

PARENTS' PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

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4405

Graduation Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
of Bachelor of Education with Honours (ESL)

Centre for Language Studies
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
April 2002

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this graduation project was made a reality because of the efforts and contribution from many great people.

First and foremost, I would like to take this opportunity of expressing my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Peter F. Cullip for his guidance in making this study a success. In addition, he had made useful comments and suggestions for which I am most grateful.

My special thanks also goes to the principal of SMK Siburan for giving me permission to conduct this study and to those parents who had given their cooperation in doing this study.

Last, but by no means least, my sincere thanks to my TESL and PKPG friends who had contributed their useful ideas, comments and proofreading throughout the course.

May God Bless You all.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- PQ** - Parents Questionnaire
- PSSIQ** - Parents Semi-structured Interview Questions
- SSSIQ** - School Semi-structured Interview questions

ABSTRACT

Parents' Participation in School Activities

Edwin Laway Uchau

This study sought to clarify parents' level of participation, the barriers they encounter when trying to participate in school activities, school efforts in enhancing parents' participation in school activities and the problems school encounter in trying to get parents' active participation in school activities.. Apart from that it also revealed the kind of activities parents mostly participated in and how the school-level variables influence the degree of parents' involvement in school activities.

The information gathered through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires of parents' activities revealed that parents' involvement was influenced by several factors which include parent's cliques, parent's education, attitudes of the school staff, cultural influences and family issues. It also showed the extent of school success in getting parents to get involve in school activities were influenced by several factors within and beyond the school capability to overcome them.

The results of this study show that many forms of parents' involvement such as the environment at home are not easily influenced by school-level variables. However, several forms of parents' involvement including parents' volunteerism and participation in parent-teacher's organizations can be increased when teachers attempt to contact parents more effectively. At the same time the result also showed the school limitation in its effort to bring parents closer to the school. The findings have implications on both the school and parents that affect their level of participation and the extent of success on the school side. An understanding of these factors will provide ways to increase and improve parents' involvement.

ABSTRAK

Penglibatan Ibu Bapa dalam Kegiatan Sekolah

Edwin Laway Uchau

Kajian in bertujuan untuk menjelaskan tahap penglibatan ibu bapa, halangan-halangan yang dihadapi dalam usaha untuk menyertai kegiatan sekolah, usaha-usaha yang dijalankan oleh pihak sekolah dan masalah-masalah yang dihadapi oleh pihak sekolah dalam usaha untuk melibatkan ibu bapa dalam kegiatan sekolah. Selain daripada itu ia juga menunjukkan jenis kegiatan yang kerap disertai oleh kebanyakan ibu bapa dan bagaimana variasi-variasi di sekolah dan di rumah mempengaruhi penglibatan ibu bapa dalam kegiatan sekolah.

Maklumat yang diperolehi melalui soal selidik dan temuduga yang separuh berstruktur tentang penglibatan ibu bapa dipengaruhi oleh beberapa faktor yang termasuk golongan kumpulan ibu bapa, pendidikan ibu bapa, sikap kakitangan sekolah, pengaruh budaya dan isu-isu keluarga. Ia juga menunjukkan sejauh mana sekolah berjaya di dalam usahanya untuk melibatkan ibu bapa dalam kegiatan sekolah dipengaruhi oleh beberapa faktor yang di dalam dan di luar kemampuan pihak sekolah untuk mengatasinya.

Keputusan yang diperolehi dalam kajian ini menunjukkan kebanyakan bentuk penglibatan ibu bapa seperti persekitaran di rumah tidak dapat dipengaruhi oleh tahap variasi sekolah. Walau bagaimanapun, beberapa bentuk penglibatan ibu bapa termasuk bantuan secara sukarela daripada ibu bapa dan penyertaan dalam organisasi ibu bapa-guru dapat diperluaskan lagi apabila guru-guru mengambil usaha untuk menghubungi ibu bapa dengan lebih berkesan lagi. Pada ketika yang sama keputusan ini juga menunjukkan limitasi pihak sekolah dalam usahanya untuk membawa ibu bapa supaya lebih rapat lagi dengan pihak sekolah. Dapatan yang diperolehi mempunyai kesan terhadap sekolah yang mempengaruhi kedua-dua tahap dan bidang penglibatan ibu bapa dalam kegiatan sekolah. Satu pemahaman tentang faktor-faktor ini akan membuka jalan untuk meluaskan dan memperbaiki penglibatan ibu bapa dalam kegiatan sekolah.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This section will discuss the background of the study, the problem the researcher wish to find out regarding the topic, the definition of term, research objectives and research questions, significance and limitation of the study, literature review, the research methodology and other aspects related to this study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Parents' involvement in their children's education is very important for the success of their children's education and in their adult life. Parents serve as a role model for their children in their concern for their children's success and upbringing. This would serve a good example for the children to realize how important education is that their parents want them to achieve while they are still young. By inculcating proper teaching and nurturing them from young it is hoped that this would bring further development in their children's life until they had a life of their own.

Research that had been done before found that the most important factor that influenced a student's success in his or her studies is their family background status. Such of these influential background factors that pose as the most important level of variables are ethnicity, family composition and the socioeconomic status of the family (SES). Parents serve as a link or a mediator in their children's achievement in the schooling

process. According to Astone & Mclanahan, Epstein and Stevenson and Baker (as cited in Feuerstein, 2000, p. 29) when parents are actively involved in their children's academic work, backed up with a stable SES, these elements will further improve students' character and attitude towards their academic and extracurricular work, attendance in school and in their overall academic performance throughout his schooling life.

However, according to Kerbow & Berndhardt (as cited in Feuerstein, 2000, p. 29) they stated that until now there had been no clear understanding provided by any researcher of the elements or mechanism that really encourage parents to become actively involved in their children's school activities. This could be due to researchers tendency to focus and emphasize on the already known and most common individual-level variables like SES, ethnicity and the structure or the background of the family. These three variables are usually the most common causes and predictors of parent's involvement and students' achievement in school activities. These three most influential variables however do not really show to what extent they really affect the home and school relationship as they are not easily influenced or affected by school or social policies either. The three variables which had been the main causes of the factors that determine the level of school and home relationship that also determine the success of the students in their education had convinced researchers to make a conclusion that these are the root of the problems that determined parent's involvement and students' success in school activities, as stated by Bowles and Gintis (as cited in Feuerstein, 2000, p. 29).

Though most conclusion had been laid on these three variables one aspect that researchers did not look into deeply is the role of the society in the student's achievement. We need to look at other perspective besides the student, family and school-level characteristics so that all parties can see and take the necessary steps to ease the problems and enhance each other's role in participating and cooperating with each other for the achievement of the students in their school activities.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study intends to find out the barriers parents encounter and their levels of participation when trying to be involved in school activities. Both schools and parents can act at their own pace and capacity when cooperating with each other to increase parent's involvement in school activities. When the school authority and parents are able to work hand in hand together it is hoped that success for the school, parents and most importantly, the students, will be achieved.

1.3 Definition of Term: Parental Involvement

The term "Parental Involvement" will be widely used in this study as this research intends to find out the level and barriers of parent's participation in their children's school activities. There are several ways parents can show their concern in their children's schooling process. Some of the roles that they can play are attending any functions conducted by the school, such as parent-teacher conference, work party, act as volunteers during sports day, etc. At home parents can help the school by helping their children doing their schoolwork such as homework, providing encouragement, monitoring and arranging

for their children's study time and television viewing and tutoring their children at home. Parents can also show a good model for their children to follow such as reading any academic articles or books for pleasure and thus inculcating the interest to read and encouraging them to read, too.

Although parents do not come to school to be directly involved in school activities, it does not mean that they are not involved. There are roles and different types of involvement which are indirectly related to their children's school activities for all their children's success in school normally begins at home. By showing and putting serious effort in their children's schoolwork at home, this kind of assistance do contribute greatly to their children's attendance, achievement at school and at home and in classroom behavior.

Parents are normally willing to give their support to school activities when they are required to do so but at their own level and capacity. However, parent's ability are restricted and limited by factors such as the family background in terms of the SES status, awareness of the importance of education to their children, literacy and the culture of the society. As such in order to get full parent's involvement, all members of the society such as the school, community, religious groups, friends, employees, etc, should put in the effort and collaboration so that more parent's participation can be achieved. Each and every one of us in the society has the role and responsibility to shoulder as guardian or parents to the children under our care whether directly or indirectly in seeing that their children take serious attention in their studies and school activities. Therefore, school authorities and the

local government must develop a strategy to communicate clearly with the public especially parents of the importance of their involvement in their children's school activities especially in their education so that not only the children will achieve success but also the school, parents and the society as a whole.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to find out;

- i. to what extent the school provides conducive environment to encourage parents to come to school to discuss about school-related matters.
- ii. the barriers parents encounter in trying to participate in school activities and their level of participation.
- iii. the level of parents' involvement in their children's education at home and at school.
- iv. how much the school involves the parents in their school activities such as sports day, manual work (*gotong-royong*), parent-teacher's meeting and other school functions.

1.5 Research questions

This research will be carried out based on the following questions;

- i. To what extent does the school welcome the presence of parents at school?
- ii. What are the barriers parents encounter when trying to participate in school activities and the extent of their level of participation?

- iii. To what degree do parents show their concern in their children's schoolwork at home and at school?
- iv. Does the school give the opportunity to parents to get involved in school activities they conducted?

1.6 Significance/Purpose of this Study

This study intends to examine the level of parents' involvement in their children's schoolwork and the barriers parents encounter in participating actively in school activities. With the findings made after the research had been carried out, the school authorities, parents and the public concern can play a more active role in enhancing the school-parent relationship. This is to enhance greater cooperation and achievement for the greater benefits of the school, parents and most importantly the school children. Not only the community of this village will gain the knowledge of how they can further involve themselves in their children's school activities that they are not aware of but also these findings will serve as a guide for the other villages in the Siburan district and other schools nearby.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

This study is only focused on the 50 parents from this village selected at random and therefore the findings may not be representative. Other than that these are parents whose children are day-scholars students and does not include parents whose children are boarders. As such the information gathered from these parents may not be representative for all the parents and conclusive for other areas. Another limitation is that this research

only covers the school where the children of the selected parents go to school and the way the school is administered is slightly different from that of other school. Some school might conduct activities more frequent than other school considering the position of the school in a semi-rural area where the school have various students from different level of background accommodating both day and boarding scholar students parents are selected and does not include those parents whose children are boarders. Therefore the data and findings obtain may not be representative for the whole parents outside this village or Siburan area.

1.8 Summary

This chapter discussed the early stages of the study such as introduction of the definition of term, statement of the problem, research questions and objectives, significance of the study and the limitation of the study. In the following chapter this study will focus on the literature review related to the topic.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews those literatures related to parent's participation in school activities. It will look into the roles played by the school into trying to encourage parents into getting involve in school activities which encompass their children's academic activities and activities related to parent and school activities. On the parents' side this literature review will explain about how and in what ways parents can give their support to the school in its effort to carry out its school policies successfully. Lastly, this literature review will also explain about the benefits that the school, parents and students will achieve when they work and support each other for the success of the students who is the most important element in this parent-school's partnership.

2.1 Research on parent's Involvement in School Activities

The involvement of parents in their children's education and its contribution towards their children's education success had been studied in the past years by many academic researchers relating to the roles of parents in education. According to Pena (2000, p.42) all sorts of approaches such as interviews, distribution of survey questionnaires, observations and other forms of analysis of parent's activities had shown that parental involvement was influenced by several factors. She stated that among these common factors are language, parent's cliques, parent's education or literacy level, attitude of the school staff, cultural influences, family issues and other hidden factors. All of these

factors are well known to the school administrator but teachers did not really know the serious effect and influence these factors had on parent's involvement. It is hoped that an understanding of these factors will provide ways to increase and improve parent's involvement in their children school activities.

Parent's involvement outside classroom activities had been welcomed by teachers but when parents tend to get involved in the classroom teaching and learning process most teachers do not really welcome their presence. This is one of the barriers that parents encounter when trying to get involved deeply in their children's school activities at a time when schools constantly call for parents' concern in their children's academic work at schools. Bauch & Chavkin (as cited in Feuerstein, 2000, p.42) mentioned that apart from that parents also encounter personal, cultural and structural barriers that have kept them from actively participating in their children's education.

2.1.2 Dimensions of Parental Involvement in School

Parent's role in their children's school activities covers a wide scope of area from discussing with their children about their homework at home to taking part in any parent-teacher's organization (PTO) meetings. According to Dimock, O' Donoghue & Robb (as cited in Feuerstein, 2000, p.29). They stated that there are basically five different aspects of parent's involvement. These five aspects are school choice, communication, teaching and learning, decision making through formal structure or state-based councils and the effect on the physical and material environment.

The first aspect that is school choice is about some parent's attitude in selecting schools they think is suitable for their children that meet their children's academic achievement, experiences level and the parent's expectation. These are high expectation parents who wish that when their children go to better school with better facility and better academic performance and better qualified teaching staff their children performance would also improve. According to Murphy (as cited in Feuerstein, 2000, p.30) he stated that this kind of school choice attitude of parents is not yet a widespread practice. In our context here, especially in rural area parents are normally not particular about which secondary school their children go to. Even if there are certain parents that might send their children to schools which they think are "better" the number of such cases are very rare and rarely heard or seen but this school-choice decision is beginning to take place though at a very minimal level rate.

The second aspect of parent's involvement is decision making through formal structure or state-based councils where parents are normally called for meetings with teachers or the school administration staff where they are expected to take part in the decision-making of any matters related to their children's education in school. This kind of participation required from parents by the school authorities are very important to ensure that academic and co-curricular activities conducted by the school will be supported by parents and thus will encourage their children to fully participate and give their best in ensuring success for the school, parents and most importantly the children themselves. When the students had done well in their school activities it means that all of the parties

concerned had done their part, the school-parent relationship will be strengthened and enhanced and the objective of achieving success for the children will be achieved.

The school decision to get parents to take part in making and giving decision in matters related to their children's schoolwork is one of the school's effort in restructuring the decision-making which had been decided solely by the school all these years. This has been part of the local education authority's effort in giving more authority to individual schools and parents to take active part in deciding what is best for their children. Parents are the intermediate party to their children and they play a crucial role in determining their children's involvement in their school activities as parents play the mediator role between school and their children.

The third aspect of parent's involvement is the teaching and learning of their children in the classroom. This aspect refers to when parents volunteer to get involved in the teaching and learning process in the classroom, discussing about their children's progress and helping or discussing with their children about their homework or school-related issues at home. When parents are concerned about how the teachers teach in the classroom and what their children learn, both teachers and their children tend to do better in their own perspective area. When teachers see how serious parents are towards their children's education, they tend to provide a good teaching environment in terms of the education given and their commitment towards their teaching to meet the parent's expectation. As for the students when they see that their teachers and parents work closely together to monitor

their progress they tend to work hard too in order to meet the high expectation of their parents and teachers.

The fourth aspect is about the effect on the physical and material provided by the school for their students. In this aspect parents are concerned about the facilities for learning provided by the school for their children in terms of their safety and comfort for their children. When the environment of the school are not conducive for the students to study, students would tend to feel distracted, uncomfortable and thus unable to concentrate in their teachers' teaching and also in their study. This will greatly affect the students' performance and frustrate those parents concerned who are expecting their children to learn with ease and progress in their school life. The fifth aspect is about parent's role in establishing a close contact with the school. In this aspect, both parents and school play an important role to inform each other of the students' problems, progresses at school and at home, behavior at home and at school. By doing so each party can take the necessary steps and precaution to reduce and overcome any problems arising from the students' attitude. When students' school life are closely monitored both at home and at school, parents and school can expect a better academic achievement and attitude for the students throughout their schooling process.

Therefore, these are the five aspects of parent-school relationship as a framework or guidelines to analyze various types of parent's involvement in school activities as one of the quantitative measures developed to describe types of involvement parents can play roles in.

2.1.3 Parent's Involvement and School Reform

Sarason and Lightfoot (as cited in Feuerstein, 2000, p. 30) suggested that parents should play a greater role in the school administration because both they and their children are influenced by school decisions. Parents should take part in the decision-making policy related to school matters because all the years it had been the school who had the authority to decide what is best for the parents and their children as schools are run by highly educated teachers. However, this one-sided kind of authority gradually began to be shifted from the local or divisional district office to the school itself due to the poor student's achievement in their education and parent's dissatisfaction with school policies.

According to Murphy (as cited in Feuerstein, 2000, p. 30) when schools are given the authority to take the necessary steps to make changes in the school administration and decision-making they were requested to share their power with parents who had been chosen to be committee members of some PTA organization or other school-parents related organization. By getting parents to be directly involved in the school policy-making decision schools would be able to know the problems parents encounter in their daily life dealing with their children education and thus take the appropriate measure to reduce these problems that might surface later at school and at home.

Caldwell & Spinks and Malen & Ogawa (as cited in Feuerstein, 2000, p. 31) stated that when reforms take place in schools where parents are involved together with school administrators in the policy-making of the school, several roles that are used to be held by the teachers, parents and students will also change. Bell (as cited in Feuerstein, 2000, p.