

CHARACTER EDUCATION MODEL FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD THROUGH NON-FORMAL “SEKOLAH IBU” IN THE VILLAGES¹

by

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ABSTRACT

Character Education for very young children requires a synergy between Early Child Education Institution (PAUD) like Playgroups (KB), Similar Education Unit (SPS), and parents during children's care at home. However, the kind of synergy has not been very popularly done and studies that develop this are still fairly limited. Therefore, this study was conducted as an attempt to develop character education model for early childhood education through integrated “Sekolah Ibu” among the non-formal early child schooling in the villages. It is expected that the developed model can be applied during the implementation of character building at the integrated early childhood education program among non-formal Early Childhood Education Institutions and parents at home. This research and development study was conducted among 11 Playgroups and 11 SPSs in the Pajangan Sub-regency, Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta Special Territory, Indonesia. 60 parents were involved as respondents during April to October 2012. The results show that the researched Playgroups and SPSs can be developed into a “Sekolah Ibu” targeting parents whose children are learning. The main materials given were about children's character building and education, children's home care, and early childhood education model. The results of the study are then developed into a conceptual-theoretical character education model through non-formal “Sekolah Ibu” Early Child Education Program in the villages which is also completed with a module of early child character education materials.

Keywords: character education, early childhod education, non-formal education, “Sekolah Ibu”

¹ This script is a research result of 2012 National Strategies Research Grant entitled Developing Early Child Character Education Model through Integrated “Sekolah Ibu” among the Non-formal Early Child Education Programs in the villages. Research team consists of Yoyon Suryono (Chairperson), Puji Yanti Fauziah, Unik Ambarwati, and Nurhayati as team members.

INTRODUCTION

Children at a very young age need to be introduced to positive characters to equip them in the future. The process of introducing positive characters may be conducted through implementing character education in the non-formal early childhood pre-schooling program such as “Sekolah Ibu” in the villages. The young children, both in rural and urban areas, have been taught and introduced good characters informally at home by parents as well as at formal and non-formal Early Childhood Pre-Schooling Programs (PAUD) such as Kindergarten (TK), Playgroups (KB), Children Daycare (TPA), and Similar Education Units (SPS) by educators, tutors, and caretakers. Interestingly, there is a tendency that the role of mothers is declining in teaching good characters to children. It happens due to several reasons among others: more and more mothers work outside, the rapid development of PAUD pre-schools, and the limited cooperation between parents and PAUD pre-schools in conducting character education for children, and not to mention the vast difference between PAUD pre-schools in rural and urban areas in which the urban PAUDs are more advanced in all aspects compared to the rural PAUDs.

Considering the above factors this character education model for early childhood education through integrated “Sekolah Ibu” among the non-formal early child pre-schooling in the villages is developed. The already existing non-formal PAUD pre-schools such as KB, TPA, and SPS need to be more empowered by involving parents in the character education of the young through “Sekolah Ibu”. This empowering is also aimed to develop a more mutual relationship and strong cooperation between KB, TK, SPS, and parents in conducting character education for the very young. In this context the children are the ‘main target’ and parents are the ‘intermediary target’. Posited as intermediary target, parents need to be trained and equipped with the skills to conduct character education for their young children very early at home so that a synergy of character teaching between parents and PAUD can be achieved. The main principle is that families are the first and main educators responsible for the children’s character building. It is together with family that PAUD pre-schools conduct early childhood character education cooperatively and integratively. The question is how can we promote this mutual cooperation and partnership to happen?

It is through this research project that a model of character teaching for early childhood education through “Sekolah Ibu” non-formal PAUD pre-schools was developed. Why is it necessary to conduct a character teaching for young children through “Sekolah Ibu” non-formal PAUD pre-schools in the village? Very young children need to be introduced to good characters and parents, not only PAUD pre-schools, have the responsibility to do that. Character teachings have long been introduced to young children through varieties approaches, methods, techniques, and media. However, when children are taught character education at home, there are problem arise due to parents lack of understanding and skills to conduct character education for their young children. Therefore, to raise the success level of the character education at home, mothers, especially, need to be trained on growing new understanding and paradigm, and skills concerning “Sekolah Ibu” character education model. “Sekolah Ibu” model will equip parents with these new understanding and paradigm of character education through a collaborative learning process together with the non-formal PAUD institutions in the villages such as KB, TPS, and SPS.

In the perspective of non-formal education, non-formal education development may be derived from the already existing model or developing a totally new program. Both developing the already existing model and developing a totally new one require a preliminary study in the form of needs assessment. The results of the needs assessment become the consideration in planning and designing the intended program. Program planning and designing are parts of a program management which moves within the cycle of needs assessment, planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluating, and program designing (Sudjana, 2005 and Sumarno, 2011).

Normatively-conceptually, character education for children should contain: love of God (the creator) and His creations, autonomy, discipline, responsibility, honesty, witty and articulate, respecting others, sympathetic, philanthropy, helping and cooperating with others, confidence, creative, resilience, leadership and justice, kindness and humble, tolerant, peacefulness, and unity. This character education can be conducted within four stages, as stated by Lickona in Marzuki (2014), knowing, rationalizing, feeling, and doing.

Early childhood character education is part of early childhood education as defined by Wortham (2005), UNESCO, and Ojala (Harkonen 1985, 1993). Early childhood education carries its understanding on child's growth based on the concept of kindergarten by Foebel, Zone of Proximal Development/ZPD by Vygotsky, Berk, Piaget, and Ki Hajar Dewantoro.

This "Sekolah Ibu" character education research study was targeting both children and the mothers. In the first step, mothers are first given training then they have to educate their children in the next step. Two learning processes are happening at the same time. Educating mothers involves the theories of adult learning and non-formal education and learning theories like Freire's problem posing, Knowles' andragogy and self-directive learning, Mezirow's transformational, Rogers' self-actualization, Gagne's problem solving, Barnes' action knowledge, and Kolb's experiential learning theories (Yoyon Suryono, 2012). Educating the young children, on the other hand, involves theories of child's growth and learning as stated by child's growth experts mentioned above.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a research and development (Borg, 1983) conducted in three years of study. The first year study is the exploration and theoretical reviews stages. Exploration study aims at mapping the field problems as well as the supporting resources such as local potential. Theoretical review is conducted to arrange the conceptual model of an integrated "Sekolah Ibu" based on theoretical and empirical reviews.

The second year study focuses on having experts validated the program model continued with trying out the model limitedly. The third year the try-outing is done in a larger scale and following after that the dissemination of the developed model.

Year-one study was conducted in off-campus laboratory of the *PLS* Department of Faculty of Educational Sciences, YSU, located in the Sub-regency Pajangan, Bantul Regency. Sample was taken using PNF unit sampling in which there were each 11 KB and SPS institutions and PAUD learners' parents as much as 60 people.

Data were collected through participative observation method, interviews, and dialogues. Data collected were in the form of qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data were analysed descriptively using descriptive statistics and were then represented in the forms of tables, graphs, and diagrams. The qualitative data, on the other hand, were analysed qualitatively using common qualitative research studies method.

RESEARCH RESULTS

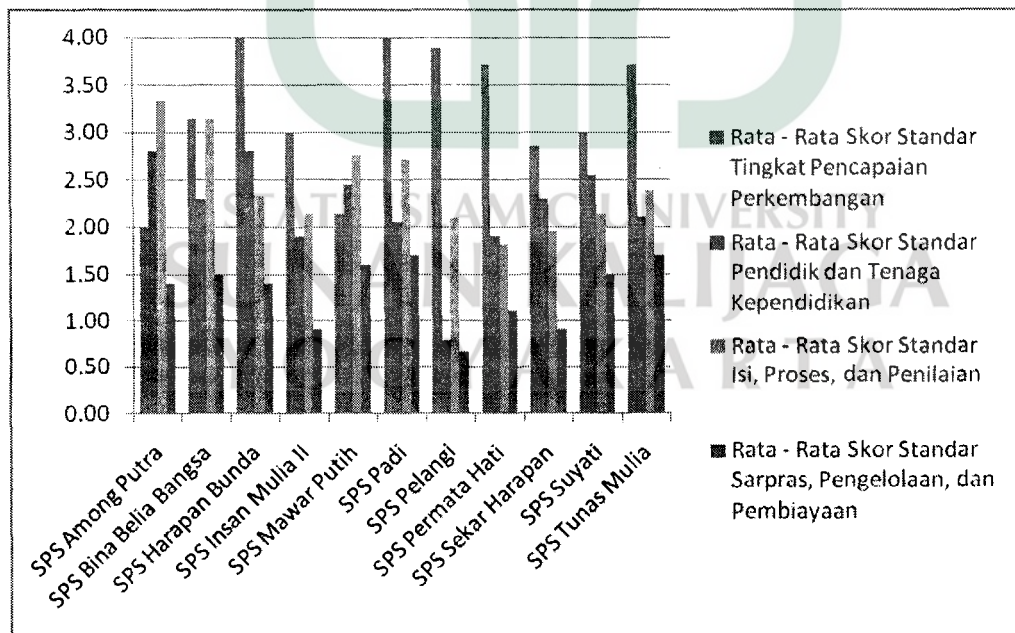
1. Institution and Respondent Identity

The respondents were 51 parents whose children were learners in the rural non-formal PAUD pre-schools. Most of the respondents were female (45%), elementary school graduates only (9%), Junior High School grads (21%), Senior High grads (45%), and diploma or undergrad holders (22%). There were also the male respondents (32%), elementary school graduates only (15%), Junior High School grads (17%), Senior High grads (51%), and diploma or undergrad holders (16%). At a glance, both female and male respondents came from closely similar educational background.

In terms of economical background, 60% males and 48% and female respondents earned below 1,000,000 IDR monthly, the rest male respondents (19%) earned above 1,000,000 IDR but below 5,000,000 IDR monthly. The rest of the female respondents were housewives that they did not have any earnings.

2. Feasibility of PAUD Standard

The feasibility of the PAUD standard of the two institutions is represented in the graph below:

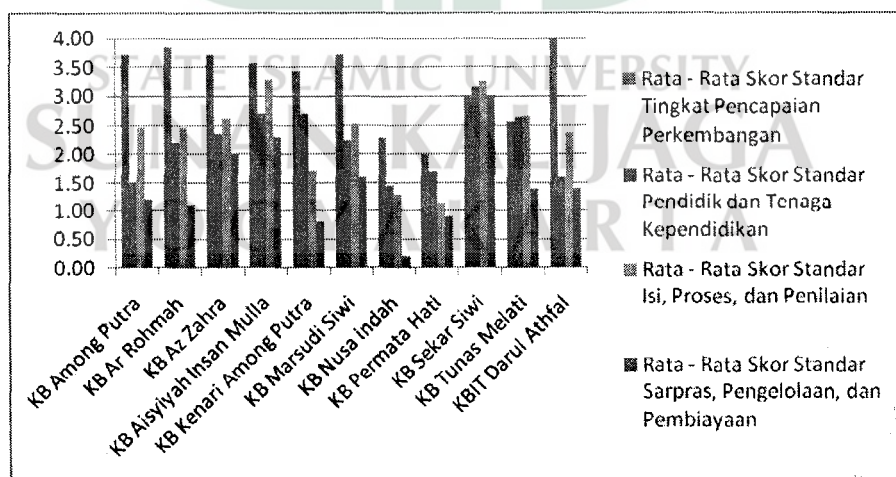


Graph 1. Feasibility of PAUD Standard among SPSs

The 11 SPSs data shows a varied feasibility of PAUD standards; on the growth achievement level standard, teachers and educators, content, process, evaluation and supporting facilities, management and finance. The main impression we can catch from reading the data is that there is a tendency that the high achievement level of growth standard of child's growth was not merely supported by the high achievement level of other standards. It, in fact, might happen the other way around in which the high or low achievement level on child growth would not instantly affect the height or the low achievement level of other standards. Several field tendencies in terms of the achievement level of the standards are presented as follows:

- In general, the child's growth was at the medium or high level but the achievement levels the standards of teachers and educators, content, process, evaluation, supporting facilities, management, and finance were low.
- The child's growth was at the medium or high level, the achievement levels the standards of teachers and educators were low, supporting facilities, management, and finance were low, but content, process, evaluation were high.
- The general pattern was that the child's growth was at the medium or high level, the achievement levels the standards of teachers and educators were low, supporting facilities, management, and finance were low, content, process, evaluation were also low.
- There were two SPSs, SPS *Among Putro* and SPS *Mawar Putih*, which showed different results. These two SPSs showed the low level of achievement on child's growth standard, high achievement in teachers and educators, content, process, and evaluation but with exception in supporting facilities, management, and finance.
- All SPS showed low achievement level in supporting facilities, management, and finance standards, none showed medium nor high positioning. It may be concluded that the supporting facilities, management, and finance aspects faced more problems.

Meanwhile the data from the 11 KBs showed high achievement level on child's growth standard.



Graph 2
Feasibility of PAUD Standards among KBs

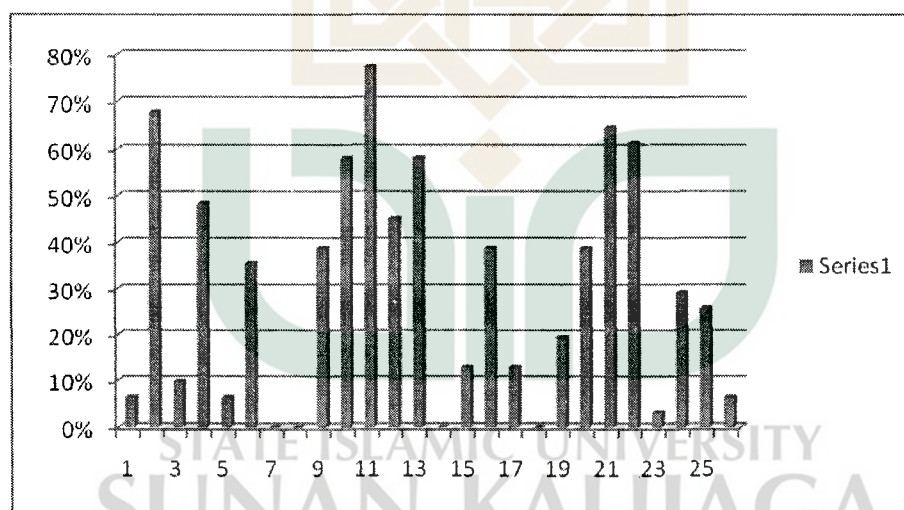
Apart from that, the achievement level of the standards of teachers and educators all tended to be low while the achievement level of the standards of content, process, and evaluation tended to be the same although varying a little but all referred to the low position. Meanwhile the achievement level of the standards of supporting facilities, management, and finance were all low.

The general pattern concluded from the data was: child's growth feasibility was generally high with average score 2.5, feasibility of teachers and educators standards were generally equal with the score 1.5-3; content, process, and evaluation feasibility showed relatively the same scoring 1.5-2.5; and supporting facilities, management, and finance standards feasibility were at the low position ranging 0.5-3.

The general conclusion drawn from the data presented was that the feasibility of PAUD standards at the child's growth was generally higher than teachers and educators, content, process, evaluation, supporting facilities, management, and finance standards.

3. Childcare Model and "Sekolah Ibu" Proposal

The following research result will explain how respondent-parents tend to their children at home.



Graph 3
Childcare Model

The graph above shows the percentage (y) of 26 parents' behaviors (line x) toward their children during childcare. The behaviors were the most common to appear in the childcare model among parents in Pajangan Sub-regency. The behaviors among others are item number 2: guiding children during activities (68%), number 11: teaching how to say sorry (77%), item 21: preparing children's needs (65%), and item number 22: spoon/handfeed the children at meal times (61%). The most prominent behavior was number 11: teaching how to say sorry (77%).

The data showed that parents tended to use more authoritarian childcare model towards their young children. This authoritarian childcare model is not completely hard on the children but in time,

as the children grow and are maturer, this may hinder children's autonomy growth. Although teaching how to say sorry did not show authoritarian teaching, it would be a lot better if children said sorry because they felt like they had to willingly other than they said sorry because they were told to do so. Preparing all children's needs and spoon/handfeed them all the time will also lead to children being unfree to make a choice. Children tend to be spoiled and ignorant of their own needs. It would be good when parents guide their children during activities; that way children are more aware of their needs and activities. Children have the opportunity to ask for their parents' favor whenever they face problems, parents are not supposed to be security guards and parents shall also provide more freedom for the children. It will give children the feeling of comfort and at the same time children will not feel like they are being watched too closely by their parents.

The next types of childcaring commonly found among the parents in Pajangan Bantul were item number 10: asking children to tidy their toys up after playing (58%), item number 13: teaching children to ask for permission (58%), item number 4: raising voices when children make mistakes (48%), item number 12: teaching children how to ask for a favour (say help) (45%), item number 9: letting children to explore (39%), number 17: being hard/strict to children for their own sake (39%), number 20: controlling all activities (39%), and number 6: supporting children's interests and hobbies which were different from other children (35%).

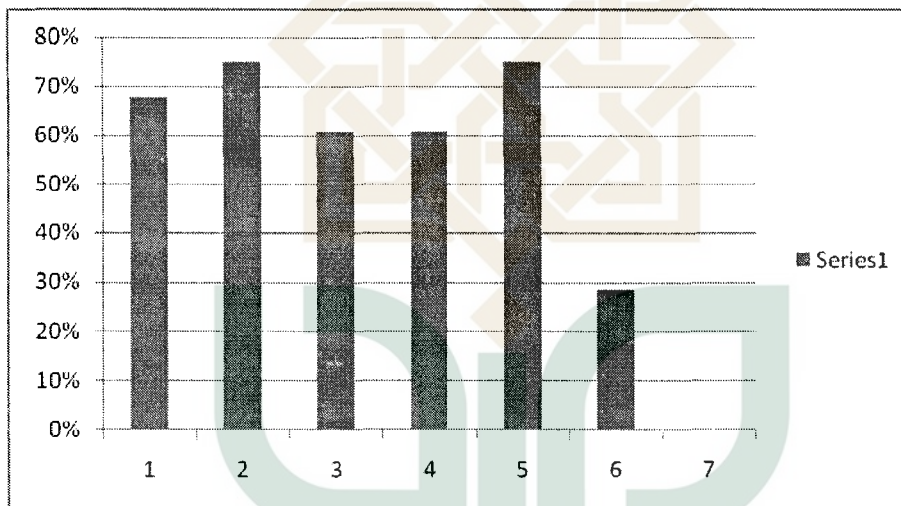
These types of childcaring were applied by small groups of parents in Pajangan Sub-regency; these types tended to be more democratic. When parents ask children to tidy up their toys early on, children will be taught to be more responsible. Teaching children to ask for permission, ask for a favour, and to let them to explore are characters of democratic childcaring, although parents need to pay attention to how often they ask their children to do so, so that children are able to do that on their own willingness because they realize that they are useful for them. Raising voices when kids are making mistakes and being strict to the kids for their own sake were two other common childcaring that parents in Pajangan Sub-regency commonly did. These two behaviors, when done properly and occasionally, will bring positive impact on the children's psychological growth. Children will understand that their parents are simply strict but not ruthless. When a certain child is treated strictly most of the times, he will not grow empathy towards others and will be likely to act strictly the same when playing with friends. Parents should set priorities of when they should raise their voice and they should explain to the children why they have to raise their voice so that children will not misunderstand the meaning.

The next data on parents childcaring pattern, below 30%, were item number 1: consistently applying rules, number 3: storytelling, number 5: hitting/pinching (punishing) to discipline the child, number 15: letting children to solve their own problems, number 19: getting angry when it is hard to tell children to behave/to do something as told, 23: giving whatever the children want, and number 26: letting children to watch TV more than 3 hours a day.

The implied problems from the above data are: 1) generally parents (30%) always give/permit everything the children ask for to express their love towards the children although in a particular condition parents cannot always fulfill what the children want. Children need to be made aware that when parents can not meet the children's expectation, it does not mean they do not love them. 2) Some parents want to be nice to the children but it does not mean they can let the children to watch

TV more than 3 hours a day. Some parents thought that it was an act of being nice to the children by letting them to watch TV, they were not aware of the negative effect of TV especially for young learners. Therefore, parents' understanding on what is being nice can be reformed through "Sekolah Ibu". 3). Parents' inconsistencies concerning children's behavior is the next concern. Parents claimed that they were strict to the children but they were also following what the children wanted. Being consistent is a desirable manner to convince children that they are doing the right things. Inconsistency may lead to confusion on the children's side, what is good or bad and what is right or wrong are not clearly defined. Inconsistency may also lead to children having difficulty in trusting parents.

This study also revealed the kinds of learning materials required to develop children's characters in the integrated "Sekolah Ibu" program. The graph below presents the desired learning materials; they are: (a) child's growth, (b) child's education method, (c) child's health, (d) healthy home childcare, (e) child's autonomy, (f) toilet training, and (g) others (of parents' choice).

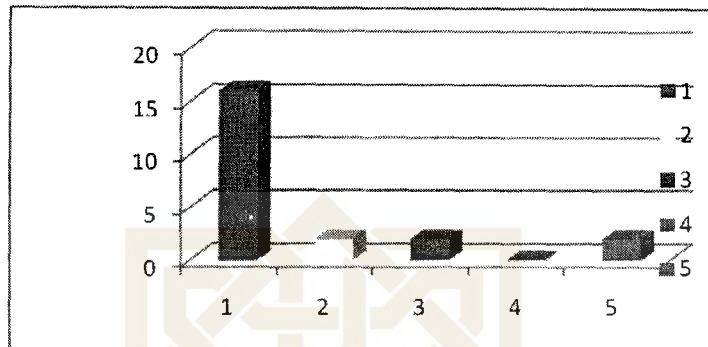


Graph 4
Parents' Choice of "Sekolah Ibu" Learning Materials

The data, in which y refers to percentage and x refers to chosen materials, informed that parents' most prominent needs in educating their children were item number 2: getting more knowledge on child's education method (75%) and item number 5: teaching children to be more autonomous (75%). Item number 3, (61%), was about child's health, item number 4: healthy home childcare was also 61%. Item number 6 with the least of percentage was about toilet training.

It may be concluded from the presented data that parents in the Pajangan Sub-regency, Bantul Regency required training materials on child education method and teaching children to be more autonomous. The learning materials will help parents to know and understand the strategy to teach children autonomy. The other material the parents need is about child's growth. Knowledge on child's growth will help parents to understand their children's physical and psychological growth in order to be able to always check the children's health, healthy childcare and do toilet training precisely.

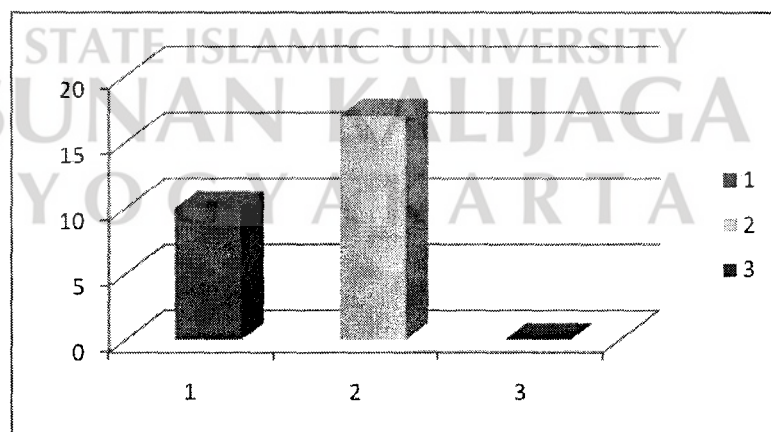
The third important point of this study is related to how much times mothers, in weeks and months time unit, wanted to spend in the try-outing of the designed “Sekolah Ibu” model. The following graph presents the data:



Graph 5
Activity Intensity of “Sekolah Ibu” in Pajangan Sub-district

The data from the field study revealed that 76% of respondents in Pajangan Sub-district preferred to have “Sekolah Ibu” once in a month (option 1). 10% of the respondents preferred to do it every two weeks (option 2), once a week (option 3), and once in three months (option 5). The data also revealed that none of the respondents wanted to do it once every two months (option 4). Based on the displayed data it may be concluded that “Sekolah Ibu” may be conducted once a month as most parents had asked.

When would the most convenient time to have “Sekolah Ibu”? Three options were provided, option 1 morning, option 2 afternoon, and option 3 evening. Most respondents chose late afternoon time for “Sekolah Ibu”. It is quite understandable that respondents felt more convenient with late afternoon; morning times are the busiest working times to work either at home or outside of home, evening time is the time for rest, late afternoon is the spare time and time for social activities.



Graph 6
The Time for “Sekolah Ibu”

The final part of the study was parents' expectation towards the designed "Sekolah Ibu" program. Based on the field study, most parents expected to have more knowledge on education skills and methods. Parents also expected the children to be more autonomous and getting proper education both in schools and at home. Parents expected to gain deeper insights, experiences, knowledge on child's growth, and to be able to motivate their children to be more diligent to study. Parents also expected to have the practical knowledge on how to educate their children properly.

DISCUSSION

The data displayed above present several important points:

1. There were 2 big groups of non-formal educational units in the rural area conducting early childhood education service; playgroups (KB) and similar educational unit (SPS). The two big groups also provide PAUD (pre-school) in the form of KB/SPS integrated-daycare.
2. In terms of how far have these KB and SPS implemented the 4 standards of PAUD (there are 8 standards in total), the data revealed that they ranked High, Medium, and Low. The KB and SPS were scored using the scoring system used in this study.
3. KB and SPS which already implemented the PAUD standards tended to, in general, show far higher child's growth achievement feasibility compared to other standards feasibility such as teacher and educator, content, process, evaluation, supporting facilities, management, and finance standards. The last three aspects tended to be placed lowest.
4. The tendency of PAUD standards achievement feasibility to be high showed that outcome aspect was higher than process and input aspects. It revealed an interesting phenomena that may rise a question of whether in PAUD learning outcome is more important than process. The answer to that will require another study.
5. The roles of KB and SPS which functioned as informal PAUD pre-school institution in the rural areas did not show any difference; it implied that KB or SPS shared equal role in conducting PAUD pre-school service in rural areas. It also means that both institutions, in conducting their programs, gave great contributions to early childhood education movement through non-formal education. Their contribution comes in line with the formal early childhood education programs such as Kindergarten (TK).
6. Although the data above categorized KB and SPS in terms of how they implemented the standards, basically the data showed the development of each institution: how long has it been founded, who the staffs and manager are, and other historical aspects.

The data on how parents cared the children at home showed that childcaring was dominated by authoritarian nursing model; the model which shows parents' power over children. It is quite understandable since the community still sees parents as power bearer although sometimes overpowering. This belief, most of the times, leads to children disable to grow their autonomy.

Although a more democratic child nursing was also found, it placed below authority child nursing. Yet, it implied that there is a growing movement on applying more democratic childcaring among the community apart from the authoritarian one. Democratic childcaring places children on

the position of having the possibility to grow autonomously as well as to develop their potential with parents support on their back.

The data on parents' behavior revealed that:

1. There were several things that parents mostly did; among others: escorting children during activities, asking children to tidy up their toys after playing, teaching how to say sorry, letting children to explore, teaching how to ask permission, giving suggestion, preparing children's needs, and spoon/handfeeding during meal times. Not so many parents were accustomed to doing these at home although these behaviors show a democratic family childcaring.
2. Several things that parents occasionally did at home were consistently applying rules, supporting children's interest/hobbies which were different from other kids, getting angry when it was difficult to tell the children to do what was being asked/told, and controlling all children's activities. These activities reflect something in the middle; it's either authoritarian or democratic. Or is it more permissive?
3. Things that parents rarely did to their children were storytelling, hitting/pinching/punishing to discipline, saying objection when children were protesting, designing detailed activity program for children, being strict to children for their own sake, and permitting/giving everything children asked for. Do these conduct belong to democratic, authoritarian, or permissive childcaring? To decide whether a certain conduct belong to democratic, authoritarian, or permissive one can be difficult sometimes due to the thin boundary between the different conduct. In practical, childcaring may change pattern suited to context and necessity.

Another finding is related to how to design and conduct a character teaching for early childhood education through the non-formal "Sekolah Ibu". Several suggestions concerning this among others are:

1. The materials appropriate for "Sekolah Ibu" are: a) child's growth, b) child education method, c) child's health, d) healthy home childcare, e) teaching autonomy to children, f) toilet training, g) others (of parents' choice)
2. The appropriate time to have "Sekolah Ibu" will be the late afternoon time once a month. It is very reasonable concerning the parents condition, environment, and parents' daily activities.

There are several things that need to be considered in designing the program:

1. "Sekolah Ibu" model is the development of the tentative program of the already existing early childhood education unit like KB and SPS in the study field, Pajangan sub-regency, Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta Special Territory.
2. There are two representatives from KB and SPS randomly chosen in the program. There are 4 institutions in total involved in this "Sekolah Ibu" program.
3. The future participants (parents) are from the two institutions. Participants are expected to come from various background; childcaring habits, location, economy, and highest formal education achieved.
4. Most participants are adults, the learning process is designed to suit adults' learning needs. Materials on how to educate children including childcaring and nursing methods will be provided too since these parents are later on teaching characters to their children.

5. The materials given to both parents and children are on early childhood character education and will be presented in the form of a learning module designed for parents and children. These learning materials, however, differ in terms of learning methods.
6. The contents for childcaring and nursing methods learning materials as well as the materials on early childhood character education refer to the materials parents had chosen, as presented in the research results above.
7. "Sekolah Ibu" will be conducted once a month for six months and each meeting will last for 2-3 hours. The meetings will be conducted in late afternoons, designed to be conducted together with children's program in KB and SPS.
8. "Sekolah Ibu" will take place in KB and SPS which are included in the tryouting of the program.
9. The "Sekolah Ibu" model development requires strong mutual partnership in sub-regency or village levels between local government, KB and SPS, and HIMPAUDI.
10. The early childhood character education learning materials module is suited with the learning theories and young children characteristics. Where the program takes place is also a consideration in designing the module.
11. The model tryout is organized by KB and SPS organizers, and local teachers and educators who will, first, be given orientation and workshop on childcaring, early childhood education, and early childhood character education.
12. Before conducting the tryout, the model will be conceptually-theoretically validated by experts on early childhood education and learning as well as experts on non-formal and informal education learning media development.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

A. CONCLUSION

1. Child's growth achievement (as learning outcomes) was generally better than feasibility of teachers and educators, content standard, process, evaluation, and standards of supporting facilities, management, and finance.
2. The study also revealed that early childhood character education was actively conducted by non-formal PAUD pre-schools institutions known as KB and SPS. However the running of the program was not supported with how parents cared for the children at home. Parents behaved in so many various ways during childcaring.
3. "Sekolah Ibu" model is a development of a KB and SPS tentative program development in Pajangan Sub-regency, Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta Special Territory. The KB and SPS, 4 institution in total, were randomly chosen from the high and low groups.

B. SUGGESTION

1. To improve child's growth as learning outcomes, there has to be improvements in terms of other standards; teachers and educators, content standard, process, evaluation, and standards of supporting facilities, management, and finance, gradually based on every KB and SPS own ability.

2. To conceptually-theoretically develop "Sekolah Ibu" model, several things will need to be taken into consideration: (a) participants from the selected KB and SPS will be given priority to join the program as the institutions are used as tryout places, (b) the main goal to achieve in this program is on parents gaining better understanding on how to induce character development among their children during home childcare, (c) parents learning process is conducted following an andragogy approach, problem-solving learning technique, and learning by doing, (d) the media used in the program are taken from the tryout location on the basis of using readily-easily accessible sources, (e) the main learning materials are childcaring and nursing model and early childhood character education, (f) any technical program running shall be discussed among researchers, teachers, and participants involved in this program, and (g) there shall be a design validation by experts before the program in try-outed.

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