# FAMILY FORUMS FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT IN INDONESIA: A NEW APPROACH IN THE MANAGEMENT OF SUCCESSFUL EARLY CHILDHOOD GRASS-ROOT COMMUNITY EDUCATION[1]

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As a new approach to empowerment, family forums contribute to national growth and development. Though, such development at times may not be automatic, planned with a clear management system makes it possible to occur. In this paper, the author aims to describe the way family forums contribute to community prosperity right from an early age fostered through widespread early childhood grass-root community education programmes. Because communities can serve as good vehicles for sustainable development. Based on this, in an effort to provide guidance to early childhood community education units, there is need for the improvement in management. Because to derive satisfaction, it is necessary to promote good management which requires several dimensional approaches, in this case, they may be five categorical dimensions which are tangible, empathy, renponsiveness, reliability, and assuring the public. In relation to this, the present paper describes students internships activities about family empowerment which took place in of the villages in Garut District in Indonesia. It has been established that continuous empowerment for all levels moreso the grass-root communities is very important for family empowerment and development. In case, empowerment programmes for villages should atleast be conducted once in three years. This can be easily achieved through students internship programmes.

*Keywords:* early childhood education, management, empowerment and community

## INTRODUCTION

National development is basically an attempt to build a fully developed human-being and the nation at large (DPPTK-PAUD NI, 2012a). In other words, development does not look at human beings as mere objects, but it positions them as active subjects who are able to determine the direction and objectives of their development (DPPTK-PAUD NI, 2012b). Though this is the ideal situation, one of the obstacles to development is the lack of young people who are able to direct change and influence technological advances. This is not a simple matter, especially at a time; the country is entering a take-off stage. However, this should not be a reason to forget the inequalities between the poor and the rich, where the rich have become more rich, whereas the poor have become more poor.

It is true that in today's society, which is massively involved in development, there are many challenges which also continue to lead to imbalances and gaps among people (DPPTK-PAUD NI, 2012c). Although several of the social problems have been successfully addressed, there are those which are consistent and they

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cannot be easily eliminated. For instance, unemployment and school dropout are some of the problems which continuously affect young people's ability and also greatly determine their future (Sardin, 2012). In reference to this, students from Indonesia University of Education conducted a thematic service learning on family empowerment with a focus on education, health, environment and economy. They found out that thematic topics were appropriate for community empowerment through the eradication of poverty and ignorance at the grass-root of the society.

At the district level, the implementation of community empowerment is carried out by different departments; however, their functions are less coordinated (Notoatmodjo, 1998). Such a situation has led to programme duplication and overlap since in most cases the goals are similar. The target of thematic student internship programme is to develop and strengthen the new and already existing community organisations which focus on family and community empowerment (Setyawan, 2005). Garut is among the recent districts that have signed a memorandum of understanding with the Indonesia University of Education in regard to community services. However, the cooperation between the university and the district ranges far back, before the early 1990's. In 2013 the village of Cintarasa in the regency of Samarang in Garut district was chosen as a location for students thematic internship programme. Since then, the activities carried out so far, have led to the formation of strong community organisation and among them is the forum for family empowerment, which has been chosen as a topic for this paper. The institutional potential of the district and sub-districts (or regencies) in support for programme implementation, for example: education, health, environmental and economic have their own limitations, among such limitation is the available human resource which should be strengthened through voluntarism.

## MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY OF NONFORMAL-EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SERVICES

A good management will lead to improved quality of the nonformal early childhood education programme. Educational services comprise of basically public services (Veithzal, 2004). Today, a point of discussion is the issue of quality. The concept of quality has become a measure of success in most organisations and services, including education services (Ida, 2012). This implies that quality is a cross-cutting issue and no longer an issue of only commercial service providers, but also an important point when it comes to government service delivery (DPPTK-PAUD NI, 2012c). The concept in real situation helps to enhance customer satisfaction.

According to the International Organisation for Standardisation (Favre, 2005) quality is defined as the overall quality and distinctive features of a good or service offered in regard to public demand. In most cases, the needs and expectations differ (Zeithaml, *et al,* 1990) are of the opinion that a customer's decision to consume or not to consume a good or service are affected by the quality of that service. The

indicators used to measure customer satisfaction are divided into five dimensions, which are: "tangible, empathy, responsiveness, reliability, and assurance".

In accordance with the above opinion, good management of nonformal-early childhood education will either be able to enhance the quality of the services for the users or will lead to consumer satisfaction after the service has been provided. To establish whether the customer's expectation have been met can be obtained through surveys conducted by organisations or individual service providers. The results of the survey are used to assess the customer's perceptions on the services. This is called customer satisfaction rating. Besides, to approve a service's quality, is also conducted in two dimensions, which are assessment by the client and assessment of the services offered.

Today, society faces five bottle-necks regard to service quality. These bottle-necks have been named gaps, they include: first, the gap between customer expectations and management perceptions. This gap arises due to misinterpretation in customer expectations. Second, the gap between management perception on customer expectations and the conditions for service quality.

This gap occurs as a result of an error to interpret management perception appropriately in relation to public expectation as a benchmark to service quality. Third, the gap between specific service quality and the services provide. This gap is caused by the inability of the existing human resource to meet the set service quality standards (Mudjiono and Dimayati, 2002). The main cause for this is over working or working beyond capacity. Fourth, the gap between service providers with the external informants; this gap arises because of the failure by the organisation to fulfill earlier communicated promises through various external activities. Fifth, the gap between public expectations and the real quality of the services the public receives. This is challenge shows that public expectations have not been fulfilled.

The most important factor is the improvement services by first understanding the above five gaps or the existing gaps in service delivery. Understanding the five gaps can help to determine the level of satisfaction and customer expectations. In addition, there is need to improve the quality of communications. By improving communication, leadership qualities will automatically improve something that can enhance quality and also will show commitment to service quality by the provider. The third gap reveals that division of labour is close to treating the public as part of the organisation because it acts a centre for checks and balances. While the fourth gap, can facilitate the flow of inter-unit communication between the public and the organisation. In other words, the organisation is encouraged to of course provide services that meet the needs of the community without exceeding the organisation capacity.

The meaning of service quality can also be examined from the perspective of the customer. One of the basic concepts on customer satisfaction refers to: (1) Privileges held by a number of products, either directly or attractive privileges that

are able to meet customer satisfaction when a product is used; (2) quality consists of everything that is free of flaws or damages. The benchmark for quality is described above; this shows that quality has always focused on the benefit or customer satisfaction. In other words, products are designed, manufactured, and services are provided to meet customer desires. Therefore, quality refers to everything that determines customer satisfaction; a newly produced product will be described as good, if it meets the customer's wishes. In line with the above, the Minister for Administration and Bureaucratic Reforms released a decree on the quality of services (DPPTK-PAUD NI, 2012a). This decree is comprised of the following:

- Simplicity, this refers to the simplification of the procedures/ or the process and steps involved in service delivery.

- Clarity and certainty, this is concerned with the procedure/ or the manner in which government services are provided to the public. It is applicable to both technical and administrative services.

- Secure, this means that the process and procedures for public services should ensure safety and legality.

- Transparency, in regard to this point, the procedures /or approaches involved should ensure transparency in services offered.

- Efficiency, there should be efficiency in all public services, because this will either directly or indirectly influences the results.

- Economical, all services offered must be economical to the public, the service provider must take account: the value of the goods or services offered to the public; the conditions and ability of the customers; and consider legality of the service.

- Equal Justice, the scope and the area of jurisdiction must consider government policies on operation.

- Time frame, in terms of implementation, public services should be offered based on schedule.

## RURAL COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is defined differently to the different people or groups. The term depends on the perspective under which it is being examined. However, the most easily understood is the word empowerment which originates from the word "power", referring to being able or or having the ability to access education, live a better economic life and participate in politics, and of course, the ability to live an independent life. There are similarities between rural and urban empowerment. Some of the common concepts on empowerment by the government are on universal values rooted in the different cultures of a nation. The goal for such empowerment

is to change the attitudes and behavior of society. In practice, the empowerment process involves awareness creation and community participation.

The most effective and quickest approach for rural community empowerment is that which brings together the grass-root community and the government. Many attempts have been made by the government in the empowerment of rural communities in order to empower the people by improving their economy. The efforts taken, include: the Social Safety Net and the fishers' housing restoration. However, such activities have not been able to build self-reliant communities.

The approach to community empowerment can be looked at from both the deficit and strength based perspectives. The deficit-centered approach is based on a variety of problems and ways to handle such problems. Its success depends on clear identification and proper problem diagnosis to establish a solution.

## CONCLUSION

The various changes taking place, have led to the demand for broad-based education. These demands aim to influence change and require that strategies are developed in regard to the environment, education needs, and the community's demands. This means that education should be able to guide strategies and policies which are aimed at overcoming changes. In other words, each of the activity requires proper management, if the set objectives are to be achieved.

### *Note*

1. Most of the content of this paper, was presented and also published in a 2014 conference proceedings report on early childhood education edited by Vina Adriany, however, with her permission, I have been accepted to republish the content with only a change in title and the abstract for publication in the Man in India Journal. It means one can also access almost similar content from https://id.scribd.com/doc/283051212/Proceedings-Negotiating-Practices-of-Early-Childhood-Educati

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