

The Role of School Leadership in Parental Involvement in Accelerated Christian Education Curriculum

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Abstrak

Peran orang tua juga terbukti memiliki pengaruh signifikan terhadap perkembangan anak secara akademis di sekolah. Pada prakteknya, masih banyak orang tua yang beranggapan bahwa pendidikan anak merupakan tugas sekolah, sehingga salah satu tugas pemimpin sekolah adalah untuk meningkatkan keterlibatan orang tua di sekolah. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk meneliti dampak keterlibatan orang tua pada sekolah XYZ yang menggunakan kurikulum A.C.E, cara pemimpin meningkatkan keterlibatan orang tua, serta tantangan-tantangannya. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian adalah metode penelitian kualitatif studi kasus dengan melibatkan 12 partisipan dari pemimpin sekolah, guru kelas, dan orang tua. Penelitian menemukan bahwa keterlibatan orang tua memengaruhi karakter siswa yang secara tidak langsung berhubungan dengan pencapaian akademik siswa, dan pemimpin sekolah memegang peranan penting dalam keterlibatan orang tua dengan menyediakan lingkungan yang kondusif dan secara konsisten mengomunikasikan visi pada orang tua. Tantangan dalam keterlibatan orang tua mencakup inisiatif dan kesibukan orang tua, serta keterbatasan pemimpin.

Kata Kunci: *kepemimpinan sekolah, keterlibatan orang tua, kurikulum ACE.*

Abstract

The role of parents has a significant influence on children's academic development at school. In practice, many parents still think that children's education is school's task, so one of the school leaders' tasks is to increase parental involvement in school. The purpose of this research is to examine the impact of parental involvement in XYZ schools that use the A.C.E curriculum, how leaders affect parental involvement, and the challenges. The method used in this research is a case study qualitative research method involving 12 participants from school leaders, class teachers, and parents. It has been found that parental involvement affects students' character, which indirectly links to students' academic achievement, and leaders play an important role in improving parental involvement through the environment provided and consistency in communicating school's vision to parents. The barriers to parental involvement include parents' initiative and busyness, as well as the limitations of the leaders.

Keyword: *school leadership, parental involvement, ACE curriculum*

INTRODUCTION

As the first party present in a child's life, parents undeniably play a very important role in a child's life. When a husband and wife who are united by religion and law are blessed with a child to raise, care for, and educate, that is where their life as parents in a family begins (Tampubolon, 2019). The family also plays an essential role in shaping children's values, personality, character, self-concept, discipline, and ways of communicating in a social environment (Purba, 2020).

Aside from family, school also serves as an agent of change which bears a transformative function to build individuals who will eventually become members of the society (Saat, 2013). Given the huge role parents and schools play in shaping a person, these two institutions are expected to work together in shaping the education that will be given to children, one of which is through the involvement of parents in schools. Research results have shown that parental involvement in children's education is very important in determining a student's academic success (Latunde, 2017). Parental involvement is demonstrated by parental support for children by attending school events, attending meetings with teachers, arranging study time with children, and modeling exemplary behavior at home (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989).

However, some parents still show ignorance when they are invited to attend parent and teacher meetings at school, which signifies low parental involvement in children's education (Karther & Lowden in Hornby, 2000). Reports show that low parental involvement in children's education is believed to be the cause of low academic achievement at school (Robinson & Harris, 2014). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (Green et al. 2007, 532-533) developed a model to investigate the motivation of parental involvement from a psychological standpoint. According to this model, the three major motivations for encouraging parental involvement in children's education are: 1) Beliefs that motivate parents, 2) Parents' perceptions of invitations for involvement from schools, 3) The context of parents' personal lives.

Teachers and school leaders play a key role in increasing parental involvement in schools. Athanasoula-Reppa et. Al. (2010, 2208) state that both teachers and parents can recognize school authorities who encourage collaborative work to solve organizational problems collectively. In general, school leaders who can create a safe and friendly environment for parents, as well as regularly communicate the importance of school and home collaboration, are proven to be able to increase parents' desire to be involved in their child's education (Alhumam, 2021). Teachers become more motivated to involve parents in children's learning at school and at home. Conversely, the negative assumptions of school leaders towards parents will increase barriers to parental involvement. (Yulianti, 2020).

A.C.E curriculum (Accelerated Christian Education) or also known as the School of Tomorrow (SOT) curriculum was compiled by Esther Howard, D. Litt in America in 1970. Focus on A.C.E. The curriculum is the integration of biblical principles, divine character training, mastery-based learning, built-in learning systems, individual learning, and the development of critical thinking (Liana, 2019). In XYZ school that uses the Accelerated Christian Education curriculum, academic achievement is defined when a student is able to achieve targeted number of modules or PACEs (Packet of Accelerated Christian Education). Hence, students are expected to work on PACEs at their own pace to master a material thoroughly. Each grade level in A.C.E. curriculum consists of 60-72 PACEs per year. If a child can do 15-18 PACEs in one term, then he is considered to have achieved his academic target.

In practice, there are still many students who have not reached this target. From the data for the 2021/2022 school year, of the 106 total students, there were 66 students or 62% of students who did less than 60 PACEs. It is estimated that there are many factors that influence this underachievement, one of which is the lack of parental involvement in student education. Through interviews conducted with five classroom teachers during the face-to-face learning period, similarities were found between students who had low academic achievement at school, namely low parental involvement. According to the class teacher, this group of parents is indifferent to the academic development of students. Parents have the perception that school is a formality hence they don't really care when students experience learning difficulties and fall behind in lessons. In addition, another obstacle faced at XYZ school is parents who have the perception that when a child is sent to an institution, the institution is fully responsible for the child's development.

Based on the problem shown in XYZ school, the researcher aims to investigate the relationship between parental involvement and student academic, how school leaders influence parental involvement, and the challenges faced by leaders in increasing parental involvement in the XYZ school that is using A.C.E. curriculum.

METHODS

The method used in this research is qualitative case study research. Qualitative research is often referred to as naturalistic research, which means the research is carried out in a natural setting without any manipulation of circumstances to understand social reality and actual human perception. Case study allows researchers to provide thorough and in-depth explanations of social problems and behaviors. (Zainal, 2007). In parental involvement research, the case study is a commonly used method. Yin (2015) notes six sources of evidence that can be used to collect data, namely: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical devices. Data from the cases studied were then triangulated to confirm its validity (Latunde, 2017).

The research was conducted at XYZ school that uses the A.C.E. curriculum. Researchers carried out observations, initial interviews and collected supporting data from November 2022 to February 2023, then conducted in-depth interviews in March and April 2023. The data collection technique was carried out by purposive sampling. The data sources or interviewees taken had different backgrounds, varied length of time at school, and involved parents of children with special needs. The purpose of this variation of data sources is to obtain results that can represent the condition of the school. Sugiyono (2013) writes that the main instrument in qualitative research is the researcher himself. Therefore, researchers as human instruments also need to validate their understanding and mastery of insights into the field under study. Researchers used primary sources of information in the form of in-depth interviews using open questions. Secondary data obtained from initial interviews, observations, and additional documents.

In qualitative research, the process of organizing large amount of descriptive information and obtaining data is called coding (Wiersma, 2009). Researchers need accuracy to analyze patterns of thought or action, words, and events that appear repeatedly in the data collection process. Strauss and Corbin (2014) developed a data analysis technique by identifying emerging themes and arranging them in a coding tree which was then used to develop categories and subcategories related to research themes. Three stages were carried out: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Presentation of qualitative research data is done by writing a dense description (thick description) of the meaning implied in an event (Wiersma, 2009). Report writing is done in an interpretive manner and investigates things that are not visible on the surface, such as motivations or the dynamics of relationships that occur in a situation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Data analysis resulted in four major themes that recurred, namely: the role of parents in education, leadership, school-home-community relations, and barriers to parental involvement. The results of the coding and the resulting themes are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Themes resulted from coding

Axial Coding	Selective Coding
Parenting	The role of parents in education
Parents-child communication	
Learning at home	
Decision making	
Volunteering	
Leader's vision	Leadership
Mentoring	
Leader's character	
Consistency	
School-home communication	School-home-community relations
Shared perception	
Parents' community	
Initiative	Barriers to parental involvement
Busyness	
Limitations of school leaders	

Based on the results of interviews with leaders, teachers, and parents, researcher found the types of parental roles that are expected and have been applied to students. These roles include parenting, home learning, parent and child communication, decision making or volunteering.

Participants stated that parents are the main educators for a child. Without the presence of parents, education will not be effective. Therefore, parents cannot fully entrust their children to school without taking part in education at school. Parents and teachers agree that parents need to take the initiative to engage their children in conversations and actively ask questions about their children's life at school so that parents understand the struggles their children are facing. Participants view communication between parents and children as vital, considering that parents should be the party parents trust the most. When a child experiences problems at school that he cannot tell the teacher about, the role of parents is to provide a platform for children to be able to convey their complaints safely. In addition, parents can also take their role by helping children prepare lessons at home. This can be done by preparing materials that children will use at school, teaching children, accompanying children with homework. In involving parents to make decisions in determining school policies, it appears that schools have not accommodated this role. Policies are usually taken in one direction for all parents.

The theme of leadership is one of the 4 themes that emerged during the data collection process. The subcategories emerging from the leadership theme in this case study are leader's vision, mentoring, leader's character, and consistency.

Anderson (2022) explains that one of the leadership approaches commonly used in researching leadership in schools is transformational leadership. In the idealized influence factor from the theory of transformational leadership, followers are moved to follow leaders who have high standards and clear goals. According to teacher participants, the leader shows a vision in which the leader encourages parental involvement in the school. This vision is not conveyed directly but is implied through daily conversations at meetings and in informal meetings. To parents, the leader has not shared his vision regarding the importance of parental involvement with parents.

In daily communication between teachers and parents, leaders provide assistance to teachers who do not feel confident to meet parents independently. Assistance is also carried out when schools need to give serious consequences to students, such as suspension and termination. Through this assistance, leaders show moral support to teachers and provide examples of how to communicate with parents properly.

Leaders' character is also one of the things highlighted in the leadership theme. At XYZ school, participants explained how the characteristics of a leader can help them understand the school's vision and mission. Through observations made by researchers, the principal shows friendliness by greeting parents and children he meets at school. This friendliness is shown in everyday life and at school events that involve parents. The leader's openness to parents results in parents' respect for the school principal. However, there is still a lack of initiative by school leaders in initiating talks with parents. School leaders tend to focus more on dealing with technical matters and when there is a problem, leaders rarely follow up first. It can be concluded that the character of school leaders still tends to be passive and lacks initiative in conveying further information to parents.

The next leadership theme that emerged was consistency. Consistency shows the leaders' ability to hold on to a set of values that they have. According to several participants, leaders still seem to lack firmness in enforcing school rules so that teachers and parents do not feel that school authority has not been shown as it should. In parental involvement, parents are also motivated by positive relationships between schools, homes, and other communities. School and home communication, shared perceptions, and parent community are the subcategories that appear in this topic. School and home communication is primarily demonstrated through the day-to-day relationships between parents and classroom teachers.

Shared perception shows the same values that are taught at home and at school. The vision held by XYZ school is developing students' academic, character, and spirituality. Both parents and teachers need to understand this so that children can see similar teaching at school and at home. The existence of a shared perception between parents and home is a motivating factor for parents to be involved in school. In Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theory of parental involvement

motivation, parents feel invited to be involved when they have the perception that they are useful for their child's academic success and there is an invitation from the teacher for the parents to be involved.

The presence of the parent community is also one of the keys to forming parental involvement through relationships. When parents find other parents who face the same conditions and have similar values with them, they feel more accepted in the school environment hence they are encouraged to be more active in contributing to school activities. In efforts to increase parental involvement in schools, several types of obstacles stand in the way. Based on the results of interviews and observations, the obstacles to increasing parental involvement include parental initiative, busyness, and limitations of leaders.

Participants said that schools' efforts to involve parents were often hampered by parents' initiatives to take part in communicating with the school. Schools cannot force parents who have no desire to be involved in their children's education. On the other hand, there are also groups of parents who are interested in getting involved and are waiting for an invitation from the school first. Age of students is also a determinant of parental involvement. In younger classes (under 10 years), parents are more actively involved in their children's education. At the older age, children are more independent, so parents begin to reduce their attention on their children's education.

Another obstacle that is also the biggest obstacle for parents to be involved in their children's education at school is the busyness of parents, both at work and at home. The characteristics of parents at XYZ school which is located in an urban area is that the majority of both parents work to earn enough income for the family. In line with Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's motivation theory, parents who believe that they are busy at work will reduce the time they give to their children's school activities.

Another obstacle that hinders parental involvement is the limitations of school leaders. According to a leader participant, he found it difficult to get his parents involved because there was a perception that he couldn't please everyone, so in the end he just tried his best. In addition, there are also certain parents' expectations on the character school principals which make it difficult for parents to see the principal objectively. The other limitations of leaders are also related to the busyness and responsibilities of other leaders, so they don't have enough time to communicate with their parents. Aside from the time issue, leaders have not gone deep into strategic planning to increase parental involvement.

CONCLUSION

The impact of parental involvement to children's academic progress is not always significant, but more consistent over the long term when parents are involved in shaping children's character. School leaders are expected to convey their vision clearly, assist teachers in communicating with parents when needed, display a friendly and communicative character, and consistently communicate with parents a community to accommodate parents to be more involved at school. After acknowledging the barriers, leaders can determine relevant strategies to increase parental involvement. Future research can consider using qualitative methods or mixed methods to get a broader picture of the data.

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