

Parental Involvement in School Program at Bintang Juara Early Childhood Education (ECE)

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Abstract

This research aims to study and analyze parents' involvement at school in the Early Childhood Education program. This research was conducted in Bintang Juara Early Childhood Education. The data were obtained from the principal, class teachers, parents, and related documents. This research applied a qualitative approach case study design. The result showed that first, there are various forms of parental involvement in Early Childhood Education. Second, there are positive results of parents' involvement towards children, parents, teachers, and school programs, such as facilitating the access of school marketing, enhancing children learning, increasing parents' learning motivation, supporting program achievement, becoming knowledge and information sharing a place, tightening the family relationship. Third, there are supporting and inhibiting factors affecting parents' involvement, namely internal factor (readiness, parents' personality, school, and children) and external factor (social, politic, and economic). Fourth, there are effective efforts to support parental involvement in Early Childhood Education programs such as effective and proactive communication, providing suitable time, and creating a friendly environment. These results become the reflection and evaluation subject to school concerning the progress of implemented programs. For parents, they gain a comprehensive image of school partnership parenting education to attain optimum child's development.

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INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (ECE) plays an important role in child's development after their primary education at home. However, there must be parent and community involvement in ECE School through cooperation and participation in the school program. Besides, parental involvement can be served as a professional commitment from the school to parents. Waluyo, Handayani, and Diana (2018) stated that family participation is vital to develop and improve the quality of ECE institution. As well as in the ECE institutions, parents' participation is significant because child-learning process derives from their family background.

Several researchers have reported the importance of parental involvement in ECE. As reported by Diadha (2015), an attempt to enhance the understanding and attention of parents in parental involvement itself is necessary. Similarly, research conducted by Rahman (2014) shows the importance of family involvement in child education through parents and school partnership. In the same vein, Ulfah (2015) points out that parental involvement is a process of helping parents and family members using their skills to benefit themselves, their daughters, and ECE programs.

Indonesian Government, through the Directorate General of Early Childhood Education, supports parental involvement in the ECE. In 2012, the institution issued the regulatory guidelines on implementing the family-based ECE and improving its quality. These guidelines have become a reference to the school administrator in conducting family-based ECE up to now (Directorate of Early Childhood Education Development, 2012). In addition to this issue, the Ministry of Education and Culture specifically established Directorate of Family Education Development in early 2015. The directorate proposes building up an active and positive collaboration between parents and school to manage the school program and to align parents and school with it. Therefore, the existence of parents and school is important as

partners who support the school program in assisting the development of children.

Apart from that, parents' involvement in ECE is still limited and inadequate. This is strengthened by the result of questionnaire dissemination in seven ECE institutions incorporated in the *Himpunan Pendidik dan Tenaga Kependidikan Anak Usia Dini Indonesia (HIMPAUDI)*, Association of Indonesian Playgroup Teachers, Gunungpati Semarang. The result showed that the implementation of parental involvement in the ECE is limited to parents and teacher meeting (discussing Child Development Report) and regular information notification via mail, message, or telephone. The school has tried to send a letter and private message; however, the parents are still not able to participate in the ECE program. In this case, the parental involvement in the school program is still inadequate. The reason affecting the involvement is because parents are busy at work.

Based on the results of questionnaires, interviews, and observations, *Bintang Juara* ECE Semarang has the distinction of involving parents' in the school program. The school said that some excellent programs are supporting the teaching-learning process. It also has parents' participation and partnership program to support child development and learning in school. Moreover, the preparation of the parents' involvement program is well planned during the school conference with the teachers and committees. Furthermore, the school informs all parents regarding learning supporting activities, including parental involvement activities in Early Childhood Education at the beginning of the year.

Bintang Juara ECE has a clear vision and missions. One of them is to establish a variety of activities involving the parents at school. In the children education and learning process, *Bintang Juara* ECE draws attention to the importance of parents' involvement in the school program optimally and continuously. *Bintang Juara* ECE has a strong commitment that the success of the education will be ideal and effectively implemented comprehensively, continuously and sustainably

by all parties, namely the family, school, and the community.

Based on the problems stated, we encourage examining parents and school involvement in Early Childhood Education. This research attempts to strengthen the premise about the importance of parents' involvement in a child's education, which is then associated with other similar research on parents' involvement in Early Childhood Education. This research aims to study and analyze parents' involvement at school in the child's education program at *Bintang Juara* ECE Semarang. These results can become the reflection and evaluation subject to school concerning the progress of implemented programs so that it can create a more effective innovation of parental involvement program. For parents, they obtain a comprehensible image of school partnership parenting education to achieve optimum child's development.

METHODS

This study applied a qualitative approach case study design. The data were obtained through the informant, related documents, and research in the school. The information resources consisted of four class teachers and eight parents. For data collection, we used three techniques. First, we used participant observation to observe the implementation of parental involvement programs. Second, we conducted a semi-structured interview for one semester or six months. Third, we analyzed the documents such as annual school plan, evaluation records, archived letters, field note, and other documents. Data collection techniques used Milles and Huberman interactive analysis. To validate the data, we applied two types of triangulation, namely source triangulation and method triangulation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion consist of four domains, as follows:

The forms of Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education

The parental involvement discussed in this paper is a complex subject. The forms are discussed comprehensively to what parents have known and applied in school. Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation studies, there are ten parental involvement programs existed and carried out in *Bintang Juara* ECE. Those programs are (1) school program presentation, (2) parenting education, (3) school committee membership, (4) *Belajar Bersama Orang Tua (BBOT)*, where parents act as teacher, (5) child development report (mid-term and final-term), (6) psychological consultation, (7) home visit, (8) communication book, (9) open house and school bazaar, and (10) family gathering.

The parental involvement program is based on the school plan priority. The planning is done at the annual school plan development through coordination and staff meeting between the school board, principal, and teachers. Some of the programs are for parents, and they can be participant or executor in the program. The implementation of parental involvement in *Bintang Juara* ECE has been implemented intensively, periodically, and continuously. The supporting learning program and parents' involvement program have been routinely implemented and have been held for about four years since the establishment of *Bintang Juara* ECE in 2013.

The forms of engagement in *Bintang Juara* ECE are following the theory stated by Ulfah (2015) that the concept of parental involvement is interpreted as a process that can benefit themselves, the children and the home or school ECE program. Therefore, the forms of parental involvement are not merely on the semester and yearly activities such as attending the reporting of children's development, delivering and picking up children and even coming to the school for the sake of paying the administration. *Bintang Juara* ECE is committed and consistent conducting the education and learning for children by focusing on maximizing parental engagement program.

The forms of parent engagement in *Bintang Juara* ECE also meet the criteria on the types of

approaches based on Ulfah (2015) the school gives parenting knowledge and skills through parenting education. The school builds up communication between home and school by holding school program presentation and giving communication book. Parents are actively volunteering at school and the community as a school committee member. Parents are supporting students learning through *BBOT* activities — parents involved in decision making and mentoring, such as home visit and psychology consultation. Parents collaborate with communities like open house and school bazaar.

Based on interviews and observations results, the school said there was a routine activity involving the parents as a speaker to play and learn with the children in a class. This activity is called *BBOT*. *Bintang Juara* ECE uses parents as a learning resource in the classroom. The school guidance services must require the cooperation of parents, especially for parents with the skills and abilities that have the purpose of supporting and assisting education and children development at school (Syaodih, 2005). This finding corroborates the idea of Persada, Pramono, and Murwatiningsih (2017) who suggested that the existence of school attempt in providing room for parents involving in the school is by inviting and making a schedule for parents' visits in the class. Likewise, Rihatno, Yufiarti, and Nuraini (2017) stated that the organization of the parents-teachers meeting (*POMG*) announced the parents' involvement as good volunteer and assistance for teachers in class. These findings are shown in parents' involvement through *BBOT*, where parents take the role of teacher and learning resources in the classroom. The goal is to support children learning with broader meaningful information and knowledge. *BBOT* also builds up emotional attachment and parental concern in the child's education.

Other programs such as the annual school plan presentation, child's development report in mid-term and final-term, communication book and home visit are two-ways communication school programs. The school imparts the program information as well as the child's development

and vice versa. Moreover, the home visit program acts as a form of school support for children who are sick and children having behavior problem and difficulties in learning. Parents also receive further guidance to address child development issues. In this program, there is an active role of parents to be partners/schoolmates in their child's education. These results are also in line with the opinion of Patrikakou (2008) who stated that parental involvement means regular parental participation, two-way and meaningful communication that carries the task of giving attention and accompanying the child, actively involving in child's education in school and becoming fully engaged associates with the school.

Other school programs include the Parenting Seminar, *Program Sekolah Pengasuhan Anak (PSPA)* or Parenting School, and the psychology consultation. The school programs collaborate with experts as an educational activity to share knowledge and skills in educating and nurturing their children. This view is supported by Morrison (2012) who writes "in parenting, the school can invite an expert to explain a problem, play the film or engage parents in discussions of child's education and development."

A variety of parenting materials or themes tailored to the conditions and needs of both children and parents. Amini (2017) suggests the selection of themes and the material of parenting should be interesting so that parents would attend." This school program has been conducted once a year or every each semester in a year. As for the psychology consultation, the school owner also acts as the legal and certified expert in child and family psychology who provides the consultation. Personally, parents are given autonomy in deciding the time and agreement to have a consultation with the school psychologist. The findings are similar to Watie (2014) implementation of Smart Parenting, which the school program can be an alternative to assist parenting and child's education.

In the implementation of school committee membership, family gathering, open house, and school bazaar, parents are actively

involved as an executor to prepare the events and parents act as advisors using coordination technique and discussions. For the committee member, there was an interaction between parents' representation and the school to discuss the concept and technical matter, including meetings for family gathering events, open house, and bazaar. Supporting the idea, Rahman (2014) argues that parental involvement through the school committee can influence the programs achievement and child's development.

The implementation of family gathering, open house, and bazaar are also addressed to parents as the executor and the participants. The family gathering program provides an enjoyable experience for all teachers and the students' family through an outdoor activity such as outbound. For the open house program, the school holds an exhibition showing the children's works and creations so that the parents appreciate their children progression. The parents also have class touring escorted by the school. Also, the bazaar is the parents volunteering project to participate, and cooperate with the community in the surroundings. One of the bazaar activities is raising donations for underprivileged citizens. This is in line with Coleman (2013) that parents' behind the scenes roles as supporters and advisors is to support teachers preparing or organizing learning in class or other activities.

In short, these results indicate that *Bintang Juara* ECE has attempted to open up opportunities and convince parents of the importance of their involvement in school or at home. Parents, children, and school programs are part of the process. These three parts are the instrument to establish good cooperation that benefits one another. These findings are supported by the existing theories and the results of previous studies.

The Benefits of Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education

The benefits of parental involvement in *Bintang Juara* ECE are based on interviews conducted on teachers and parents. Not only the parents but also the children experience the benefits, and the school programs become

increasingly well planned. These benefits are namely (1) accessible school marketing, (2) supporting child's learning, (3) increasing parents' motivation in learning, (4) supporting the program achievement, (5) place to share information and knowledge, (6) strengthen the family relationship. In her case study of parental involvement in ECE, Prabhawani (2016) identifies three benefits of parental involvement. First, the school obtained special and overall information about a child. Second, parents are more aware and understand the development of their child and the available education program in school. Third, the cooperation between school and parents give a positive impact on a child's development.

Also, parents might take the role of promotional agents for relatives or other parents. This might bring the result of attracting interest and beliefs of others to trust their children in the hand of teachers in *Bintang Juara* ECE. Furthermore, the benefit of parental involvement in school provides roles and responsibilities to the parents as supporters, executors, and advisors to achieve a school program obtained from school committee membership, family gathering activities, open house, and bazaar in *Bintang Juara* ECE.

In the same way, parents also gain valuable and meaningful information related to educating and nurturing children. Parents acquire this knowledge from parenting seminar, sharing with other parents, psychological consultation, and a home visit. This explains the alignment of educational patterns and proper parenting at home, and this can improve the parents' motivation in learning.

Similarly, the school has the benefit of knowing the beginning and current information about the child's development so that the teachers can also adapt to the needs and character of each child. As noted by Yeni, and Nugraha (2011), the acquisition of a child's development from the parents might facilitate the teacher in organizing the learning.

In *BBOT*, the benefit of parental involvement is to support learning with a broader knowledge of lesson theme and topic in school.

Fasina (2011) states that parental involvement is crucial in ECE, and it can expand their child's knowledge and improve their social relationships with others. This view is supported by Retnaningtya, and Paramitha (2015) who writes that parents as teacher activities are beneficial to share information and creative experiences of parents and improve learning motivation and parental skills of mastery and understanding children's learning materials.

The cooperation between the parents and the school has a positive impact on all parties concerned with the child's education and development. This was shown based on the interviews and questionnaire for eight parents and four teachers of playgroup and kindergarten class. From the data, the benefits of parents' involvement in school can be divided into four aspects. First, parents' involvement becomes learning supporting program according to early childhood principles. Second, it builds up cooperation and participation. Third, it develops the emotional attachment of children and parents. Fourth, it establishes parental concentrations of children's education in ECE.

The parents acknowledge their close relationship with the school. Parents are pleased and enthusiastic about school invitations that addressed them to attend school activities that directly give impact to the activities and development of children. The activities that parents are invited, namely *BBOT* activity, home visit, family gathering, and open house, bazaar, and child development reports. Parents are pleased with the warm welcome from the teachers when they are taking and picking up their children at school. Moreover, parents also have a close relationship not only with the school but also with other parents. For children, the positive impacts of parents' involvement can grow a sense of comfort, foster confidence, establish positive interactions, and communication with friends and teachers in school. Similarly, when children are in a new environment, they become more adaptable and comfortable with others outside the school.

The Factors affecting Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education

The parents' response is full of enthusiasm regarding their involvement in the school program. Some points influence this response. First, teacher readiness builds up confident and communicative communication with parents. Second, the parents are responsible and active in their child's development and education in school. School or program readiness of *Bintang Juara* ECE has offered commitment and willingness of parents to participate in each school program that is a routine and continuous agenda for the optimization of a child's education.

Also, there is a political factor affecting parents' involvement in the school program. *Bintang Juara* ECE seeks to adhere to the Government's rules to facilitate family education in the ECE. For the social and economic factor, most parents are working in the institution, and some of them are a single parent. However, they still prioritize their child's education in school. As well as good financial capability, so that it provides ease in implementing the parental involvement program and will be more confident to engage actively in the school program.

Although this may be true, the practices of parental involvement did not go well due to several factors. *Bintang Juara* ECE is integrated with a nursery or daycare program. Some parents are busy at work so that they entrust the education and development of their children to teachers in school. Both parents are working, and one of them has to work outside the city. This factor led parents to claim their difficulty to attend school programs. The findings of the current study are consistent with those of Kocyigit (2015) who states that the inhibiting factor is lack of time, fatigue and parental demands to fulfill the living needs of the family members. Therefore, *Bintang Juara* ECE seeks to know the condition of parents by offering various forms of communication by conducting surveys on the time that parents have to be able to engage in school programs.

The researcher conducted interviews with parents who had been involved in *BBOT* at

Bintang Juara ECE. Based on the interviews, personal readiness is the key to the activity. The inhibiting factors in learning with parents' activity were lack of information, communication, and skill to teach children in front of the class. Moreover, other factors were the lack of preparation of appropriate learning materials and teaching techniques applied to the children. This finding is in agreement with Morrison (2012) finding, which showed that parental readiness also affects their involvement to support their child's education at school.

Furthermore, the inhibiting factor that was being reviewed by the school was when the teacher adjusted the schedule or time it required to further confirm through various forms of communication with parents to engage in the school program. Also, there were difficulties in school readiness to incorporate parental involvement in the planning and preparation of the programs. During this time, the school committee member was still not optimal when following the coordination meeting activities held at the school. It is in agreement with Morrison (2012) who explains that the school not only engages parents on an incidental basis but other elements show the school or program's readiness for parental involvement through the various forms of activities that will be able to involve parents according to their time, abilities and opportunities.

In addition to the inhibiting factors explained above, there are also supporting factors of parental involvement in the school program. The supporting factor of parents' involvement at school is that parents have awareness and concern in cooperation efforts to support the achievement of the school program. Additionally, parents assume that their involvement is a form of priority and inherent consequences as an effort to optimize children's education and development. These findings further support the idea of Ule, Živoder, and du Bois-Reymond (2015) that a high awareness and responsibility to parents in the education of their children, so that parents are not fully dependent on teacher in school. Furthermore, parents have high confidence to maximize their child's

education through support and strong communication relationship with the school.

Another factor that supports the implementation of parental involvement in *Bintang Juara* ECE was how the teachers communicated with parents confidently and communicatively. The readiness of school or programs in this regard, *Bintang Juara* ECE has offered commitment and willingness for parents to participate in various school programs that have been planned according to the routine and ongoing agenda as an effort to improve learning motivation and educating skills and parenting. This commitment can be seen in the relationship between parents and school and the friendly and warm response as a form of the acceptance of the school involving parents as partners/associates or vice versa. This is in line with the results of research conducted by Nitecki (2015) that the integrated partnership between families and schools is reviewed from three main factors namely multidimensional relationships, friendly environment, and parental enhancement efforts. Moreover, the supporting factor in the financial matters of the school can provide facilities in implementing the parental involvement program. For example, in the home, visit activities and parenting seminars need financial support to invite practitioners or parenting experts.

Parents will also be more confident to engage actively in school programs when having balanced financial. Some parents involved in *BBOT* in school did not mind the budget or costs they needed to spend in the activity. *Bintang Juara* ECE also offers the opportunity for parents to donate in the school bazaar programs, for example, donating food supply for underprivileged citizens or providing relief when disaster/calamity occurs in the neighborhood. Also, parents were willing to estimate special budget to follow the implementation of the Child Care School Program (*PSPA*) required by the school. Parents were also willing to save their money for the sake of school committee needs, family gathering event, and cross-subsidize for underprivileged students.

Based on the explanation above, the conclusion of the factors that can affect the

involvement of parents in *Bintang Juara* ECE related to internal factors namely readiness, parents, school, children and external factors namely social, political and economics. Therefore, there needs to be cooperation and active collaboration of all parties concerning the child's education to maximize the parental involvement efforts in the ECE without any meaningful obstacles.

Effective Efforts to Support Parents' Involvement in Early Childhood Education

Based on the findings explained above, there are some efforts proposed by the school to engage parents in the school program, for instance establishing effective and proactive communication, providing the suitable time and creating a friendly environment. Regular communications between parents and school are also established, such as the cooperation commitment, communication book, and all forms of school notice to parents.

Bintang Juara ECE creates rules and guidelines for the procedure of partnership for parents as a form of initial communication. The school conducts direct talks strengthened by the written statement form. The form is a statement of parents' support commitment to engage in the education of their children. Parents who decide to put their children in *Bintang Juara* ECE are required to complete the administration and requirements. One of them is to fill and sign the legal commitment statement. This effort is done to provide positive support and cooperation with the school.

Communication book aims to give information about the learning purpose and activities. Furthermore, it gives information about the children's learning outcomes development on a day-to-day basis. The teacher distributed the communication book every Friday, and the parents returned it to school on Monday. Parents are required to provide feedback on their child learning activities and special information.

Another routine communication performed by the school is direct and indirect. The school employs indirect communication

through notification or announcement letter, group chat, or private chat using *WhatsApp* application. For direct communication, the school provides consultation activity with the class teacher or school psychologist and conducts home visits.

The school develops further communication by reporting the activity evaluation publication through social media, namely *Facebook* or *Instagram*, in the form of photo documentation or video footage. This kind of communication is built as a school respond to the parents. Associated with the reporting of the children learning outcomes, the school holds child development report in the mid-term and final term. These findings are following the opinion of Patrikakou (2008), who points out that proactive communication is important and necessary to give information to parents regarding their child's development and education and also the school programs.

The next effort is to create a friendly and comfortable environment. *Bintang Juara* ECE creates welcoming guidelines or standard operating procedures (SOP) for the school and personnel by greeting everyone they meet and put on a smiling face. The parents who had been involved in *BBOT* admitted that there is hospitality, especially the class teacher, when communicating indirect speaking, private or group chat using electronic messages and communication book. Those acts provide a distinctive comfort when parents are involved in the school. In line with the research results, the research findings by Arifiyanti (2015) proves that creating a comfortable school environment is one of the effort to facilitate the involvement of parents in kindergarten.

Bintang Juara ECE has a strategy to conduct parents' involvement activities outside of school since there are no large rooms or halls in school to gather the parents in one place. However, the selection of meeting locations or places is also challenging for the school needs to attract parents' interest so that they might attend the parents' involvement activities. Parents admitted that there was a more comfortable atmosphere when attending school events in a

hall. There is documentation featuring parents' involvement events such as parenting seminars, *PSPA*, family gathering, and child art performances performed in a hotel or resort halls or outdoor attractions. The school seeks to accommodate both parents and children's expression. This is in line with the opinion of Brewer (Diadha, 2015) who recommends increasing strategies of parents' involvement in schools through accommodation for parents and children expression.

The last attempt is to find a suitable time for all parents to be present at the school event. Therefore, parental engagement activity in *Bintang Juara* ECE is always carried out on weekends. For the time, the school can adjust to parents, and it can be morning, afternoon, or evening. As in the same way, the distribution of a child's development reports is adjusted to parents' available time. The parents can make an appointment with the class teacher so that both parents can attend and discuss their child progress in school. These findings are following the theory of Patmonodewo (2000), which explains that one of the teacher's successes in collaborating with parents who act as volunteers is to pay attention to the time.

The researcher analyzed the new findings in the parents' involvement in *Bintang Juara* ECE, which is the school's capability to create good relationships with the parents. The school also plans or makes a variety of parental involvement programs. The programs must be adjusted to the situation, condition, and culture of parents and teachers in the school. The school also adheres to the ECE philosophy of integrated education and thorough manner to develop a school program in parental involvement.

The stated efforts are aimed to minimize the inhibiting factor in the parent involvement program in ECE. The school believes that all parties, namely families, schools and communities, implement the success of the integrated ECE program programmatically, continuously and sustainably. It must be ideally measured by fulfilling efforts parents' involvement in school.

The commitment and parental involving program become the alternative involvement for parents and school in succeeding and aligning the education program developed by the school. Therefore, as shown above, this study on parental involvement in *Bintang Juara* ECE Semarang can support the school program effectively and optimally.

CONCLUSION

The result of this investigation shows that *Bintang Juara* ECE has various well planned and well-implemented parental involvement programs to enhance student achievement and success. Those programs can be listed as follows: school program presentation, parenting education, school committee membership, *BBOT*, child development report (mid-term and final-term), psychology consultation, home visit, communication book, open house, school bazaar, and family gathering. The parental involvement in *Bintang Juara* ECE has been implemented intensively, periodically and continuously.

Consequently, the positive impact of parental involvement in *Bintang Juara* ECE affects not only the parents but also the children and the school programs. There are factors affecting parental involvement in *Bintang Juara* ECE, namely, internal and external factors. The internal factors include readiness, parent's personality, school, and children. The external factors cover social, political, and economic factor. Those factors affecting the implementation of parents' involvement in *Bintang Juara* ECE can be treated as a supporting or inhibiting factor reviewed by the school and the parents.

The school has done some effective efforts to engage parents in school programs; those are establishing proactive communication, providing suitable time, and creating a friendly environment. The *Bintang Juara* ECE School is also able to create a good relationship with parents. Moreover, the school has planned and provided variation of different school programs involving the parents. Finally, this study could be

used as additional references for future researchers who are interested in the same topic. Additionally, further research might investigate in a detailed analysis of the parental involvement programs in Early Childhood Education directly.

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