

## **Building A Collaborative Role between School and Home in Fulfilling Balanced Nutrition at PAUD “Melati Indah”**

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### **Abstract**

Children's understanding of healthy and nutritious diets needs support from teachers and parents. Research on group students preschool Melati Indah Batan, Banyudono, Boyolali, Regency which was carried out in September 2023 aimed to determine the role of teachers and parents in introducing healthy balanced nutrition to children. A qualitative descriptive approach was applied in this study with data collection methods through observation, and interviews. The data are in the form of student activity descriptions, and the results of interviews with teachers and students' parents. The results showed that several students brought lunch of non-nutritious food. For this reason, efforts are required to increase understanding of the importance of classically healthy and nutritious food for children, which is welcomed by parents. This is proven by the students' lunch menu which is healthier and more varied. The role of teachers and parental support through healthy eating habits, and balanced nutrition in the provision of daily menus or provisions for students to school is a real effort to increase student understanding of healthy and nutritious diets.

**Keywords:** Preschool, nutrition, collaboration

### **Introduction**

Early Childhood Education is a coaching effort aimed at children from birth to six years of age which is carried out by providing educational stimuli to help physical and spiritual growth and development so that children are ready to enter further education ([Republik Indonesia, 2003](#)). Well-maintained growth and development of children is one of the capital to be able to have competitiveness in the wider community.

The issue of nutrition is very close to human daily activities. Information about nutrition for early childhood is a necessity at this time because the nutritional information obtained during early childhood is the basis for nutritional status in adulthood ([Partida et al., 2018](#)). Children who are familiar with nutritional knowledge from an early age will have a good nutritional status as adults. Nutritional information for early childhood is provided by the stages of early childhood development. Nutrition materials are delivered by paying attention to the way early childhood learns. Various foods are served for consumption and meet the nutritional needs of early childhood. Early childhood is a group that is in dire need of balanced food and nutrition intake for health and developmental growth ([Okeyo, 2018](#)). Nutritious food intake determines the growth and development status of early childhood. Early childhood who get nutritional intake will have good academic abilities ([Nyaradi et al., 2013](#)). Early childhood needs balanced food and nutrition to stimulate brain cells so that they can be used according to function. Food consumed affects children's brain development ([Bodden et al., 2021](#)). Early childhood growth and development include cognitive, language, social-emotional, and physical-motor aspects, including early childhood brain development, determined by food intake.

Nutritionally balanced foods are foods that contain nutrients tailored to the level of needs, such as age, gender, weight, occupation, and so on, which fulfil the substances needed by the body, including carbohydrates, protein, minerals, fat, and water ([Wulandari, 2022](#)). Family factors are the most influential factors in children's diets because their home environment is the first environment that children know before they get to know the family world. In addition, parents also form a pattern of eating habits for their children. How parents process and serve food for their families, will shape the nutritional patterns of food that will be consumed by children, which includes the types and varieties of food consumed.

Parents' understanding is very important to fulfil balanced nutrition for children. Knowledge of food sources that contain balanced nutrition is very important for parents to understand. The food menu served to children at home will

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depend on how parents, especially mothers, prepare the balanced nutritional intake that their children need in their growth ([Paes et al., 2015](#)). On the other hand, learning the introduction of nutritious food in which 6 elements must be fulfilled by the body, namely carbohydrates, protein, fat, vitamins, minerals, and water. The needs of the 6 elements are obtained from staple foods along with side dishes and vegetables and fruits. At school has an important role in knowledge and also influences the daily lifestyle of early childhood. [Wardhani et al. \(2019\)](#) revealed that learning about healthy food in PAUD needs to be done to introduce children to the concept of a menu with balanced and halal nutrition content so that children know the types of food that can be consumed and make children healthy.

Teachers can schedule school meals, which involve parents in the preparation. In this way, teachers can create a pleasant atmosphere for children that will make them eager to eat the menu provided ([Savage et al., 2007](#)). Providing a diverse menu is expected to help children to be able and willing to eat foods that they have never eaten before. With a note the menu provided must pay attention to the content of nutritional values and nutrients that are beneficial for the growth and development of children.

The introduction of nutritious food can familiarize students with consuming healthy food every day. Teachers can introduce nutritious foods by using real media such as vegetables, fruits, and the like which are classified as nutritious foods, and explain the vitamin content in them as well as the benefits for the body and intelligence so that children understand and like to consume nutritious foods every day by no longer bringing lunch from home in the form of snacks and the like which are less good for health. Sunita ([Almatsier, 2010](#)) states that nutrients can provide the energy needed by the body to carry out activities which include carbohydrates, fats, and proteins. If the ratio of nutrients contained in food consisting of carbohydrates, protein, fat, vitamins, minerals, fiber, and water is fulfilled in the daily diet, the body's health will be maintained.

According to ([Abidin, 2021](#)) the teacher as a figure who is “digugu dan ditiru” will be trusted and imitated in every word and behaviour. In the teaching and learning process, teachers have a great influence when compared to their parents. When learning at school, teachers can join and eat with children when they eat lunch together with a note, the teacher also eats the same menu with them. This method is quite effective because when teachers model how they enjoy the nutritious food menu, it can stimulate children to follow and try the existing menu.

Another way that is no less interesting is through cooking class activities ([Sofianti et al., 2020](#)). Through the cooking class, children can learn about the equipment and various kinds of spices and healthy food ingredients needed when preparing a particular menu. From here they unconsciously learn about the types and uses of each tool and food ingredient. Thus, the teacher becomes a role model in the habituation of healthy eating ([Eliassen, 2011](#)). In addition, she also added that warm conversations and chats about the food eaten when eating together can make children feel comfortable and like the food ([Hughes et al., 2007](#)). Eating together at school is an effective way to introduce children to healthy food ([Fikawati & Ahmad, 2019](#)). No less important is to integrate healthy eating patterns in the preschool curriculum to shape healthy eating behaviour with balanced and varied nutrition ([Sepp & Höjjer, 2016](#)). The habituation of eating together at school is an effective effort to form children's habits in consuming nutritious food for their growth and development until they grow up. ([Drummond, 2007](#)). This should also be supported by parents as food providers for their children.

Therefore, parents' ability to process and serve nutritious food to their children is also considered very necessary. Especially nowadays working parents tend to provide ready-to-eat food to their children, thus modeling unhealthy food processing ([Reynolds & Caraher, 2005](#)). Another way that teachers can provide children with early childhood education is by introducing healthy eating habits, namely by teaching them what habits should be done before eating, during eating, and after eating. For example; washing hands before and after eating, washing fruits or vegetables before processing, and cleaning up the dining area when they finish eating ([Eliassen, 2011](#)). In addition, she also added that rewarding children when they feel full, and providing enough time to finish their meal is also very important. This can make children feel comfortable when they are eating and enjoying the food provided.

Initial observations were made directly where the researcher as a participant observer observed the lunch brought by students at school. Researchers also observed eating together at school which is held regularly once a month. From the observation of the provisions brought by students to school, researchers found that there were still many students who brought provisions in the form of instant or fast food, such as instant noodles and sausages. Many lunches brought are snacks, instant noodles, and also less healthy snacks. The results of research by Rina, Syukri, and Halida ([Rina & Syukri, 2016](#)) that food supplements are not recommended to be consumed because nutritional needs are met by daily meals that already meet balanced nutrition coupled with enough exercise, enough rest, regular life, no stress and also free from pollutants (air, food and water). Observations on eating together at school showed that the food served by the school was quite varied, but when eating together, the teacher was less interactive in wearing and informing students about the types of food and their nutritional content and benefits for the body's health. On another occasion, researchers observed when the teacher presented the theme of healthy food to students. The teacher only mentions the kinds and even then only in the form of pictures. This makes participants less interested in following. In addition, the teacher also did not provide information about the nutritional content and how to consume it healthily.

From initial observations of the lunches brought by students at school, it was found that the types of food they brought still did not meet adequate nutrition. This shows that parents' understanding of balanced nutrition is still lacking. Starting from these observations, the researcher is interested in researching the role of teachers and parents in introducing and familiarizing healthy eating in early childhood. Furthermore, the purpose of this study is to find out how to foster and

improve healthy eating habits in children through the role of teachers at school and parents as providers of healthy food menus for children at home so that children as learners become accustomed to consuming balanced nutritional healthy food in their daily diet.

Parents are the primary caregivers and first teachers in a child's life, having invaluable insight into their child's unique characteristics, interests, and learning styles. By sharing this knowledge with teachers, parents can help educators customize their teaching approaches to meet the individual needs of each child. Similarly, teachers can guide parents on age-appropriate activities and strategies that can be implemented at home to reinforce and extend learning.

The role of parents in schools is interwoven in partnership programs that aim to prepare and support productive relationships or connections from home, school, and community ([Epstein, 2018](#)). The role of parents and teachers is intertwined in a collaborative approach that consists of two main elements, namely: 1) a partnership in which the parties involved are specialized and navigated to reach a mutual agreement, and 2) the presence of communication which is defined as the level of work in the partnership to convey information through the exchange of ideas, feelings, intentions, attitudes, expectations, perceptions or orders ([Ziv & Goshen, 2006](#)). Collaboration is defined as the process of two or more parties working together to achieve common goals and objectives.

Effective collaboration is based on the efforts of all parties in pursuit of a common goal. Collaboration is important as a reflection of practice and exchange of knowledge and is used as a key strategy to generate creativity and innovation in creating effective education ([Adams, 2005](#)). Collaboration between parents and teachers ensures consistency in the home and school environment. By aligning their approaches, parents and teachers can reinforce important values, behaviours, and academic concepts.

Collaboration as an approach between parents and teachers is based on efficient decision-making and has the potential to produce high-quality learners. A collaboration can also optimize the monitoring and learning of learners leading to the achievement of potential and achievement ([Reed, 2012](#)). The foundations of parental engagement necessary for successful parent-teacher collaboration in a school setting include 1) the establishment of parent-teacher relationships, 2) the development of communication systems with planning and maintenance, 3) the creation of specific opportunities for additional parent involvement activities ([Staples & Diliberto, 2010](#)).

## Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study research type to find out the extent of understanding about nutritious food that takes place in the PAUD Melati Indah unit in Batan village, Banyudono sub-district, Boyolali district by describing various related things. In addition to the researcher being the main instrument in data collection, in-depth interview techniques, participant observation, and documentation studies were also used as data collection techniques. The sources of data/information are 1 teacher and 15 parents of students. To ensure the validity of the data, a triangulation process was carried out. Data/information was analyzed by referring to the opinion of [Miles & Huberman \(1994\)](#) carried out with three steps simultaneously, namely: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification.

As for interview activities, researchers interviewed teachers and parents of students. Interviews with teachers were conducted when the teacher had finished learning, while parents were conducted on the sidelines of activities when parents were waiting for their children to come home. The interview was intended to find out the reasons why the teacher chose the learning activities carried out and the extent to which the teacher understood balanced nutrition as the basis for a healthy diet. Meanwhile, interviews with student guardians were intended to find out the parents' understanding of balanced nutrition and how to introduce, serve, and get used to eating these foods on the daily menu for children at home

## Result and Discussion

### Result

From the results of interviews conducted by researchers on student guardians, based on their employment background, almost all student guardians work as private employees, only a small portion of whom work as ASNs. In the dimension of parenting, parents' activities in terms of receiving information about the growth and development of children in PAUD Melati Indah show that there is still a lack of information received by student guardians from teachers about child development, this is triggered by the background of the work of parents which results in a lack of communication between teachers and student guardians. Overcoming the lack of information about child development due to lack of communication is by creating clear communication channels so that parents can connect easily. In this case, the teacher must provide regular updates to people, besides that, the teacher can also make home visits to provide information as well as be able to ask questions about child growth and development.

Another obstacle that arises is the lack of consistent parental involvement in monitoring children's growth and learning, due to parents' understanding that all matters related to learning are the role of the teacher and parents do not need to be involved. To eliminate such parental understanding, a collaboration that can be done by the school is to organize regular meetings every month to equalize perceptions between parents and schools in terms of how to fulfil children's nutrition while at the same time providing opportunities for parents to work together, for example by compiling

a routine schedule of nutritious food supplies that must be brought to school. This may also be applied by parents at home so that children will have regular eating patterns and fulfil their nutritional needs. Parents can also involve children in compiling shopping lists and serving dishes together with children so that they can increase children's knowledge about nutritious food.

Lack of understanding of the importance of nutritious food for children is also one of the obstacles for children to meet their nutritional needs, one of the factors that influence this is the educational background of parents and also the economic conditions of the family. Because of these limitations, parents pay less attention to the food given to their children, so it seems important to be fed without thinking about the nutritional value of the food itself. Seeing this condition, it is necessary to collaborate where teachers hold workshops and work with the Health Office in charge of nutrition as a resource person so that parents can ask questions, conduct discussions, and exchange opinions which can ultimately increase their knowledge about the importance of nutrition for children.

In addition to the obstacles that arise above, an equally important obstacle is the absence of a common vision between parents and teachers, which will result in less clarity on the objectives of the process of providing good nutrition for students. For this reason, from the beginning, it is necessary to have a common vision first between teachers and parents so that all will be the direction and purpose of the collaboration itself. To overcome this obstacle, regular meetings between teachers and parents are needed. From here we can discuss what needs to be done to fulfil children's nutrition, here we can also convey the developments that occur in children so that we can know the extent of the results of this collaboration. clear vision, so that here the teacher can convey to parents related to the introduction of the learning implementation process, motivate parents, and convey what will be implemented in fulfilling children's nutrition. Furthermore, parents as implementers of learning to children by guiding children, providing intense assistance with children in understanding children about the importance of nutrition, facilitating learning media, and providing motivation to children so that children become more likely to consume nutritious foods.

Furthermore, teachers and parents always control and evaluate. Evaluations submitted by parents to teachers consist of evaluating learning outcomes every day and evaluating child development. Teachers can give feedback to parents so that they can find out their shortcomings and strengths. From these shortcomings and advantages, it is hoped that the implementation of nutrition for children can run better the next day.

## **Discussion**

The collaboration process between parents and teachers is influenced by several factors, namely the family's economic background, parents' education and employment factors, and parents' psychological conditions ([Hsiao et al., 2017](#)). Considering the educational background of parents also has a role in the process and success of parent-teacher collaboration. Based on the research conducted, economic conditions can be seen from the professional or occupational status of parents. This shows that collaboration is also supported by the economic stability of the parents because economic factors can be a barrier to collaboration between teachers and parents ([Lohmann et al., 2018](#)). The variety of professions or occupations of parents still does not hinder collaboration with teachers, due to the opportunities provided by teachers for involvement and the role of parents in productive activities related to programs at school and children's education so that there is equality between parents with different professions ([BaquedanoLópez, Alexander et al., 2013](#)).

In parenting, there is an activity of sharing information, especially regarding the activities carried out by children and their development while at home. In this case, sharing information between parents and teachers can improve children's performance or learning ability. It is stated that collaboration is a form of positive interaction that includes sharing and exchanging information about child development between parents and teachers ([Ellis et al., 2015](#)). Mutual motivation between parents and teachers affects children's interest in learning at home ([La Jeti et al., 2021](#)). The communication process can be carried out through technological media in the form of email, messages, and WhatsApp. Furthermore, the role and involvement of parents in the dimension of involvement in the process of providing nutritious food to children at home is based on teacher reports when children are in school so that parents get information on child development and child conditions ([Shamir-Inbal & Blau, 2021](#)).

Based on the above conditions, it can be concluded that collaboration between parents and teachers in children's learning activities, as well as motivation for each other, is based on an open attitude and an invitation or opportunity for parents to get involved. The use of technological media to establish communication with parents at home can be overcome by collaboration. Parents and teachers collaborate to make a joint commitment to improve the quality of children's education at school ([Sarmiento & Freire, 2012](#)). Joint decisions are made by being open to the problems that exist around child growth and development. However, based on the research, the consistency of collaboration is still carried out between parents and teachers for mutual goals and benefits. The participation of parents in this case can eliminate the bias of differences in family economic backgrounds in society. There is a view that higher economic levels are dominantly involved in the process of providing nutritious food. However, the opportunity given to all parents to participate in the provision of learning resources in the community makes the distance (gap) between fellow parents disappear ([Baquedano-López et al., 2013](#)).

## Conclusion

This research on home and school collaboration in fulfilling children's nutrition for PAUD Melati Indah students in Batan Village, Banyudono District, Boyolali Regency aims to determine the role of teachers and parents in introducing healthy balanced nutrition to children. Understanding nutritious food is very important to support children's growth and development. This understanding can be done at school by teachers and supported by parents at home. Interesting learning by teachers can provide a strong basis for understanding for children, coupled with a friendly learning atmosphere for children to make them feel comfortable and enthusiastic about learning. The basic understanding obtained by children at school will be able to be solidified and strengthened with the support of parents at home. Preparing a variety of nutritious food menus is an effective way for parents can do as a form of support and reinforce children's understanding of how important it is to consume nutritious healthy food that supports children's growth and development. In addition, creating a friendly and pleasant atmosphere when eating, will affect children's appetite, thus motivating children to try various variations of nutritious food served. To familiarize healthy and nutritious eating patterns at home, the role of parents, especially mothers, is very important.

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