Parental involvement in selected private preschools in Tangerang, Indonesia

Rohaty Mohd. Majzub a,* Elis Johannes Hendry Salim b,*

Faculty of Education, University Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to measure parental involvement in preschool education. Five aspects of involvement based on Epstein's model have been investigated. Quantitative data was collected from 294 parents whose children attended 6 selected private kindergartens in Curug district, Tangerang, Indonesia. The findings indicated that parental involvement was at low level. The result of One Way Anova analysis showed significant mean differences in parental involvement according to types of kindergarten. This study implies that principals need to have open policy and support parental involvement, arrange more structured parental involvement program, provide teachers’ training and programs that can improve parents’ SES through preschool education. It is recommended that the government provides guidelines in implementing parental involvement program, provides fund to support preschool finance and encourage employers to give time for mothers to attend school activities.

Keywords: parental involvement, preschool, preschool education

1. Introduction

Preschool education has an important role in developing high quality human resource. Focus on holistic children development is needed in order to prepare them with the ability to compete and have survival skills to meet global changes. According to Essa (1992), preschool education helps parents to enhance their children development through a holistic, meaningful and fun learning experience in enriched environment by stimulating their brains. Preschools can provide experiences that may not be provided at home even though the family has sufficient facilities (Rohaty, 2003). The first five years or preschool age is the best time for parents and teachers to stimulate children because of the fast growth of their brain in this period (Bloom, 1966; Doman, 2006). In this study, preschool education refers to education provided by kindergartens for children aged 4 to 6 years.

Children’s achievement in preschool is also determined by the involvement of parents in their education. The importance of parental involvement has been recognized by researchers and educators. Various studies in the last few decades showed positive effects of parental involvement to children (McAllister 1993; Conway 2003; Arnold et al., 2008 and Izzo et al., 1999; Miedel and Reynolds, 1999; Marcon, 1999; Taylor & Machida, 1994), to parents (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Rohaty, 2003; Ozcinar, 2006) and to the preschool (McAllister, 1993; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Parental involvement determines children’s achievement; improve parents’ knowledge, skills and self esteem, and the quality of preschool. Furthermore parental involvement has been the main goal of United States Department of Education (Fantuzzo et al., 1999) and the foundation or philosophy of Head Start (Administration for Children and Families, 2006).
1.1 Statement of the problem

Most of the studies on parental education reported were carried out in western countries. As the result, there is a major gap in the relevant literature in Indonesia. This research attempted to fill this gap by studying Parental involvement in Indonesia. Furthermore, there are presently no detailed guidelines from the government for planning activities that will involve parents in the preschool. Challenges in successful parent education included low perceptions of parents on the importance of preschool education, the lack of qualified teachers, the low quality of the kindergarten in the private sector and parents' demands on academic competencies.

Parental involvement in Indonesia is varied according to the types of kindergarten that is affected by kindergarten policy, kindergarten finance, teachers' perceptions on parental involvement and parents' perceptions that influence their involvement in kindergarten. Private kindergartens have different policy toward parental involvement and kindergartens with low financial capacity usually do not focus on parental involvement program but focus on how to fulfil the learning and teaching needs. While kindergartens with high financial capacity can implement parental involvement more easily, but the preschool policy may not be open toward parental involvement. Teachers might lack the knowledge and experience on how to involve parents. The opportunities for involvement provided by the preschool, however, influence the level of parental involvement.

Perceptions of teachers and principals about parental involvement are varied in terms of (a) the extent to which parents can be involved in decision making at the preschool, (b) the extent to which parents can help teachers and students in teaching and learning in the classroom, and (c) the extent to which parents can be involved in planning of preschool curriculum. Perceptions of teachers and principals are also influenced by their attributes. Thomas (1987) stated that problems arise when teachers refuse to work with parents who are not professionals. Teachers and principals need to find consensus on parental involvement.

In summary, although various studies revealed the positive impact of parental involvement in preschool education, it has not been the focus of attention of relevant education parties. Parent involvement in preschool education in Indonesia may be varied because of the diversity of kindergartens as well as teachers' and parents' perceptions and factors that influence them. At this stage there is no detailed guidance for principals to plan and implement parent involvement programs in Indonesia. The literature on parental involvement in preschool education in Indonesia is very rare because most of the studies have been reported were carried out in western countries. The factors described above provide the rationale of this study.

1.1.1 Research questions

This study has been designed to address the following questions:

1. What is the level of parental involvement in kindergarten activities?
2. Are there any significant differences in parental involvement according to type of kindergarten?

1.1.1.1 Hypothesis

This study was to test a null hypothesis Ho1: There were no significant differences in parental involvement according to type of kindergarten.

2. Review of the literature

Several researchers had expressed their strong opinions on the importance of parental involvement. Based on researches in Western countries (Bronfenbrenner, 1976; White, 1984; Douglas, 1969; Davie, 1973), Mc Conkey (1985) concluded that family had a greater influence on children's learning than school. Bronfenbrenner (1976)
stated without family involvement, the impact of any intervention program will vanish when the program ends. White (1984) concluded that informal education provided by parents and families give more impact on children’s development as a whole compared to formal education system. Next, Davie (1973) found that there were differences in reading achievement between children from family with different socio economic status. The most powerful factor is home environment. The implication of this study is that equal educational opportunity cannot be achieved only by increasing the number of education institutions. Parental involvement cannot be taken lightly because parents have great influence in their children's education. Preschool requires smart partnership with parents in order to enhance children’s learning, parents’ development and high quality kindergarten.

According to Pettygrove & Greenman (1984) parental involvement refers to parents’ participation in their children education such as in parenting, raising fund, decision making, volunteerism, or just simply exchanging information with preschool. Morrison (1978) argued the need of a comprehensive parental involvement and stressed that teachers have to consider parents as the ones who have the talents and abilities that can be used for their own benefit, children and educational agencies. Thus, the meaning of a comprehensive parent involvement is the actualization of parents’ potential in order to help them discover their strength and talents and use them for the benefit of themselves, children and preschool. In parental involvement program, they become the main part of development.

3. Methodology

A survey was conducted involving a stratified random sample of 294 parents of children in six private kindergartens in Curug district, Tangerang. The researcher divided kindergartens into three types based on the school fees which are kindergarten Type A (low school fee; less than 70 ringgit), Type B (moderate school fee; between 71 to 180 ringgit) and Type C (high school fee; more than 180 ringgit). The school fees indicated the socio economic status of parents. The questionnaire used in this study was adapted from the questionnaire used by Wee (1996) and Nelavathi (2004). A pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability of the questionnaire used in the actual study. A total of 30 parents in the Curug district were involved in the pilot study. The reliability obtained was Cronbach Alpha (\( \alpha \)) = 0.896 indicating high reliability.

4. Results of the study

1. The level of parental involvement in kindergarten activities

Table 1. indicated that the average mean score of parental involvement in kindergarten Type A was 1.772 (very low), while the average mean score of parental involvement in kindergarten Type B was 1.875 (low) and Type C was 2.204. In kindergarten Type A, the aspect of learning at home had the highest score (1.752) and decision making aspect had the lowest score (1.505), while in kindergarten type B and C, parenting aspect had the highest mean scores (1.967 and 2.527), and volunteerism aspect had the lowest mean scores (1.470 and 1.763). Average mean score on parental involvement in all types of kindergarten was 1.945. This is interpreted as a low level of involvement. This means parents lack involvement in preschool activities in all types of kindergartens.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of involvement</th>
<th>Mean score and interpretation</th>
<th>Average mean score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low school fee (Type A)</td>
<td>Moderate school fee (Type B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>1.716 (very low)</td>
<td>1.967 (low)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td>1.505 (very low)</td>
<td>1.644 (very low)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>2.265 (low)</td>
<td>2.436 (low)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning at home</td>
<td>1.752 (low)</td>
<td>1.920 (low)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Significant differences in parental involvement according to type of kindergarten.

To answer the second research question, One Way ANOVA test was conducted and the result was revealed in Table 2. The table showed $F$ value = 62.379, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$. This means that there were significant differences in parental involvement according to the types of kindergarten. To determine which pairs of kindergarten that showed the significant differences, Post Hoc Tukey test was conducted and the result was shown in Table 3. The result of Post Hoc Tukey test showed there were significant mean differences between Type B and C (0.023); between Type A and C (0.023); and between Type A and B (0.000). All $P$ values are less than significant level 0.05. This means hypothesis Ho1 was rejected. The conclusion is parental involvement in kindergartens are significantly different according to the types of kindergarten.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I)</th>
<th>(J)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type A</td>
<td>Type B</td>
<td>-1.033*</td>
<td>.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type C</td>
<td>-0.4321*</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type B</td>
<td>Type A</td>
<td>0.1033*</td>
<td>.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type C</td>
<td>-0.3287*</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type C</td>
<td>Type A</td>
<td>0.4321*</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type B</td>
<td>0.3287*</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant at the .05 level

5. Discussion

The findings showed there were mean differences ranging from Kindergarten type A to type C. However, the level of parental involvement in all three types of kindergarten were all at a low level (1.95). This means that parents lack
active involvement in kindergartens. This finding is consistent with the findings of Nelavathi (2004) and Mardziah (2006). It also supported the study of Rohaty et al. (2002) whereby only 10 percent of parents were actively involved in their children education and it is limited to taking their child to field trip, involving in school sport activity, graduation day, donating cakes but not involving in curriculum planning, tutoring or teaching. According to Norshidah et al. (2002), parental involvement is still limited to helping teacher because of lacking communication between parents and teachers.

The low level of involvement may be caused by some constraints faced by parents such as work schedule that they cannot manage to attend school activities (Parker et al. 2001; Hooker 1993; Casares 2006), negative attitudes and experiences of parents toward school (Norshidah 2002), socio economic status and education background of parents. (Driebe dan Cohran 1996; Yamamoto et al. 2006) dan Morse (2001). In this context, kindergarten policy and diversity also influence the level of parental involvement. Kindergarten may not have an open policy and do not have structured parent involvement program. The literature showed that there are principals and teachers who do not like parents to be involved in kindergarten activities. The financial factor in low fee preschool is causing them not to focus on parental involvement. Moreover, teachers also lack of knowledge in parental involvement programs. The findings implied that parental involvement still can be improved. The school has not used the energy, experience and skills of parents maximally in order to help children improve their performance. Principals need to carry out more activities that involve parents so that parents can reach a higher level of involvement.

Although the level of involvement in all types of kindergarten was the same, further analysis is needed to be conducted to sharpen the conclusion. The result of One way Anova test indicated significant differences in parental involvement according to the types of kindergarten. The school fee was assumed representing the social economic status of parents. This means parental involvement is significantly different according to their SES. Social economic status is a factor that strongly influence parental involvement. This finding was relevant with the findings of Nelavathi (2004); Mardziah (2006); Arnold et al. (2008); Yamamoto (2006); Lareau (2003) dan Castro et al (2004) that stated there was a significant relationship between SES and parental involvement. Yamamoto (2006) found that mothers from high SES tend to involve more in accessing formal information resources and reading at home but they less involve in activities at school. While mothers from moderate SES have higher confidence level to interact with teachers, provide support and advice for their children. They believe that their interest to children’s education and being involved directly are important in their role. Mothers from low SES tend to think that their children’s education has become the responsibility of teachers so that they less involve in their children’s education (Lareau 2000). The implication of this finding is that kindergarten may plan and carry out projects that will help parents to increase their incomes and skills. Morrison (1978) stated the goal of parental involvement can include providing opportunities for parents to improve their incomes through education program. Parental involvement can be viewed as a way to break poverty circle.

6. Conclusion

Parent involvement in preschool education is very much recommended because it gives a deep positive impact for children, parents and preschools. Parental involvement in education includes providing material and non material support to help children grow in a holistic way. Through this involvement, parents are also able to actualize their potential and talents to be used positively for the benefit of children and preschools. Preschool can achieve the goals set successfully and the quality of preschool can be improved.

The constraints on parental involvement cannot be used as an excuse not to implement the program or not involve in preschool education. However, teachers and principals should strive to build a close relationship with parents and do not underestimate their participation in education because they are the first and foremost teachers of their children. Thus, a number of strategies should be taken to increase parental involvement. By building quality relationship which considers the psychological aspects and the needs of parents, parental involvement can be enhanced. In addition, several strategies can be applied in the scenario of preschool education in Indonesia. This study provides the following recommendations to be considered by the various parties involved:

i. Kindergarten policy
   • Kindergarten should have an open policy toward parental involvement and support the implementation of parental involvement program.

ii. Kindergarten curriculum
Kindergarten needs to plan curriculum that includes structured parent involvement programs which cover planning, monitoring and evaluating of the program implemented. Epstein Model can be used as a guideline and may be modified according to Indonesia context.

Kindergarten needs to plan projects and activities that can improve parents’ knowledge and skills as a way to improve their income, especially for parents with low SES, such as giving workshops or training on small scale business.

iii. Teacher's roles
- Recognizing that they have an important role in parental involvement program and determine the success of children and kindergartens.
- Showing openness, do not underestimate the participation of parents in preschool activities and viewing parents as people who have skills for educating their children.

iv. Principal's roles
- Providing teachers training on parent involvement programs and improving teachers’ quality through various training.
- Establishing Parent Association as a way to improve communication and parents’ skills in decision making related to their children's education and the quality of kindergarten.
- Attracting parents to involve in preschool education so parents are motivated to involve despite the constraints that hinder their participation.

v. Government’s roles
- Providing guidelines as a reference for teachers in planning parental involvement programs.
- Providing financial support to kindergartens especially low fee kindergartens, so they can focus on parent involvement programs.
- Supporting employers to provide chances for parents to attend school activities in certain limits so as not to disrupt their work at the workplace.
- Supporting research on parental involvement and applying the recommendation in order to achieve effective implementation of parental involvement program in preschool education in Indonesia.

Parental involvement not only seeks to establish relationships between the parties, but also to handle education issues that arise. Sharing a harmonious atmosphere between teachers, principals and parents are important in developing children into future generations with high quality in all aspects of the life.

References


