Accommodating Parental Participation in Managing School

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Abstract
The objective of this research is to know to what extent parents should be accommodated in managing school. Qualitative method was used to explain to what extent parents need to be actively involved in managing school for the betterment of students' achievement. Interview and questionnaires were the main instruments used in collecting the data from 50 parents of students of Senior High School in Gorontalo, Indonesia in 2012 who were purposively chosen as informants in this research. Additional data were also taken from students themselves and teachers in this school. The data were then analyzed descriptively to answer the problem statement above. The results show that parental involvement in their children's education highly correlates with children's success at school.
Keywords: parent, involvement, students, academic performances

1. Introduction

School performance is better among students whose parents know where they are, who they are with, and when they plan to come home. Such parents also exercise reasonable control over non-school activities. Considering the above facts, it is important to make the school well-managed in terms of enabling and encouraging much more participation from all educational stakeholders, particularly parents, in improving the educational process to enhance students' academic performance.

This research explores the phenomenon above regarding to what extent parents should be accommodated in managing school for the improvement of their children achievement in school. There are two points which are discussed in this research such as: parents and teachers interaction, parents and school partnership in managing school.

2. Method

Qualitative was used to get a comprehensive description about parental participation in managing school. There were 50 parents of students of Senior High School in Gorontalo, Indonesia in 2012 employed as informants in this research. They were chosen purposively from different kinds of ethnicity, intellectuality, personality, social and economic background as the representation of all parents whose children are studying in Senior High School in Gorontalo. Interview and questionnaires were the main instruments used in collecting the data from primary sources namely parents and secondary sources such as students and teachers in this school.

Interview and questionnaires were used to get the information needed in conjunction with teaching and learning process included the interaction between students and teachers, the communication between teachers and parents. The collected data were then analyzed and interpreted to the needs of this research to explain to what extent parents should be involved in managing school for the betterment of students' achievement in school.

3. Findings

In this research, it is found that the interaction between parents and teacher is categorized in low. It happens more and less twice a year when they were invited to receive their children's academic report book. In this very limited time, teachers let parents know only a little about their children's academic performances since there were many parents were siting waiting for their turn. Consequently, parents had little time to get more valuable information about their children in relation to academic development.

Besides, parents and parental guardians were only informed about their children's performances if only their children did something wrong either in or out of school. Even some parents are disappointed since the school staff did not let them know about several cases occurred which involved their children in. In addition, they said that if they were informed earlier, they would probably prevent their children from doing bad things which can cause bigger and worse impact such as drop out. Parents hope that they should be informed regularly about their children's activities and performances in the school.

On the other hand, some teachers argued that they gave some pieces of information to parents or parental guardian regarding to students condition in school. Some of the teachers sent letters to parents and parental guardian informing all about the students activities and behaviors in class. They are wondering why parents claimed that they did not get the messages. In fact, teachers are also aware of one possible answer to this doubt namely students did not inform or give the letter to their parents or parental guardian because they were afraid if their parents got angry having read or known the bad news.

Realizing this phenomenon, some teachers are now realizing the benefit of using information and technological devices such as mobile and e-mail. Therefore, they can inform parents about their children academic performances in school directly and as soon as possible. Parents who have access to these devices are happy with this choice to bridge the communication gap between them and teachers. Nowadays, teachers have moved on and used such gadgets to let the students' parents know what happen to their children in relation to school programs.

However, to some extent this choice cannot satisfy all parents. Some parents have different ideas about the use of these devices because not all of them have access to these technological tools due to socio-economic, education and geographic reasons. It is therefore, some of them suggest that teachers or school need to find other alternative solutions to enable parents to have a good interaction with teacher and school for the betterment of their children academic achievement in school.

In accordance with school decision making process, some parents said that they are still not actively involved in. Parents based on their previous experiences assumed that school leaders and teachers will involve them and ask them to take a part mostly due to financial reasons. Other than that, parents are sometimes passively involved. In addition, they are only informed about the result and what they need to do regarding to the result of school leaders' decisions and policies.

4. Discussion

4.1 Parents and Teachers Interaction

Educational quality will be questioned if there remain discrepancies between the result and the expectation of the teaching and learning process. A good result will be reached through a good teaching and learning process and vice versa. To attain a better result in the educational process, parental involvement is important without a doubt (Jacobs & Harvey, 2005). Hence, it is imperative that teachers and parents collaborate with each other in maintaining good interaction to deal with students' learning process and achievement.

Children gain education at first from their family, in this case parents. However, as children enter school, teachers join in the process of shaping children's minds, attitudes and behaviors by forming a partnership with parents and administrators (Brannon, 2008). Students can get a better learning result if they are supported by the quality of teaching being done by the teachers and their parents' contribution by giving full attention towards what their children are learning. Christopher (1996) reckons that education consists of one-third teacher, one-third parent and one-third student. He further explains that when these sides work together, the result is a stronger educational system and a successful child.

In line with this statement, Brannon (2008) suggests that if the school and the families are supporting each other, then children are going to learn and internalize those values as important to their parents and at school, so they will see them as important in the world. Furthermore, Christopher (1996) argues that children who succeed have parents who take an interest in their children and schools. If children know that their parents believe school is important in order to succeed, they will also consider the importance of schooling. In addition, DeBarshee (1995) claims that families play an important role in socialization of children into the values of the school.

What is more, good communication which builds among these elements could empower parents to be partners to help prevent bad academic behavior appearing (Purdie, Caroll & Roche, 2004). Therefore, maintaining a good relationship with parents will make them feel well-informed and understand the purpose for the class rules and consequences. Having said that, parents can also cooperate much more with teachers when academic problems arise.

Parental involvement, through encouragement and monitoring of educational and behavioral activities conducive to successful educational outcomes, are considered to be critical factors in academic success (Flouri, 2006; Markose, 2008). For this reason, school and educators need to be aware of possible parental influences and should promote and recommend the involvement of parental attention in education. Eventually, parents and teachers should work collaboratively to optimize positive attitudes towards school and learning and the academic intrinsic motivation in students.

However, working with parents can be tough and sometimes exhausting. It can be nerve-wracking, and there are some parents whom can never reach or make happy no matter what teachers do (Christopher, 1996). Despite the problem, there are many beneficial outcomes from working together with parents. Furthermore, Beckman (as cited in Ehli, 1995) comments that there are a number of key points for teachers to remember when they communicate with parents: (a) give accurate information to parents, (b) recognize parents for the work they have accomplished with their children, (c) provide clear, ongoing evaluations of the child's progress, (d) use as little jargon as possible, (e) sometimes call a conference to share good news, (g) ask parents what they have tried and be open about incorporating some of their suggestions into a plan, (h) schedule conferences flexibly so that both parents can attend.

From the above point of view, it is clear that parents should be informed about what the expectations are and

what materials are needed. This in turn helps everyone adjust to a new learning situation. Axford (2007) advised that parents should also take some initiatives to give extra time to making a positive rapport with school, particularly teachers dealing with their children's schooling.

4.2Parents and School Partnership in Managing School

Schools are ordinarily thought of as institutions including pupils, staff, administrators and possibly board of education members. At this time, however, it is useful to think of a school as being part of a system which includes other individuals and groups such as parents, social agencies, governmental agencies (district, province and national), profit and non-profit enterprise, mass media and indeed all citizens.

Parents, teachers and community, as well as government, are partners (Beare & Lowe Boyd, 1993) sharing responsibility for the educational process. Parents are in a position to support the school and through the observation of their own children, provide and inform comment on children's school performance. Meanwhile, teachers or schools are those performing the teaching and learning process. Therefore, they know about students' learning ability and should inform parents what happened in the classroom or at the school in relation to students' academic performance for the improvement of their achievement. Partnership in the teaching and learning process may be seen to have additional educational importance.

The involvement of parents in school is part of a wider concern. Parents are only one of a number of possible participating groups. Their involvement may be in one or more of a number of different areas of decision which may be taken at a number of possible levels. In considering the involvement of parents in school, some teachers (Interviewed, May, 2012) suggested that there are several types of involvement of parent in school, for instances: (1) meeting with teachers for information, (2) contributing through finance or work to facilities, (3) using facilities and resources for their own purposes, (4) providing resources for extra curricular activities, (5) providing resources for curricular activities, (6) conducting a joint enterprise with the school, (7) participating in the development and the implementation of the policy.

Parental involvement in school can be done through a school committee or individually. The school committee provides a number of tools and resources to assist parents, the Principal, and teachers initiating conversations about family-school relationships, and to support them so that they can grow into real, sustainable partnerships (UU Sisdiknas, 2003). Parents have been considered crucial members on the team because of the unique understanding of their child's needs, medical history, likes and dislikes, and daily routine. Parents are expected to act as advocates in asserting their child's interests and making decisions about what is best for them.

Apart from its useful things, there are organizational and structural weaknesses in the school committee which may contribute to an ability to attain a parity of power with administrators and school boards. Myers and MacBeath (2001) stated that the persistence of these problems and the lack of remedial action by school committees are blamed on the inability of the poor and disfranchised, which are supposedly represented on the committee, to organize, to participate and to deliberate.

All schools have a school committee whose members are mostly students' parents, females; indeed, being a parent is often a prerequisite for membership. The poor and ethnic minorities are relatively few in number. Therefore, their interests are rarely represented and voiced in the school decision-making process (personal communication, May, 2012). Other members are most often representatives of home school organizations and government or other civic improvement groups. Nonetheless, some parents perceive the school committee as only a complement to the organization because it is only active, or conduct a meeting if there is something to be discussed, mostly in terms of getting money collected from parents.

Besides, parents are rarely involved in the school decision-making process to deal with students' achievement. Thus, their membership on a school committee is half-hearted. Moreover, family socio-economic conditions make most parents busy fulfilling their family's basic needs rather than going to school meetings or taking part in school programs to cope with students' learning achievement.

In addition, parents are often distraught by the system. This leads to feelings of fear and frustration that increase as the system becomes more complex. Teachers (personal communication, May, 2012) stated that many parents are able to neither understand nor identify themselves with the system. Furthermore, they argued that most of parents need to spend most of their time earning a living and have little available leisure or energy to devote to either learning about the task or doing the tasks required.

Yet, one of the main concerns of schools, parents and committee should be to understand and become familiar with the system. Therefore, changes in the attitudes, skills and knowledge of the members of a school committee and school council are significant (Langer, 2004). It is also important to pay attention to the change of school structure enabling more parents' effective involvement in managing the school. What is more, parents will be effectively involved if there is well maintained communication between school and them and vice versa.

Direct and well-managed flows of information will enable parents' and the committee to provide meaningful advice to administrators and boards. Consultation, thus, becomes the focal point of all parents' and committee activities and the culminating point of their co-operation towards the improvement rests on constant and efficient

communication between parents and school or educational authorities. Having strength of information provided by management and boards, parents will be in a better position to state their thoughts and desires in relation to school decision making in managing the school to enhance students' academic achievement. School and parents should co-operate and maintain good communication in relation to students' academic performance.

5. Conclusion

Parents should be given opportunities to discuss children's performances and get information about the school's programs. By and large, parents seek more information than the school provides. Moreover, the school should also use its best endeavors to stimulate and encourage parental response and initiative in order to establish a genuine working partnership. This will not only involve the deliberate encouragement of parental assessment, particularly of their own children's work and progress but also more widely, of the school's successes and failures. Furthermore, it is important to keep parents involved in every decision-making process and school activities to promote students' achievement.

To gain this objective parents should be considered as partners and regularly informed about their children's performance both inside and outside the classroom, such as their class activity, attendance, strengths, weaknesses, and be asked to play a key role in rectifying them. In addition, to promote and sustain parental participation in their children's activities and achievement in school, it is suggested that they be involved in managing the school in relation to decision- making processes to improve their children's academic achievement.

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