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## Developing an Integrated Model to Early Childhood Education and Care in Vietnam: Perspectives of Early Childhood Educators

### Abstract

*The partnership between school, family and community for the development and care of children has been interested in research by many scientists. This study aims to investigate Vietnamese early childhood educators' perspectives on an integrated model to early childhood education and care in Vietnam. A self-assessment tool with 5 standards and 15 criteria was administered to 420 teachers working in 30 kindergartens across 6 provinces of Vietnam. The self-assessment tool considered 5 areas of the school, family and community partnerships, including: planning and building childcare education environments; connecting and sharing information between the school, family and the community in child care and education; coordinating in individual child education; making decisions about policies related to child care and education; and evaluating child development. Through average score analysis, the results show that early childhood educators in Vietnam stressed the significance of school, family and community involvement in early childhood education and care.*

**Keywords:** Primary Childhood Schooling and Care, Child Growth, Consolidated Strategy, School, Family, and Society Collaboration.

### Introduction

For a better comprehension of children's education and growth, massive research on family, school, and society collaboration has been a central focus around the world. Many academic topics are learned by the children in school, however how well they understand, what else they understand, and the reason behind this understanding is greatly impacted by families, schools, societies, and their associations. Investigation on family, educational institute and society collaboration are additionally integral for comprehending the collective association of

schools. Many educational institutional are coordinated by instructors and educational strategy, however, in what ways schools are administered viably and how effectively educators encourage learners, are impacted by the family, educational institutes, and society associations. These findings are valid through every nation. Investigation around the world regarding the collaboration of families, educational institutions, learners, and societies add to a comprehension of necessities for educational institution modification and upgrading (Sanders & Epstein, 2005).

A significant rise was observed in the last 10-years, in research on and practices of the

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educational institution, family and society contribution in the children schooling. Following pattern can be ascribed to various parameters. Because of long-term study, Epstein (1995) has recognized six forms of family-educational institution-society contribution that are significant for children's knowledge and improvement, and more viable educational institutions and families. These include: (1) nurturing assist all families with setting up house atmosphere that helps children as students and also assists schools to familiarize with families; (2) communicating-planning and leading powerful types of mutual correspondence about institutional projects and kids' improvement; (3) volunteering-enrolling and sorting out assistance and backing for study halls, institutional programs, and students exercises; (4) education at house - providing data, thoughts, and prospects to families that in what ways they can assist scholars at home with study choices, schoolwork, and syllabus-associated exercises; (5) decision-making that includes guardians in institutional administration, and (6) partnership with the society- recognizing and coordinating assets and facilities from the society to fortify and uphold institutions, children and their families, and from institutions, families, and understudies to assist the society.

Regardless of genuine development in many states, districts, and educational institutions in recent years, there are still a large number of schools where instructors do not comprehend the student's family. There is still an excessive number of families who do not comprehend their children's schools, and an excessive number of societies that do not comprehend or assist their institutions, families, or children. There are still many regions and states without the strategies, branches, governance, staff, and financial help required to assist all schools with creating incredible and perpetual projects of collaboration (Epstein, 2011).

Creating maintained and far-reaching associations with schools, families, and the society is an important attention area and also concerns the schools and scientists in the same manner. According to Henderson and Mapp (2002), there is no educational program that directs a step-wise process to deal with collaboration between schools, families, and community that would be relevant on the whole settings and conquer the mind-boggling intricacy and special nature of these settings. These connections require some investment, carefulness, a profound arrangement, and a desire to connect the schools, the families, and societies to recognize needs, and above all, the amount of hard and delicate assets to help the one bringing together mission for all – that is, supporting the yearnings of our children's. Such

ground-breaking collaboration can uphold them scholastically, yet also socially and passionately.

In the context of Vietnam, a developing country in the Southeast Asia, education in general and early childhood education in particular are considered the top priority. Amongst its population of nearly 100 million people has over five million children attending child care centers and kindergartens. The Vietnamese government along with schools, families, and communities give extraordinary consideration to children's education and care. This study evaluates the Vietnamese early childhood educators' perspectives on a collaborative model to early childhood education and care in Vietnam.

## Literature Review

### **1). *Integrated Approaches to Early Childhood Education and Care***

Integration of the childcare and early childhood education systems is a problem of high significance for children, families, and societies (Rhee, Kim, Shin, and Moon, 2008). The requirement of an incorporated way to deal with childhood education and care is a social spectacle, an interest from society in most industrialized nations going through profound changes requiring new childcare plans. In numerous nations, the women's development assumed to play a significant part in making additional opportunities for extra parental child socialization, beginning of another idea of childcare with proficient and instructive segments, which addressed the child issues for care and education just as the social, word related and family needs of women (Haddad, 2016).

At the macro level, the forthcoming models for collaboration consist of: (1) combination after age-explicit merger, (2) collaboration after function-explicit merger, (3) collaboration after organization of explicit-assignments, (4) prompt collaboration after schooling patronages (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development: MEHRD), and (5) quick impermanent collaboration under childcare support (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family: MGEF) (Rhee et al., 2008).

Integrated approaches to deal with childhood education and care have numerous advantages. As indicated by Haddad (2016), incorporated methodologies targets providing quality, progression, adaptability, and variety as per a comprehensive methodology offer incalculable advantages to families, children, women, men, communities and society. They enhance child's encounters, extending their emotional references and building their characters and comprehension of the world. Childhood education and care

approaches additionally fortify communicational and learning abilities and empower significant exercises and connections. They give freedoms to children to associate with their friends and with elders and to learn being a resident. They likewise offer important help for family functioning by giving regular chances for socialization and the exchange of knowledge, and also joins professional activities with families, hence improving the parents' involvement.

## **2). Home, Parent, Community Partnerships in Early Childhood Education and Care**

Home-school-community partnerships address a strategy to deal with advancing positive child and juvenile accomplishment (Wright & Smith, 1998). Study on school-family-community collaboration contrasts from nation to nation due, partially, to every country's educational history, social investigation, and collaboration strategies. For instance, Epstein (1995) characterizes parent and society associations as "the connections between schools, parents, and community individuals, organizations, and businesses that are forged to directly or indirectly promote students' social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development".

Studies in many countries show that a few parents are profoundly engaged with their children's schooling and others are not. The advantages of parent contribution in children's education are well archived (Epstein & Conners, 1994; Henderson & Berla, 1994). Without a doubt, there is convincing proof that parents' involvement and backing are the essential components for children's prosperity or disappointment in school (Berger, 1995). In pretty much all countries, a few guardians are firmly associated with their kids' schools and cooperate effectively with instructors. Others, especially parents with fewer proper training, are hesitant to communicate their institutions on the off chance that they see them as antagonistic spots. Schools are not just establishments dedicated to instructive transformation. Universally, society-derived organizations and projects are getting associated with improving educational consequences for the present youth, society offices are progressively working with families and educational institutions to build the help that all kids require to become effective residents of 21st century (Sanders & Epstein, 2005).

There are, nonetheless, possible boundaries to the effective execution of practices to include all families. These incorporate a few instructors' views of an absence of help or encouragement from the home, and a few guardians' bad encounters with schooling, either by themselves or their children's. Most guardians have inquiries concerning in what ways they can help their kids

tutoring, how to enhance student's communal, enthusiastic, and scholarly growth at various ages, and how to assist set them up for post-secondary schooling or their probable career. Not with standing, study of Calabrese (1990) concludes that a few parents are hesitant to go to the educational institutions for the assistance and data that they want. This hesitance might originate from a societal position or instructive differences among guardians and school faculty, or absence of a favorable environment for the family and society contribution.

Study in Israel drove Goldring (1991) to resist that various boundaries should be taken out if more noteworthy school-family collaboration is to be accomplished. These include (1) absence of adaptable, structures for communications among guardians and instructors; (2) contradiction among guardians and instructors over meanings of instructor professionalism, and (3) immense contrasts in the manners in which that students associate with the instructors and guardians. Research in the USA concludes that institutions and instructors who manage compelling, thorough associations with families can separate the hindrances to positive interaction, and assist families with conquering their hesitance to utilize the school as an asset (Dauber & Epstein, 1993). Research in Canada likewise shows that such practices assist further families to feel better with their children's schools, and expand their education experience (Sanders & Epstein, 2005).

## **3). Policy and Practice in Early Childhood Education and Care in Vietnam**

Vietnam currently has a population of nearly 100 million people. There are approximately 5.15 million children from 3 months old to 6 years old attending 15,476 nurseries and kindergartens. Also, there are 326,332 early childhood teachers (MOET, 2019). Considering education as the top national priority, the Vietnamese government, organizations, institutions and citizens are all dramatically aware of the significance of education and care for the children, the future masters of the nation.

Educating and caring for early childhood is an important part of the national educational system in Vietnam. Policies for early childhood care and education have been a significant focus by the government especially over the past 15 years. The Children Law issued in 2016 provides for children's rights and responsibilities; rules and methods of ensuring children's rights; duties of agencies, organization, education facilities, families and individuals to exercise children's rights and responsibilities (Article 2). Specifically, children have the right to education and study so that they can have a comprehensive development

and promote their ability in the best way. Furthermore, children are granted with equal opportunities for study and education, and developing their talent, creation and invention (Article 16) (National Assembly, 2016).

Attending an early childhood care and education programs is not mandatory in Vietnam; however, it is a prerequisite for 5-year-old children for entry into primary school. Its goal, as shown in the Law of Education 2019, is to elevate general admittance to a childhood setting for children; give great training to help the children physical, social-enthusiastic, scholarly, and aesthetic growth; and set up the kid for school at grade one (Boyd & Dang, 2017). Early childhood education and care offer sustain, mindful, and learning opportunities to children from 3 months old to 6 years of age. Early childhood education and care services consist of nurseries (for babies from 3 months to 3 years old), kindergartens (for kids from 3 to 6 years old), and young 'sprout' schools, consolidating nurseries and kindergartens, for kids from 3 months old to 6 years. Services generally give full-or half-day choices, with defined schedules and learning opportunities to help in children's growth and set them up for elementary school (National Assembly, 2019).

Early childhood education and care is the part of the Vietnamese education system under the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) administration, which features Vietnam's attention on the instructive part of childhood education. For decades, Vietnam has a defined syllabus for the early childhood education program. All public and private childhood educational settings in Vietnam have been required to follow a unitary public educational plan. Nonetheless, early childhood educational curricula have been improved three times since 1998 (Hien, 2018). The changes are thought to have achieved positive changes in preschool study halls. Early childhood educators now have more authority in curriculum development when contrasted with the past educational program with foreordained and definite guidelines in regards to showing contents and didactics. Classroom atmosphere became more informal and friendly as compared to conventional practice.

## Methods

The empirical data used in this research were gathered through a self-assessment tool about the perspectives of early childhood educators on the integrated model to early childhood education and care in Vietnam. In fact, the self-assessment tool was designed in the form of an integrated model to early childhood education and care for Vietnam. The self-assessment tool was administered to 420 teachers working in 30 childcare centers or

kindergartens across 6 provinces (out of 63 provinces in Vietnam).

The self-assessment tool, which was developed based on regulations of the Vietnamese Government and guidelines of MOET, consists of 5 standards and 16 criteria. The ten standards and number of criteria are summarized below:

- Standards 1: Planning and building childcare education environments (four criteria).
- Standards 2: Connecting and sharing information between the school, family and the community in child care and education (four criteria).
- Standards 3: Coordinating in individual child education (two criteria).
- Standards 4: Making decisions about policies related to child care and education (three criteria).
- Standards 5: Evaluating child development (three criteria).

Each teacher would self-assess all the sixteen criteria with maximum mark 3 for each criterion. For analysis, the data were then inserted into Excel sheets for average score calculation.

## Results

### 1). Planning and Building Childcare Education Environments

There are four criteria in this area and the average scores of teachers' self-assessment are below:

Criterion	Average score
1.1. Developing programs and plans for child care and education at home, school and public	2.7
1.2. Coordinating the implementation of daily child care and education at school and home	2.05
1.3. Building facilities and environments for activities in schools and communities	2.75
1.4. Building a cultural environment to communicate with children of the family, school and social community	2.45

Results from standard 1 assessment showed that the average scores were quite high for each criterion with the highest score for program and plan development (2.7) while coordinating in child care and education at nursery/kindergarten and home received the lowest score (2.05).

## 2). *Connecting and Sharing Information between the School, family and the Community in Child Care and Education*

There are four criteria in this area and the average scores of teachers' self-assessment are below:

Criterion	Average score
2.1. Making the school's child care and education activities public to families and the community	2.5
2.2. Coordinating in propagating and mobilizing organizations and individuals to participate in child care and education	2.3
2.3. Answering questions, processing information / requests of parents and the community related to child care and education	2.55
2.4. Coordinating in propagating and participating in activities to ensure safety and protection of children at home, school and community	2.6

Average scores for information connection and sharing were also relatively high with the maximum of 2.5 for the criterion related to the publicity of child care and education activities to families and the community. The criterion of coordinating in propagating and mobilizing organizations and individuals to participate in child care and education received the lowest score of 2.3.

## 3). *Coordinating in Individual Child Education*

There are two criteria in this area and the average scores of teachers' self-assessment are below:

Criterion	Average score
3.1. Coordinating in identifying abnormal children and counseling	1.45
3.2. Coordinating the planning and implementation of abnormal children care at home and school	1.35

Surprisingly, both criteria of standard 3 related to coordinating in individual child education received quite low scores. They were both below the average score, with 1.45 for coordinating in identifying abnormal children and counseling, and 1.34 for coordinating the planning and implementation of abnormal children care at home and school.

## 4). *Making Decisions about Policies Related to Child Care and Education*

There are two criteria in this area and the average scores of teachers' self-assessment are below:

Criterion	Average score
4.1. The school participates with stakeholders in the development and promulgation of policy on child care and education	2.4
4.2. Family and community are allowed to participate in decisions in the school's child care and education	2.2

Two criteria of standard 4: making decisions about policies related to child care and education got relatively high scores with 2.4 for criterion 4.1 and 2.2 for criterion 4.2.

## 5). *Evaluating Child Development*

There are three criteria in this area and the average scores of teachers' self-assessment are below:

Criterion	Average score
5.1. Participating in developing criteria and procedures to assess child development	2.15
5.2. Participating in child development assessment	2.65
5.3. Using the results of assessing the child's development	2.4

Three criteria of standard 5: evaluating child development also received quite high scores with the maximum for criterion of participating in child development assessment (2.65) and minimum for criterion of participating in developing criteria and procedures to assess child development (2.15).

## Discussion

Considering the important role that families and societies play in the achievements of their children in schools is of vital significance (Molina, 2013). Well-planned and well-implemented programs and practices empower families to get involved at school and home, including families that are probably not going to get involved all alone. Great projects give the environment, apparatuses, abilities, and certainty that parents need to help their children and the schools. Constructive outcomes of programs that involve families have been accounted for by researchers in different regions like Australia, Chile, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Ireland, Portugal, New Zealand, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Specifically, teachers' perspective about parents' interest and abilities changes after

they start to work with families; parents figure out how to help at home and direct a lot more exercises with their kids and schools; and children benefits in different areas when they see that their parents and teachers know and regard each other and interact routinely (Sanders & Epstein, 2005).

The current research shows that teachers of nurseries and kindergartens in Vietnam have been fully aware of the important role of school-family-community partnership in early childhood education and care. Their perspectives echo Sanders and Epstein's (2005) study. Schools need the contribution of families and societies. Schools also need help from their children's families and their societies to give rich and different instructive skills to assist all kids with succeeding in school and throughout everyday life. In many countries, the budget for education is too low to even consider addressing all necessities. Educational systems should have the option to distinguish, assemble, and put together all accessible assets and gifts to help and broaden projects and openings for all students. Most parents need help to comprehend their children, the schools, and strategies to assist both. Schools are in an exceptional situation to address the feelings of dread and worries of uninvolved parents by building up projects and practices that urge all parents to take part in their children's schooling.

Connecting and sharing information between the school, family and the community in child care and education received quite high scores from early childhood educators participating in this study. According to Wright and Smith (1998), the home, school, and community environments may support each other and be mutually beneficial. For instance, relations to class and society assets may profit families who have concrete boundaries (e.g., transportation) to involvement at school, communities may help schools by linking with nearby grown-ups in extraordinary programming or professional fairs, or business support may finance school activities in science and innovation. Quality schools help give a well-trained labor force to businesses and industries. In addition, it is found that degrees of parent and society association impact the drop-out rate among students (Horn & West, 1992). Different zones that are emphatically influenced by expanded parent association incorporates student's presence, mentalities, conduct, and higher yearnings (Henderson, 1988; Henderson & Berla, 1994).

Coordinating in individual child education did not receive high scores from Vietnamese teachers working in child care centers or kindergartens. One possible answer might be explained by Sanders and Epstein (2005) that many families have inquiries regarding how to best help their kids' tutoring, how to advance

children' social, emotional, and scholarly improvement at various ages, and how to help them set up for primary schooling, and additionally post-secondary schooling. To answer the questions and comparative inquiries, the institution is frequently the most advantageous and open establishment to which parents can turn. The educational institution, subsequently, can be a significant source of data and support for parents in the consideration, socialization, and children's education.

Making decisions about policies related to child care and education should have the involvement from parents and communities. The part of school strategies and authority are believed to be significant in creating collaborations; anyway, less qualitative research has inspected these variables. Strategy, leadership, and environment are ideas that are more vaporous and poses more risk to dependable and legitimate estimation. In light of these admonitions, this segment takes a gander at the creating theoretical and exact base exploring the roles of strategies, leadership, and environment in advancing collaborations (Wright & Smith, 1998). Participants in this study gave quite high score for the criterion "Family and community are allowed to participate in decisions in the school's child care and education". As explained by McLaughlin and Shields (1987), strategies are written assertions and methodologies that straightforwardly impact school workforce practices. School strategies impact the improvement of home-school-community collaboration by imparting assumptions, rules, and impetuses. School strategies may give principles for the recurrence and kind of home-school interaction, for the recurrence and interaction of parent-teacher meetings, and for assumptions about alternate methods of including parents. Progressively, strategy at the school, state, and legislative levels are perceiving that endeavors to connect with parents in school should assist with convincing educators and other school staff of the advantages of including parents of different social classes and give a stipend to the individuals who do as such (Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007; Williams & Chavkin, 1989). Nonetheless, instructors and managers are at first impervious to expanding family contribution. Several teachers in many areas dread that including families and others will diminish their professional status. There is more hesitation from including families in the decision and syllabus-making programs, and less resistance to including families in raising money, volunteering, and interacting in customary ways from school to family. Different sorts of associations (i.e., two-way correspondences and including families with their kids on homework) meet mellow, less opposition, yet are developing

zones for activity and improvement (Sanders & Epstein, 2005).

Assessing child improvement is of incredible importance in preschool and kindergarten plans. It furnishes childhood specialists with a compelling method for gathering data on children. This takes into account recognizable proof of children with developmental issues or delays just as the individuals who are possibly best in class, and who might be needing further evaluation or attention. The assessment also permits instructors to expand their comprehension of individuals and children and to settle on educated choices about children's requirements in childhood (Bagnato & Neisworth, 1991; Shaughnessy & Greathouse, 1997). The current study shows that families and communities were highly recognized in being involved in evaluating child development. The evaluation tools might be formal or informal. Specifically, formal evaluation alludes to government-sanctioned tests, where a child's performance is within defined developmental boundaries is converted into a score that is contrasted and either the presentation of different children with comparable qualities or with explicit models or instructional targets. Formal evaluation instruments have unwavering quality and legitimacy (Appl, 2000; Mindes, Ireton, & Mardell-Czudnowski, 1996; Puckett & Black, 2000). Informal evaluation alludes to non-standardized tools. A child's performance is not normally converted into a score or contrasted with different kids or explicit models. Informal evaluation is generally founded on perceptions and interviews, and frequently includes ordinary homeroom events (Mindes et al., 1996).

## Conclusion

Education and training are vital all together for teachers and staff members to comprehend assorted families and to acquire the information and abilities expected to set up and keep up great programs of collaboration with all families and societies. Most teachers in developing countries are ill-equipped with their schooling and exercise to comprehend and effort with families. In certain nations, teachers are required to build acclaims or other proof of proceeding with training at regular intervals; however, these enhancements do not need to incorporate school-family-community collaborations. Educational institutions need help from their students' families and their communities to give rich and changed instructive encounters to assist each children with succeeding school and throughout everyday life.

This study, not with standing, shows that children who get uphold from school, family, and community are highly profited, and are bound to be scholastically fruitful instead of individuals who

do not (Sanders, 1996). To provide the most ideal education, institutions should collaborate with families and communities. Authentic collaboration depends on mutual regard. Teachers respect and value parents' knowledge and insights about their children. Parents respect and value teachers' knowledge and insights about the learning process and understanding children's educational needs. In a school-family-community collaboration, all individuals from the society can perceive changing family needs to raise children in an atmosphere that gives suitable conditions to wellbeing, security, and learning. This study contributes to the lack of literature about integrated models to early childhood education and care in developing countries generally and in Vietnam particularly. However, these research results were only analyzed from the early childhood educators' views. It is recommended that further research should investigate families and communities' perspectives to triangulate research findings.

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