relationships in that community. By including activities that shape students' sense of identity and culture, schools can build a sense of community in each student. The work of schools includes aspects of the social, emotional, moral and spiritual development of young people. Thus schools have a role to play in promoting both personal growth and cultural renewal. Schools can act as a focal point for communities to come together and engage in capacity-building.

4. Consultative Decision Making

This key dimension emphasises that parents are entitled to be consulted and participate in decisions concerning their own children. Parents can play meaningful roles in the school decision-making processes. Training and information to make the most of those opportunities can be provided as part of the partnership activities. An inclusive approach to school decision-making and



parental involvement creates a sense of shared responsibility among parents, community members, teachers and school leaders. In turn, shared responsibility:

- a. Ensures that parents' values and interests are heard and respected;
  - b. Makes the school more accountable to its community;
  - c. Ensures that the values and opinions of families are sought outside the formal school structures; and
  - d. Ensures that contact with Indigenous parents from within the community is sought to ensure their engagement in school decision making.
5. Collaborating Beyond the School

The important component of partnering is collaboration. Collaboration will be easier if communication is frequent, and you consistently create opportunities for your child's learning. A collaborative, cooperative partnership focuses on specific, positive strategies to help your child achieve to the best of his or her potential. Planning and problem-solving are forms of collaboration, and will be especially important when your child needs extra support to reach a goal.

This key dimension emphasises identifying, locating and integrating community resources. The wider community provides services which can strengthen and support schools, students and their families. Schools, families and students can assist the community in return. Families participate in the school in a wide variety of ways and all contributions are valuable. Participation may involve families having the opportunity to do something that interests them and including activities that are not directly education-related.

Outlined below are suggested strategies to develop partnerships based on each of the key dimensions. They are designed to support school communities in developing family-school partnerships, to assist them to reflect on their existing practices and plan for improvement. These strategies provide practical guidance for schools about how to initiate partnerships, how to help families to initiate partnerships, and how to have families' perspectives on issues represented in partnerships overall. The different strategies are designed to build on each other with none of them being a 'cure-all' by itself. They are not intended to be exhaustive but are examples of good practice to help school communities build partnerships. Strategies can be added or modified for each key dimension and will also overlap across key dimensions. Skills-building for families, school leaders and teachers is a crucial strategy for each key dimension. The description of the application of this partnership can be seen in table 1. regarding the dimensions and strategies of the following 5C components:

Table 1. 5C's Partnership Implementation

Key Dimension	Implementation
Communicating	Set in place alternative methods of parent-teacher interviews when personal circumstances prevent parents from attending



	a face-to-face meeting, including options for telephone and email contact
Connecting	examine the ways in which parents and families can encourage, motivate and reinforce children's learning at school
Community	create connections with local health and welfare services to facilitate access to such support for the school community members
Consultative	arrange for the school community to be consulted on new school policies, eg assessment, reporting and curriculum changes;
	Parents can play meaningful roles in the school decision-making processes. Training and information to make the most of those opportunities can be provided as part of the partnership activities.
Collaborating	gather and provide information and access for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support and other programs or services;

Source: Data Analysis Results, 2020

Positive connections between parents and teachers have been shown to improve children's academic achievement, social competencies and emotional well-being. When parents and teachers work as partners, children do better in school and at home. Research shows that when a partnership approach between parents and teachers is evident, children's work habits, attitudes about school and grades improve. They demonstrate better social skills, fewer behavioral problems and a greater ability to adapt to situations and get along. And parents and teachers benefit, too. When working together as partners, it's been found that parents and teachers communicate more effectively, develop stronger relationships with one another and develop skills to support children's behaviors and learning.

A family-centered perspective is essential to the success of the school-family-community partnership. The importance of involving parents in the education of their children cannot be overestimated. Teachers must always remember that parents are the child's first teachers and that a partnership between home and school benefits children, families, and teachers alike. The unique cultural, ethnic, and language aspects of each community, as well as its rural or urban nature, offer both opportunities and challenges for establishing responsive partnerships. Teachers and administrators must not assume that a lack of parental involvement means non-caring. They must work to understand the barriers that keep some parents from



being more involved in their child's education. Family-friendly schools must reach out to parents and the community to develop multiple ways to work together so everyone benefits and feels valued. Galen (1991) offers recommendations to help principals build partnerships with families and the community. Principals should seek teacher input and encourage teachers to develop their own learn-at-home materials for parents to use. Because parent-teacher conferences have been proven to be an effective way to build trust.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the implementation of the partnership program in Wihdatul Ummah Makassar Integrated Islamic PAUD is based on its principles and application. The partnership principle implemented is support and cooperation between families (parents) and the school. The partnership model developed is the 5 C's which includes communication (either direct or indirect), connection (linkage between family and school), community (parent's association), consultation (guidance and complaints) and collaboration (cooperation in various matters). Opportunities and challenges in terms of implementing the partnership program cannot be separated from the support of various parties including the community and government as an important part of the education system including early childhood education.

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