A REVIEW ON PARENTING EDUCATION PROGRAM: THE CASE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN INDONESIA

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Early Childhood Education being an important component in one's life, it is highly needed in society . As it is evident in various researches on early childhood, children grow rapidly, both physically and socially, they therefore, need to learn from competent staff. Though the target of the early childhood education program is children, as the main (direct) target, and parents, as the secondary (intermediary) target, preliminary observations have revealed that parents are still neglected. Parents' involvement in early childhood education for their children is still minimal. They come to the institution only to escort or bring the children and to take them home. Few institutions invite parents' involvement in setting and implementing programs, let alone help teachers in managing routine tasks in early childhood education institutions. Only very institutions implement it; and they are usually the expensive ones that target the wealthy group of society. Therefore this study is interested in exploring this problem by outlining several concepts that are used as the foundation of this study. The theoretical-conceptual framework referred to in this study includes a review of several concepts relevant to the study. Among these concepts are the concepts of Early Childhood Education, Adult Education and Parenting Education. These concepts were expected to be the theoretical and practical basis for implementing parenting education in early childhood education institutions to improve children's social development.

Keywords: The concepts of early childhood education (PAUD), adult education, parenting education.

INTRODUCTION

In the last few years, various researches have been conducted to investigate the topic of early childhood development, whose results show that the first 5 (five) years of a child's life are the golden age to instill basic knowledge and skills in a child. The good quality growth in this period would result in better physical, mental, emotional, and social health of a child, as well as developing good learning skills and child behavior.

Optimal care in a child's golden age optimizes their potentials and growth. In optimizing children's growth, there are two important things; the parents, educators, and the early childhood nanny must do. The first is satisfying children's basic needs to optimize growth. The second is conducting various stimulation, detection, and intervention towards children's growth. These two things are the basics of Early Childhood Development.

Early childhood education (P*endidikan Anak Usia Dini* - PAUD) serves as the main function of developing all aspects of children development, including the

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aspects of cognitive, language, physical (gross and fine motor), social, and emotional aspects. Various researches show that there is a significant correlation between the development experienced in early childhood and the success in future life. For instance, children who grow up in an interaction-rich environment (at home or PAUD institution) with good use of language would be accustomed to listening and uttering words correctly, so that when they attend school, they already have basic reading capabilities.

In line with the functions outlined above, the aims of early childhood education are: First, to provide care and guidance that allows young learners (students in their early childhood) to grow and develop appropriately according to their age and potentials; Second, to identify possible deviation so that, if it happens, early intervention could be done; and Third, to provide various fun experiences for young learners, that would allow them to develop their potentials; so that they can be ready to attend elementary school.

Family plays an important role in early childhood education because children receive and respond to everything they see and experience from parents and the environment. At their early age, children could quickly absorb everything they are exposed to. As M. I. Soelaeman (1994: 171) noted, a child's education is his parents' responsibility, from long before he is born until he is an adult when he should be able to hold and perform his own responsibilities. Children's helplessness in their early age requires them to highly depend on others around them, not only physically but also psychologically and mentally.

Education provided by today's parents is commonly referred to as *parenting*. It is closely related with the capabilities of a family/household and the community to provide attention, care, time, and support to satisfy the physical, mental, and social needs of early-age growing children. Therefore, parents should be able to direct and guide children from their early age until they became adults. One way to do this is by providing early childhood education. The vision of early childhood education is to nurture healthy, intelligent, and happy young learners to have noble characters and be physically and mentally ready to attend the next level of education.

In early childhood education, there are two kinds of targets; the direct target and the intermediary target. The direct or main target of early childhood education is children, new-borns to 6 years old, while the intermediary or secondary target is parents/family, parents-to-be, educators and managers of early childhood education, early childhood education institutions, stakeholders in early childhood education and the public to a certain extent. Parents as one of the intermediary targets, are not getting enough attention because empirical facts in the field show that the main activities of early childhood education focus mainly on the teaching-learning activities of children in an institution, which only occurs for one or two hours. It means that children spend most of their time in their homes with their families.

Early childhood education could succeed if some efforts are put in by the family, as the first educational institution of children, and the non-family educational institution, as the next system of education for children.

Preliminary observation confirms that opinion. In reality, in both early childhood education institutions providing non-formal education and in PAUD institutions, parents' involvement is minimal. Parents or family members only participate in bringing children to institutions and then taking them back home, or when they receive invitations to attend special events organized by the institution.

Only very few institutions request parents to cooperate and collaborate in deciding and performing education programs. For parents to help teachers perform routine tasks in the PAUD program is almost never heard of. Only a very small number of institutions have done this, and they are the expensive ones that target only the wealthy in the society; who are not many.

This fact is worrying. PAUD institutions should be a place to educate all young early-age learners, however, the aforementioned facts create big discrepancies. The 'wealthy' parents put their children in expensive PAUD institutions, with good parenting knowledge. However, the parents in other PAUD institutions have minimum parenting knowledge.

Parents should be the ones who provide the first and foremost education for their children, through appropriate parenting and in line with the development of the child and the world. It would be very advantageous if parents could do it in collaboration with PAUD institutions in the society. Although, there is a lot of parenting knowledge development programs provided for PAUD tutors nowadays, a lot of parents do not follow or even know about appropriate parenting for early-age learners. This has created a discrepancy between tutors' knowledge and parents' knowledge concerning parenting. As we know, early-age children spend more time with their parents than with PAUD tutors.

Therefore, it would be very useful if tutors' knowledge concerning parenting was also provided for parents. This is important because the development of young learners or early-age children has to be comprehensive and cross-disciplined. The physical, mental, emotional, and social growth and development of young learners are highly influenced by their health care, nutrition fulfillment, education, mental stimulation, and psychosocial condition. Early childhood education aims to simultaneously and systematically satisfy various essential needs of children, including various aspects of physical and non-physical development, so that the children could grow into healthy, strong, intelligent, and happy children with noble characters.

In this paper, there is a discussion of several concepts which are considered relevant for the development of a model of parenting training program for PAUD tutors in Bandung city, and for obtaining data concerning empirical conditions of the parenting program implementation in Bandung city. These two activities are conducted through the literary review.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) Concept

Early Childhood Education, in essence, is an education conducted to facilitate the growth and development of children comprehensively, or in other words, focuses on developing all aspects of children's personality. Early Childhood Education provides opportunities to develop students personality and identity; therefore, early childhood education, particularly at the level of kindergarten, should provide various activities that could develop children's development aspects, including the aspects of cognitive, language, social, emotion, physical, and motor aspects (Anderson, 1993).

The age limitation for early-age learners in Indonesia is from the birth to six years old. This is clearly stated in the Regulations of National Education System (2003), Paragraph 1, Clause 14, "Early Childhood Education is a development effort aimed at newly-born to six-year old children, conducted through providing educational stimulus to help the physical and mental growth of children, and their development so that they can be ready to attend the next level of education."

Adult Education Concept

Parenting education is a special program for parents with early-age children, which aims to foster a similar perception in both PAUD institutions and parents, concerning the development of children's social competence. Parenting education enriches parents' knowledge and understanding. It is also an effort of PAUD institutions to involve parents at the institutional level to produce a better quality of children's social development. The target of the parenting education program is the parents who enrol their children in PAUD institutions. Educating adults requires a different approach than educating children. Therefore, the theories that can be used to educate parents are adult education theories.

In facing adult learners, it requires strategies and approaches that are different from those used in formal schools. In schools, the strategies and approaches used to educate children are called Pedagogical approaches. In practice, these approaches are not suitable for educating and training adult learners. For instance, a parenting training program requires an approach that suites the maturity, self concept, and experience of the trainees. In the field of education, this strategy and approach is called the Andragogy approach, or the adult education approach.

Adult education theory, in its development, is formulated into several assumptions, from various researches according to C. Lindeman in Knowles (2005: 40). The main assumption concerning adult learners used in this research is that: Adults are motivated to learn as they experience needs and interests that learning will satisfy. b) Adults' orientation to learning is life-centered. c) Experience is the richest source for adult's learning. d) Adults have a deep need to be self-directing. e) Individual differences among people increase with age.

Andragogy in Practice
(Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 1998)
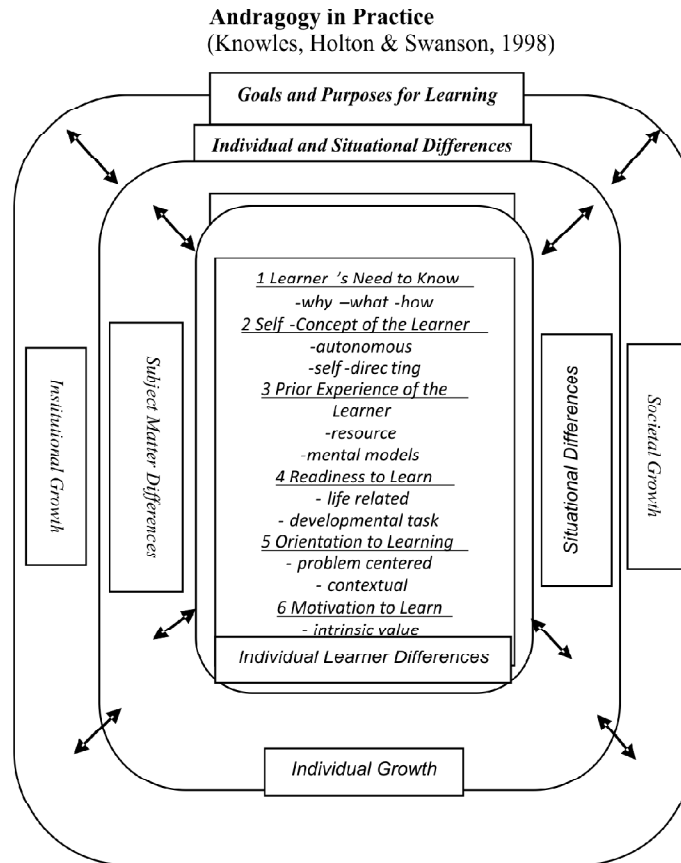
Figure 2.2: Adapted from of Malcolm Knowles- Andragogy in Practice (Knowles; 2005: 149)

Goals and purposes for learning, the outer ring of the model, are displayed as a result of the development program. The goal and purposes of adult learning serve the function of shaping and creating a learning experience. The goal and purposes of learning were divided into three categories; individual growth, institutional growth, and societal growth.

Andragogy: Core Adult Learning Principles state that adult learners already acquired or owned: 1) Learner's Need to Know; 2) Self-Concept of the Learner; 3) Prior Experience of the Learner; 4) Readiness to learn; 5) Orientation to learnning; 6) Motivation to learn; (Knowles Malcolm; 2005: 154).

The Parenting Education Concept

The growth and development of PAUD institutions; in various forms of PAUD services, including kindergartens (TK/*taman kanak-kanak*), child-care centres

(TPA/*taman penitipan anak*), playgroups (KB/*kelompok bermain*), and similar PAUD units (SPS/*satuan PAUD sejenis*), show an increase in society's awareness of the importance of early age childhood education. However, the rapidly growing PAUD institutions could not replace the role of family in early childhood education. Considering the importance of conformity between the parenting at home and learning activities at PAUD institutions, every PAUD institution is expected to facilitate this by providing a parenting education program. Parenting education programs aim to strengthen the role of family as the most influential environment in children's growth and development.

Parents' involvement in educational institutions, according to Berger (1991: 122) could be conducted through; 1) involving parents as educators of their children; 2) involving parents as observers of the classroom learning process; 3) involving parents as temporary voluntary workers; 4) involving parents as decision makers in schools.

Several reasons why it is important to involve parents in the education process in educational institutions, according to Epstein, cited in Brewer (2007: 238), include 1) parents and teachers have more similarities than differences in educating children; they have many goals and needs that have to be shared by one another; 2) parents' involvement in the program do not stop at educating children, it should continue to the next level of education; 3) programs developed by educational institutions should involve every member of the family; 4) programs developed by educational institution make teachers' work easier; and 5) programs are developed over time.

Furthermore, Brewer states that a school that implements the following principles would succeed in planning programs/activities with parents. The principles are: 1) Parents visitation/observation day; 2) Family events like "social ice-cream" or family nights; 3) Curriculum exhibition, also exhibitin children's works; 4) Parents' Computer Day, in which parents learn about technology; 5) Grandparents day; 6) Informal meetings with head master or school director; 7) Information of fun summer exhibition; 8) Reports on parents activities at home, or other similar reports; 9) Parents' visit to library, field trip, seminar, or workshop; 10) Award program, in which every child gets an award for various categories.

Relevant Research Reports

There are several researches that are in line with this research, and are used as reference. Among these researches is Weiss (2006: 1) who noted that the researchers at Harvard Family Research believed that children's success is determined by supporting environments. The environments include family, early childhood education programs, schools, activities and programs outside the school, and other supporting facilities. Specifically, the role of family in early childhood education referred to character building, attitude development, and values embedding. In Weis' report, the environment is an important factor in a child's success; which includes family and early childhood education programs.

Meanwhile, Chen's study in China (2000: 855-873) showed that families expect more from educational institutions in providing a better education for their children. Educational institutions are considered institutions that could replace the role of family as educators.

In Sardin (2011: x), there are several strategies that could be employed by an institution to develop parents' competence in early childhood parenting. To improve parents' knowledge and understanding on parenting, these activities could be conducted by; 1) providing special programs for parents, for example through parenting classes; 2) involving parents as educators of their own children in educational institutions; 3) involving parents as observers of the learning process which is expected to facilitate dialogue between parents and PAUD institutions; 4) involving parents as voluntary educators (teachers) or a voluntary source of learning at PAUD institutions; 5) involving parents in the development of programs and activities of PAUD institutions, so that parents can comprehensively understand the program and activities of the institution.

CONCLUSION

The goals of early childhood education can be achieved if they are implemented together by parents and institutions. Parents should be able to direct and guide their children since early age until the children became adults. One of the ways to do this is through early childhood education, whose vision is to nurture the healthy, intelligent, and happy young learners (early-age children) to have noble characters and be physically and mentally ready to attend the next level of education.

Realizing the importance of this, PAUD institutions should provide parenting education programs, whose aim is to improve parents' capacity in educating and nurturing children. These programs should also intend to be cooperation programs between parents and institutions to shape children as stated in the vision of early childhood education.

In the implementation of parenting education, the referenced conceptual-theoretic framework needs to be realized. This framework includes the concepts of early childhood education, adult education, and parenting education. Practically, there are several relevant researches concerning parenting education. These researches are expected to provide a picture of the benefit, the steps, and various forms of parenting education; whose implementation could be adjusted based on the condition, situation, and preparation (readiness) of PAUD institutions.

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