

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION BASED ON MULTIPLE LITERACY PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPING CHARACTER OF THE CHILDREN AT GUNUNGKIDUL, YOGYAKARTA, INDONESIA

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Abstract

The general objective about this paper is to improve access of rural children in Gunungkidul Yogyakarta to early childhood education (ECE) based on multiple literacy principles. **The aim** is to identify and develop multiple literacy-based ECE model for children 3–6 years of age, with a community and poverty targeted focus for selected rural families to develop their character. **The specific objectives** are to (a) identify and conduct cost-effective programs that are accessible for the target groups; and (b) strengthen the capacity of the ECE based on multiple literacy principles of practitioners in planning, managing, financing, coordination, monitoring, and evaluation the programs. (c) improving society's awareness and the independence in the establishment of ECE. (c) ensuring the sustainability of the program.

Introduction

Gunungkidul is one of districts which has illiterate number is the highest comparing to the other districts in Special Region of Yogyakarta province. The inhabitants are concentrated in remote areas which are difficult to access.

In the practice of early childhood education, there are three aspects that need to consider, i.e. input, process and output. The problems that occur are caused by the following: (a) low input (b) low education background of parents and ECE teachers (c) monotonous learning activity (d) Irrelevant learning activities to the children developmental stage (e) lack of systematic and sustainable training program for the teachers/caregivers (f) different treatment and belief of parents and teacher (g) inexistence of ECE model that fit rural situation, especially Gunungkidul (h) lack of education media suiting young learners (j) lack of module/course book that can be used for independent learning .

Regarding this fact, some of the local government educational development foci are to enlarge access to education, to accelerate illiteracy reduction, and to promote multiple literacy. In the last 5 years, PAUD (Early Childhood Education) in this area is mushrooming. The local government and also some NGOs actively socialize this program to the society. At the moment, there are approximately 378 PAUD centers and 1542 PAUD teachers in Gunungkidul. The service is usually conducted in the afternoon starting from 3.p.m up

to 5 p.m. Majority of the young parents are farmers. Children do not have optimum access to quality education and the literacy level of the society surrounds is low. Parents' awareness of the importance of the early childhood education in general is also low since their education level is low. Therefore, an ECE model that meets the needs of the target group must be developed.

Many families in the target area do not have any specific plan on how to improve the life quality of their children. Poverty makes them busy thinking of how to survive and continue their life. Children are often seen as economic asset. They have to generate money for the family by working in various low paid jobs. As the result, the poverty cycle sustains as if it is inherited. Therefore, an intervention program is needed to cut the cycle.

The general objective of this program is to improve access of rural children in Gunungkidul Yogyakarta to early childhood education (ECE) based on multiple literacy principles involving multiple participants. In addition, improving literacy level is one of development strategies in accelerating and directing the social transformation. It also allows the society to access information and education more easily. The number of rural poverty can be reduced as people in the area are able to empower themselves and be more independent. The following table shows the attitude of the key stakeholders involved in the action.

Table 1.

Key stakeholder group	attitudes
Government	strengthen the implementation of the Policy on Early Childhood Education and provide recommendations for strengthening provision of ECE programs for rural groups.
Academic	Develop, Use and apply the theories to solve the problems identified in the field and developing/ finding alternate model in ECE
ECE practitioner	Applied the suggested concept/model/technique
NGO, EU and partner countries	Provide financial and human resource support and ensure the accuracy, accountability and transparency of the program

Type of activities and related outputs and results are shown in the table below.

Table 2.

No	Actions	Outputs	Results
1	Identifying and analyzing the needs	Identified the needs of children, parents, society, teachers/caregivers and stakeholders	Data of ECE based on Multiple Literacy Principles (MLP)
2	Designing early childhood education model based on multiple literacy principle	ECE learning model based on MLP	Implementation of the model
3	Developing learning kits and modules	Modules for the parents, teachers/caregivers and manual for the stakeholder	Improvement of practitioners' capacity and parents' knowledge and skills that lead to integrated ECE
4	Communication and supervision	Evaluation and assessment guidelines	Sustainability of the program

Each of the target groups and final beneficiaries are described below:

Rural children

Approximately 1,000 rural children, especially children from poor family groups, from 3 to 6 years of age across three sub districts will benefit from this programs. They are selected because they are marginalized and cannot access quality early childhood education. They need to improve their cognitive and psychosocial skills to face global challenge. The constrains that usually appear in dealing with rural children come from their special characteristics that need specific treatments, cognitive capability, health problem (malnutrition). This program is designed to stimulate their literacy. They will participate as students.

ECE Stakeholder and practitioners (teachers /caregivers)

Approximately 50 ECE stakeholders will benefit from this program as they will learn how to plan and manage the ECE program better. Approximately 300 teachers/caregivers will participate as collaborator and trainee and user.

Local Governments of Gunungkidul District

Three subdistricts will participate in project implementation. This program will help them gaining accurate information of the existing problem in the field that furthermore can be used to formulate policy.

Parents and society

Almost 500 people living in the targeted project areas will benefit from ECE based on multiple literacy campaigns. They will participate as the users, supporter.

This program emphasizes the importance of basic education mainly early childhood education. **Early childhood** is a moment in which significant transformation and extreme vulnerability take place. The multiple literacy knowledge will be more effective when it is introduced and exposed earlier involving all elements of society. The government, early childhood education stakeholders and educators, and parents are important participants of multiple literacy internalization. Programs that support young children prior to primary school education provide strong foundations for subsequent learning and development. Moreover they contribute to the improvement of the individual, group, and society capacity and furthermore offer a way out of poverty. A literate society will be able to empower itself and contribute to sustainable poverty reduction as the result of accessing quality information and education.

Poverty has become one major problem in Indonesia. It is very clear that poverty affects children's access on quality education. Children from the poor family do not have opportunity to study in any qualified education institution nor can they have better education from parents and society. Quality education may lead to better living. So, when children cannot access it they will keep trapping themselves in poverty and it goes on and on. Therefore, one of the ways to reduce the number of poverty in Indonesia is by giving children larger access to quality education as earlier as possible.

Multiple Literacy means advanced functional literacy comprising literacy in various aspects of life namely economic and financial literacy, health literacy, civic literacy, information and mass-media literacy, social literacy and critical literacy. Multiple literacy acquisition will lead to optimum development of an individual, group, and community. Moreover, literacy in various aspects will make the society become dynamic, focus, and effective in achieving the aim of the transformation

or change which are stimulated by internal power or external power as a result of interaction. Literacy competence which is supported by strong commitment, the supervision and assessment of transformation can be done professionally and holistically. Literacy has become a major need of rural society as it will help them accessing, participating and corresponding the development of global society.

The expected results are (a) identified cost-effective programs, (b) increased access of the target group to quality early childhood education by setting up ECE centers in 3 sub districts, (c)

improved capacity and participation of teachers/caregivers through training and supervision to improve their ability in planning and managing the learning process based on multiple literacy principles, focusing on information and technology literacy, health literacy, civic literacy, social literacy and critical literacy, (d) improved parent and society participation in ECE, (e) Sustained early childhood education in community. (f) developing the character buiding of the children about literacy.