# Partnership Communication Plan to Support the Implementation of Holistic-Integrative Early Childhood Education (PAUD HI)

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*Abstract*—The government has issued a policy requiring that Early Childhood Education Institutions must be conducted in a holistic-integrative manner to improve the quality of Early Childhood Education, provide a comprehensive, quality service, and involve all related education stakeholders. As a matter of fact, that the partnership between school, family, and community could enhance student's learning, accommodate the diverse needs of the student and bring an inclusive culture in education, it's essential for the teacher to develop communication partnership plan. This study was conducted in a systematic review with a qualitative approach. The communication values that can be implemented to develop an effective partnership are include understanding and respecting, openness, mutual trust, and commitment. The possible obstacles to implement this communication partnership plan components include a judgmental attitude when working with family and community, school as a hostile environment, the assumption that family and community are less able in the educational process, and lack of teacher partnership training.

*Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Community, Family, Partnership*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The term of partnership often related to collaboration, co-operation, joint working, or interagency working. Martinez-Miguel, M. L., & Stuart, M. (2002) defined partnership as the idea of co-operation and reciprocity. Partnership also described as a variety of arrangement which includes purposes, members, timescales, structures, and procedures (Lowndes, 2001 retrieved from Cawthra, L., Childs, S., Madge, B., & Wildridge, V. 2004). A literature review studied by Cawthra, L et al. (2004) relate partnership to shared goals, an arrangement in the process, joint-rights, resources, and responsibilities, improve the quality of services, equality, and trust. Referring to the notion of partnership by Lowndes above my understanding of partnership in the early childhood setting is a collaboration between a range of early childhood professional, family, and community with the purpose of supporting children's learning and development with the arrangement of structures, timescales, and procedures to make the partnership work effectively.

In Indonesian context, the partnership practice in Early Childhood Education can be seen in the implementation of PAUD HI (Holistic-Integrative Early Childhood Education). The implementation of PAUD HI was enacted in 2013 with the purpose of encouraging all education stakeholder to participate in Early Childhood Development. The regulation then reinforced by the Government Regulation No.20/2013, article 2 which defined PAUD HI as the endeavor of Early childhood development to simultaneously meet the essential needs of diverse and interrelated children in an integrated-holistic stimulation service.

School services faced several barriers in conducting PAUD HI program (Dewi et al., 2013). Given the fact that both the community members and schools face several barriers in implementing PAUD HI programs, such as the difficulties of coordination between stakeholders, lack of knowledge and skill to implement partnership programs, and low parental participation, I would like to draw a partnership communication plan which can be used to support early childhood development services in conducting partnership in a holistic-integrative manner.

## II. METHODS

This study was conducted in a systematic review of empirical research articles concerning partnership in the early childhood education context. The empirical studies and literature about partnership were analyzed to give an insight on how to implement partnership strategies and tackle the obstacles that might happen during the program. The articles were searched and found in the Monash database library for alumni using different combinations of the search terms "partnership," "family," "engagement," and "early childhood education." In order to design strategies for partnership communication to support the implementation of PAUD HI program, a qualitative analysis was conducted to identify strategies and obstacles concerning this topic. The empirical studies and literature were examined to obtain an overall understanding of developing partnership communication strategies that can be useful for PAUD HI program enforcement.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### III.1 The Benefits of Partnership in Education Context

Building partnership between all members in education is essential since it has many advantages in relation to support student's learning and creating an inclusive school culture. The studies conducted by Harvard Family Research Project shows that active involvement of educators and families can lead to a higher exchange of information, better demonstration and modelling of respect and clearer learning expectation which will affect early child's learning experiences positively (McNulty, C., Prosser, T., & Beining, K. H., 2011). Collaborative partnerships with interprofessional such as practitioner, researcher, policymaker, and specialist also can contribute on bringing an inclusive culture in education. For example, when we have a student with a significant learning need, building a partnership with researcher or specialist will bring a new insight about how to deal with this issue, later the outcomes from the collaboration will be useful for policymakers to create the curriculum.

Partnerships between School-family- community provide the means of meeting the diverse needs of children in a coordinated manner (Mawhinney, 1994a). Bryan, J. A. (2003) argued that partnerships between School-family- communities can result in better educational outcomes and resilience for students, parental empowerment, and social capital for children. To give an illustration, the Specialist Integrated    Community Engagement (SpICE) Model, a project which encourages student from wide range expertise to create impact and raise awareness for the Indigenous, rural, and Remote Australian community show the effectiveness of this model to address several problems in the community through developing integrated specialist service delivery. This model also emphasizes that partnership with communities is essential, and more can be gained by "working with" people rather than doing something for them (Clarke, K., & Denton, M., 2013).

### III.2 Communication Partnership Plan

Researchers have created a range of approaches and models to promote a partnership between school, family, and community. Those approaches were trying to provide knowledge on how to build an effective partnership and improve the parent and community involvement in School. The diagram below will illustrate the component of communication partnership plan which might be visible to apply in PAUD HI program.

*Figure 1. Partnership Communication Plan*
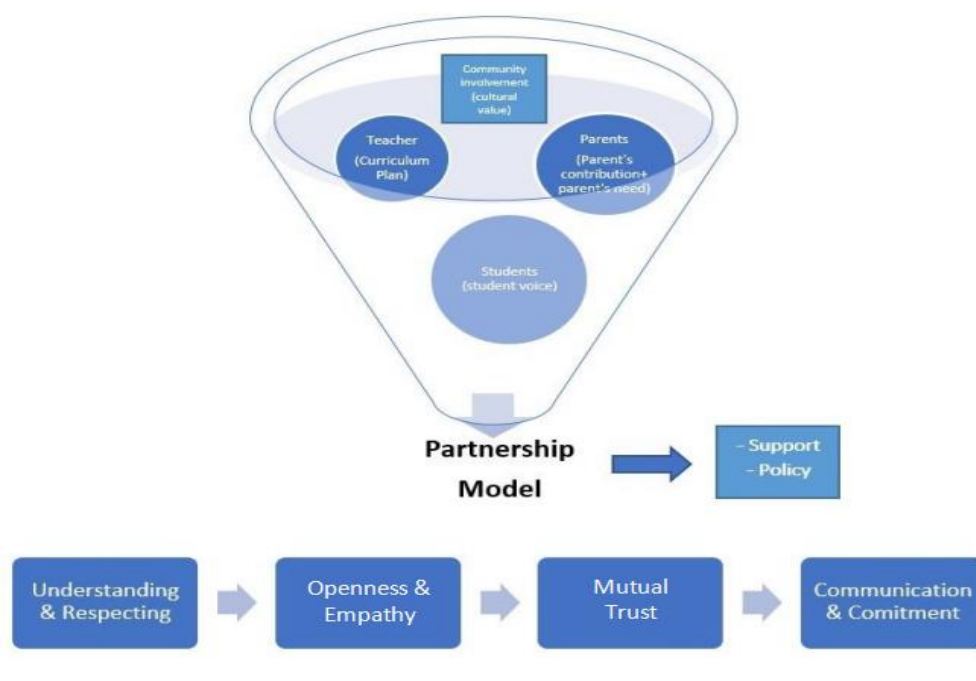


The communication partnership plan above was developed by combining and adapting existing approaches and theories (eg. Bronfenbrenner, Epstein, Dunst and Hornby). This plan aims to provide effective partnership strategies for all stakeholders in order to conduct PAUD HI program successfully. The first essential component is understanding and respecting. This value adapted from the bioecological theory which states that human development has resulted from the interaction of multiple factors. The latest version of bioecological theory illustrates this theory as the model of process–person–context–time (PPCT) which views human development as a result from (a) interrelated systems and contexts, (b) processes situated within specific time settings, and (c) person-related factors (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998; Tudge et al. 2009). Within this concept in mind, both teacher and professional should recognize the influence of an individual characteristic, student's family history, and cultural value as the multiple factors which can affect students learning development. Respecting and understanding is necessary for establishing effective communication between each member while discussing about the learning program.

By respecting and understanding the cultural value in the local community, teacher can link it to the school culture such as adapting character values of local wisdom or including local art culture into the lesson plan. These values also required in partnership between teacher and student since teacher should be       encouraged to give the student differentiated instruction to accommodate their diverse needs in learning activities. Teacher should recognize that every student who comes to school bring their "virtual bag" carrying diverse culture, language, cultural experience, and community knowledge (Thomson, 2004 retrieved from Carrington & Macarthur, 2012). Thus, it is extremely important for the teacher to understand student's background in order to make the learning activities relevant.

The second component is openness. Hornby (2000) has summarized some expectation of parents and teachers and found that teachers want parents to be open with them regarding information of student's particular needs or health issue and home circumstances which might affect student's learning. Consequently, the parent also demands teacher to discuss more about the student's learning process and responding to their voices. It is undeniable that the expectation of parents and teacher regarding the learning process might be different, even though it has the same primary goal which is to support students learning. Therefore, each party should be open and set the clarity and transparency to success

the partnership It is important to clarify the expectation of each school council members related to students learning to create the desired school program which can accommodate everyone needs.

The third component is mutual trust. As mentioned previously, one of the challenges to implementing partnership in PAUD HI program is the confusion of sudden shifting role and authorities among all stakeholders which contains the school principal, teacher, and representative of parents, communities, and students. The education system in Indonesia used to be centralized by the Government, that is why the sudden shifting role and authorities to take part in school policy decision become a burden for several members especially for parents and communities who never have the authority to participate in school policy before. Before the reform implemented, family and community have minimal involvement in school and parents usually more dependent on the teacher as they see the teacher as the expert. The teacher always maintains control over the decision for student's academic matter, while parents' role is receiving the information and instruction about their children. The notion of "trust" also urges by Dunst (2002) in his family-centered approach which suggested that educator should empower family so they can genuinely become decision makers regarding any options of intervention and program practices to support children's learning and sharing information and knowledge about their child. Along the similar lines Hornby (2000) also mentioned the need for trust in the partnership model; he emphasized that both parent and teacher should be viewed as an expert who can contribute in students learning.

The role of community is also crucial to strengthen the social capital and provide students with the resources to be a competent citizen in the twenty-first century (Boyd and Crowson, 1993; Waddock, 1995 retrieved from Sanders, 2001). Hence, the mutual trust to carry out the responsibility in the partnership is needed to encourage both parents and communities to take part in children's learning, development, and wellbeing. While many studies have emphasized the importance of partnership between school, family, and community to support student learning, student voice as one of the crucial elements in this partnership. Carrington & Macarthur (2012) argued that student's involvement in decision making at school has benefits both in relation to learning improvement and to being included and valued in the school community. Engaging students in the partnership with others will provide them opportunities to speak their voice, and collaboratively involved in school activities. Therefore, other school council members should recognize their opinion and trust student's responsibility to take part in decision making.

The last component of this partnership plan is establishing effective communication and commitment. Teachers need to have good interpersonal communication skills to build a partnership with parents (Hornby, 2000). This communication skills required active listening, counseling, and assertiveness. Basic counselling also required which involve the skills of listening, understanding and action-planing. Hornby (2000) emphasized that teacher should listen to what parents have said to clarify their concern and ideas, then help them gain a clear understanding of the problem situation. Finally, the use of action-planning skills is needed to help parents consider the possible options to tackle their concerns, develop plans for action and review the progress. In a democratic partnership in which every member has equal power and opportunities to speak their voice, the interpersonal communication skills are essential to prevent the communication problems such as assumption and prejudice and misuse of language.

Hornby (2000) identified five forms of communication to develop and maintain two-way communication between parents and teachers which includes (1) Informal contacts (i.e., school production, open days, outings), (2) telephone contacts, (3) Various forms of written communication (i.e., handbooks, newsletters, email, home-school diary and progress report) (4) parent-teacher meetings and (5) Home visit. It can be seen that there are wide variety of strategies that can be used to improve the communication between teacher and family. However, Hornby (2000) emphasized

that the use of the actual method depends on the parents and teacher preference and the context situation.

 In PAUD HI program, parent meeting is commonly used as a form of communication strategies. Still, providing various strategy will lead to a substantial increase in the level of parent and community involvement in schools. Last but not least, the commitment to do the responsibility and role in the partnership also become a crucial element. Pinkus (2005) argued the importance to define the role of each member clearly in the partnership. The roles chosen by the members should be based on their preferences and respected by everyone involved (Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2005). Finally, the commitment to carry out the role and sustain collaborative working environments is required in establishing effective partnership (Wesley & Buysse, 2001)

### III.3 Possible Challenges in Partnership Communication Plan

The partnership between school, family, and community are often challenging to implement. Public Agenda found that most parents are wearisome with their leadership role; consequently, teachers also uncomfortable having parents in those roles (Muscott, H. S., et al., 2008). Along similar lines, Epstein & Sanders (2006) also argued that most teachers and administrators often have an assumption that they are the "individual leader" in student's education, and they have a little attention to the importance of family and community involvement. The table below gives information on possible challenges in implementing communication partnership plan components.

*Table 1. Possible Challenges in Partnership Communication Plan*

| Communication Plan Elements | Potential Obstacles |
| --- | --- |
| Understanding and Respecting | Judgemental attitude |
| Openness | The school is seen as a hostile environment and sometimes it can be intimidating for parents and community |
| Mutual Trust | The school's assumption that family and community is less able in the educational process |
| Communication and Commitment | Lack of teacher knowledge of interpersonal skills in communication. |

First, the potential challenge in implementing respecting and understanding components is judgmental attitude when working with family and community. Henderson, Johnson, Mapp & Davies (2006) argued that teachers and administrator attitude toward parents often influenced by the cultural value of white, middle-class values, assumptions and experiences. It resulted, that family engagement likely to occur with more educated and economically stable families rather than the family from low socioeconomic (Sheldon, 2003). Addressing this obstacle, the teacher should avoid the prejudice toward family and community.

In the family-centered practice, Dunst (2002) argued that each family have values that should be encouraged.  This judgmental attitude not only against the concept of "education for all" but also could promote the marginalization in education and affect the partnership. Furthermore, the assumptions toward family choice and respond to school activities also should be respected. Hornby (2011) mentioned that teacher should not assume that parents who do not come to parents meeting

are not interested in their children's education. There are several reasons why some parents do not attend on parent's meetings, including transport and babysitting problems, as well as parents' negative feelings about their own school days. Of course, it is particularly difficult for the teachers when parents do not attend parent's meetings since that program provide opportunities for teacher-parents to talk about children's development in school. However, Muscott, H. S., et al., (2008) argued that it's vital for teachers and administrators to develop an understanding of families' particular needs, proficient in relationship building skills and specialized interaction as well have knowledge and access to targeted support and access.

Second, the possible obstacle to implement openness value is school often seen as a hostile environment which sometimes can be intimidating for parents and community (Fraser, 2000). Muscott, H. S., et al., (2008) argued that some families might disengage in partnership because they have unpleasant memories and experiences about School. This circumstance promotes avoidance and escapes behavior which makes the family engagement difficult. To address this obstacle, I argue that teacher should empower family engagement and create a friendly environment in school.

The characteristic of the family-friendly school includes (1) providing an environment where all families feel welcomed, valued and respected, (2) all families have opportunities to speak their voice, (3) All families have opportunities to be involved in school activities, (4) All families satisfied with these elements (New Hampshire Family Engagement Work Group, 2000). Along similar lines, Epstein (2006) also encourage family-like schools' approach which encourages the teacher to welcome all families, not only families that are easy to reach. By establishing a family-friendly school, family and community will feel welcome so it can encourage the openness to share the information regarding student's learning development.

Third, the challenge to implement mutual trust component is the school's assumption that family and community is less able in the educational process. Hornby (2000) have listed the typical teacher's attitude toward parents' involvement which includes: Parents as a problem, parents as adversaries, parents as vulnerable, parents as a less able, parents as needing treatment, parents as causal and parents needing to be kept at a "professional distance." All those identifications emphasized that parents are often seen as a part of the problem rather than solution (Fraser, 2000).

This challenge could be solved by cultivating the teacher's understanding that family and community have the right and roles in students learning development. Hornby (2000) also argued that teacher should recognize the parent's right to involve in school activity and shared the accountability and responsibility within a partnership form. Epstein (2006) has established a framework of six types of involvement to promote school-family-community engagement includes Parenting, communicating, volunteering, decision making and collaborating with family. Involving parents and community in the variety of school activities exemplify the teacher's trust on the importance of parents and community role to students learning development.

Fourth, the potential challenge to implement communication and commitment is the lack of teacher knowledge on interpersonal communication skills and the language barrier. Hornby (2000) argued that teacher might be expert in verbal presentation and explanation; however, they have less developed skills on listening, counseling and assertiveness. These three interpersonal communication skills are essential for partnership with parents and community. Epstein (1985) also point out that majority of teachers have had a little training on working with parents. Therefore, they lack skills and knowledge regarding how to deal with parents and community in the partnership approach. To tackle this issue, I argue that teacher should be equipped with the knowledge and understanding about partnership model, including the collaboration practice and communication skills. The pilot study conducted by Bartels, S. M., & Eskow, K. G. (2010) shows that training to school professional could enhance

communication and collaboration skills and bring the positive change in attitudes toward collaboration. The other possible challenge is the language barrier between teacher, family, and community.

## IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

As a matter of fact, that the partnership between school, family, and community could enhance student's learning, accommodate the diverse needs of the student in a coordinated manner and bring an inclusive culture in education, it's essential for the teacher to develop communication partnership plan. The potential components which can be implemented to develop an effective partnership are understanding and respecting, openness, mutual trust, communication, and commitment. The openness value will enable mutual trust in a partnership which can bring through shared dialogue, planning, and participation.

The possible obstacles to implement this communication partnership plan components include judgmental attitude when working with family and community, school as a hostile environment, the assumption that family and community is less able in the educational process, lack of teacher partnership training and language barrier. However, to tackle these issues, the teacher should avoid the prejudice toward family and community, teacher should empower family engagement and create a friendly environment in school, teacher should have an understanding that family and community have the right and roles in students learning development, arrange teacher partnership training and provide extra support to address language barrier. Finally, evaluation of this communication partnership plan is needed to assess the success of this plan. The school should continually conduct a regular assessment, survey current involvement of parents and seek feedback from parents about the implementation of the partnership (Rosenthal and Sawyers, 1996 Retrieved from Hornby, 2000). The study about the evaluation of partnership in PAUD HI should be considered in the future research to identify the weakness and strength components in the actual practice.

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