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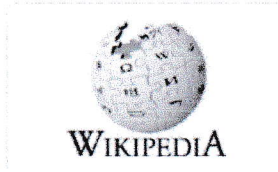
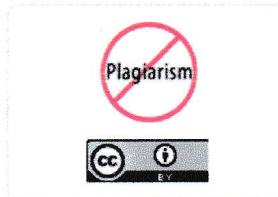
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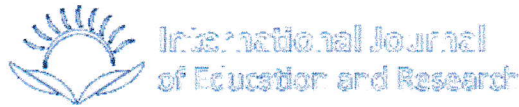
International Journal of Education and Research



News

Attention to Authors

The latest issue (December, 2016) of IJER has been published and hardcopies have been sent to authors.



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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: SHARING WHAT WORKS FOR PARENTS AND CHILDCARE CENTRES

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research was to study the feasibility practices of parental involvement at childcare centres, with six research questions derived from the objective. The data was collected through survey questionnaire (teachers, childcare providers and parents) and interviews (principals/managers). The results showed that parental involvement at childcare centres and parents' perception towards childcare providers/teachers were high, and centres encouraged parents' participation and involvement at the centres. Factors that influenced parents' involvement were: the requirements set by the centres, for the sake of their children, parents felt they need to contribute something in return for the low fee charged by the centres, and parents saw other parents doing it.

Keywords: Parental involvement, childcare centres, parents, teachers' beliefs, parents' beliefs

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The government of Malaysia has realized that in order to ensure its human capital is sustained there need to be an intervention at the grassroots, meaning, there has to be a serious commitment towards preparing the young minds of today for a better tomorrow. With this in mind, in 2007 the *PERMATA* Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Programme (below 4 years old) became the latest entry to the childcare centres of Malaysia. Initially, the *PERMATA* ECEC Centres were set up in each of the 13 states in Malaysia but through the years as the need arises there were more than one centre in each state. Today, the *PERMATA* program is being extended to other government agencies such as KEMAS and PERPADUAN childcare centres as well as privately owned. The *PERMATA* program provides early childhood care and education for children under four with priority given to those from families with a monthly household income of less than RM1,500 irrespective of ethnicity and religion. The founding principles of *PERMATA* ECEC Centres are: Every child is precious, every child is a part of the human capital of the country, every child needs the best education, and as such it is vital to develop the child's intellectual, emotional, cognitive and social aspects.

PERMATA ECEC Centres adopt the community-based integrated approach practiced by Pen Green Corby, United Kingdom under the Sure Start Program. Besides being childcare centres, these centres also prepare out-reach program, parenting courses, counselling, and healthcare services to help local community to build healthy and safe life style. Teachers at these centres resort to teaching techniques that aimed at stimulating the children's mind by allowing them to explore and play as they like, everything in the centre can be used as learning objects. Children are empowered to learn on their own through discoveries.

The uniqueness of the *PERMATA* program is that it encourages an active family and community involvement. At the centre various services such as healthcare, family counselling and advisory services on nutrition are organized to provide parents with knowledge on childcare. Parents, irrespective of whether the mother or father, has to be involved with the activities at the centre for a minimum of four hours within a month. The involvement may take in the form of helping out with the management of the children, event, field trip, or cleaning the centre. There is no specific program for parents' involvement and thus, each *PERMATA* centre has its own definition of what this involvement should be. However, if parents are unable to fulfil the four hours then a reminder will be issued to the concern parents. After two reminders, parents will be informed that their child has to be removed from the centre. This involvement is seen as a vital component of the program as it believes that parents should play an active role in their children's learning.

Studies on Malaysian parents' involvement with their young children are limited. Roopnarine, Lu, and Ahmeduzzaman (1989) studied Sarawak Chinese families (mothers' & fathers') involvement with their infant at home, Hossain and colleagues (2007) later focused on Khadazan fathers' and mothers' involvement with their infant at home, and Endicott (1992) looked into parental involvement among Kelantan mothers and fathers. All these studies focused on young children at home and not at the childcare centres. True it is necessary to know what parents do with their children at home but what is more important is whether parents extend this involvement to the centres where their children spend most of their days. If parents are directly involved with their children's learning at the centres then they are better informed on how to extend the learning from the centres to their homes. Such a move will allow for a smooth

transition of learning from centre to home and this will definitely enhanced not only children's learning but also helps parents to do what is best for their children's development.

Thus, this study attempts to fill the gap on parental involvement in Malaysia by focusing the context of the study at the childcare centres in Malaysia and examined some of the feasible parental practices that are currently being practised so as to be a guide to educators, teachers, childcare providers and parents that parental involvement is a vital aspect of children's learning and it ensures a better learning process for children. The study had several research questions as its focus: What are teachers' and parents' beliefs towards parental involvement? What are the factors that influence parents' to be involved at the centre? What are the challenges parents' faced in getting involved at the centre? How do centres inculcate parental involvement? What are the feasible practices of parental involvement at the centres?

1.1 Low Parental Involvement

Studies have identified that parents' cultural beliefs about parenting goals and its influence on children's development tend to shape parents' involvement in their children's development (Chao, 2000; Bhattacharya, 2000; Hwa-Froelich & Westby, 2003). Similarly, parents' belief and expectations on their children's education would decide their involvement in their children's education. Generally, Asian parents see teachers as the person who knows what is best for the children and this has made them less keen in being seen in school (Chan, 2004; Collignon, et al., 2001; Garcia Coll et al., 2002; Hwa-Froelich & Westby, 2003; Morrow, 1989). Thus, it is clear that both parents and practitioners differences in understanding and expectations of each other's role may lead to the strain relationship between them.

There has also been constant criticism on the lack of parents' involvement at childcare centres especially from low income group. They seemed to leave their child at the hands of the day care providers and little do they get themselves involved with the happenings at the centres. As such, this resulted in caregiver-parent interaction being generally low (Britner & Phillips, 1995; Zigler & Turner, 1982). Other reasons given for the low involvement are that these parents hold more than one job (Children's Defence Fund, 2001) and have little time, energy, or other resources necessary for active participation in their child's care and education outside the home.

On the other hand, there are parents who reported that they were satisfied with the program at the childcare centres (Shpancer, et al., 2002) while others perceived the centre to be of quality (Cryer & Burchinal, 1997) that there was no need for them to get involved. Similarly, parents who perceived that their children are performing well at school tend not to be involved (Mendez, 2010). Therefore, it could be concluded that parents' low involvement at the centres may have been contributed to their own doings rather than the caregiver.

Another reason could be that parents who were uninvolved were because they were not informed about the happenings in the centre (Bradbard, Endsley & Readdick, 1983; Cryer & Burchinal, 1997). How the centre communicates with parents may to a certain extent determine parents' involvement in the activities (Stein & Thorkildsen, 1990). For example in Greece, parental involvement is not encouraged at preschools as they do not believe in allowing parents to get involved and they do not encourage any communication between them, parents and the community (Rentzou, 2011). Such involvement is seen by teachers as causing confusion and it is also not supported by the Greek Law.

1.2 High Parental Involvement

It cannot be denied that there are parents who are interested in their child's development at the centre and they find the opportunity to ask questions to gain understanding of their child's progress (Elliot, 2003). These are educators and parents who believed that through their shared experiences, warm interaction and meaningful conversation would help in improving their children's learning and assist in meeting the daily needs of the child (Smith, 1999). Thus, frequent and open communication between parents and the educators is the "foundation for good home-school relationships" (Katz, Aidman, Reese & Clark, 1996).

Parents who are involved in their children's learning generally believed that early education and their expectations for their children's achievement are important and thus this tends to influence their involvement practices (Kim & Rohner, 2002; Martini, 1995). This belief was found to be more prevalent among Asian parents as they strongly believed that family values help to build a firm educational foundation in children (Chao, 1996; Ho, Peng, & Lai, 2001). Thus, they became more involved in their children's learning at home which later helps to enhance their children's academic and cognitive skills during the preschool years (Huntsinger et al., 1997; Schneider & Lee, 1990).

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Respondents: This study applied the convenient sampling as most of the centres were identified based on their performance. This recommendation was based on the annual performance of the center. The private centres were selected based on their willingness to be the respondents for this study. It is assumed that the centres that were willing to be involved in this study were centres where parental involvement was being practiced and that they were keen to share their experiences and practice with others.

Instrumentation: A quantitative method using questionnaire and a qualitative method using interview were used to capture the required data. The quantitative approach had survey questionnaire administered to childcare providers/teachers and parents and items covered their beliefs towards parental involvement (Rentzou, 2011; Jacob & Kelly, 2006) and factors influencing parents' involvement. 5 point likert scale was used with 1 being low and 5 being high. Data collection was also done through interviews with principals and managers of childcare centres, covering the factors that influence parents' involvement, challenges faced by parents in getting involved, how centres inculcate parental involvement and the feasible parental practices of parental involvement. Data from the questionnaire were key into the SPSS and analyzed. The interviews were transcribed and analyze to answer the research questions. All the findings were reported in a descriptive manner.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 Demography of the Respondents

Parents: A total of 169 parents volunteered to participate in this study. Parents came from the various childcare centres that represented the Malaysian childcare industry.

Teachers/childcare providers: There were 89 respondents representing the early childcare industry. The largest group were kindergarten teachers (55.1%) followed by the childcare provider (30.3%) and a small group comprised childcare officers (14.6%).

3.2 Research Question 1: What Are Teachers' Beliefs Towards Parental Involvement At Their Centres?

Overall, the findings revealed teachers' belief on parental involvement at their centres to be high (mean=4.06). This is because they make an effort to establish and maintain good relationships with parents (mean=4.53) as they believed that it is parent's responsibility to volunteer at the centres (mean=4.35). They also believed that if there is a problem they can talk about it immediately with parents (mean=4.36). According to teachers the child's parent is someone who knows about how to take care of the child (mean=4.10) thus, they value parents' opinion on most matters (mean=4.18). In addition, teachers believed that they are supposed to work closely with parents in order to gain a better understanding of the children (mean=4.37).

This high belief by teachers/childcare providers could be created by principals/managers' positive approach towards parents. This is expressed by them during the interview:

<this relationship is meaningful... very important to ensure that we are comfortable working ...> (Principal 2)

<... we don't want parents to place a distance by assuming that the nursery is a childcare provider... they need to look at us as parents to their children...> (Manager 1)

Principals also see the importance of partnership during this involvement. They believed that parental involvement helps in solving problems:

<...we share with them on the children's development..., teachers will ask parents on what happens at home and together we find the solution... if this relationship is healthy, then everything will run smoothly and well too...if this relationship is unhealthy, when small matters arise it may turn into a problem for both parties...> (Principal 1)

According to another Principal:

...sharing information is important for the development of children especially in discussing the children's problems such as emotional problems...> (Principal 2)

While another Manager believes that parental involvement helps strengthened the relationship between educators and parents:

<...a strong relationship with parents will build a bonding between parents, children and educators> (Manager 1)

It is also believed that parents need to cooperate to help monitor their children's learning at home:

< ... parents are supposed to cooperate so as to monitor and provide information on their children while they are at home, whether what is taught at the nursery is being continued to be done at home....> (Manager 2)

3.3 Research Question 2: What Are Parents' Beliefs Towards Teachers Managing Their Children At The Centres?

The findings revealed that parents' perception towards their children's childcare providers/teachers are high (mean= 4.05). This is evident when the findings reported parents truly value childcare providers/teachers opinions on most matter (mean=4.18) because parents

believed that the childcare providers/teachers are caring (mean=4.36) and genuinely care for their children (mean=4.53). In addition, parents believed that the childcare provider/teacher is someone who knows how to take care of their children (mean=4.10) and if there is a problem parents can always talk about it immediately with the childcare providers/teachers (mean=4.36). In addition, parents know that their children truly enjoys being with his/her childcare providers/teachers (mean=4.43). Therefore, parents are willing to establish and maintain good relationships with their children's childcare providers/teachers (mean=4.53).

3.4 Research question 3: What are the factors that influence parents to be involved in the activities at the centre?

Based on the interview with principals/managers these were the reasons for parents' involvement at the centres:

The PERMATA program requires them to be involved 4 hours with the children at the centre:

<... it is a requirement by PERMATA that parents who wished to enrol their children here must fulfil the 4 hours of involvement...> (Manager 6)

However, there were parents who believed that the 4 hours set by the PERMATA program is not enough so they get involved more than the required hours:

<... the 4 hours at the nursery is not enough... not enough because children at the nursery level still need more attention from parents...> (Manager 3)

While others are willing to put in more hours:

<There were parents who were willing to be involved for the sake of their children:

<... parents get involved because they don't want their child out of the PERMATA centre...> (Manager 4)

While others were forced into it:

<... initially they were not involved ... but in the end they did after seeing other parents' involvement...> (Principal 5)

Centres were sensitive to the constraints faced by parents who would like to get involved, therefore steps were taken to ensure parents' convenience:

<... normally parents are consulted on the days they are free and with their consent on the date and time, a program is then run... (Principal 6)

<... preferably activities are organised after working hours...> (Principal 7)

3.5 Research Question 4: What Are the Challenges Parents Faced In Getting Involved at the Centre?

According to all principals/managers time factor was the biggest challenge for parents to get involved:

<... parents are unable to fulfil the 4 hours... due to their working hours...>

<... work schedule is a hindrance to parents' involvement...>

3.6 Research Question 5: How Do Centres Inculcate Parental Involvement?

The quantitative findings revealed that the centres encouraged parents' participation and involvement in their centres (mean=4.46), organized orientation session for children and parents (mean=4.27) and communicate with parents efficiently in exchanging information about the centre.

During the interview, principals/managers informed that centres organised courses on parenting to emphasise the importance of parental involvement:

<... we have a course on early childcare education for parents... the speaker explained the importance of involvement so that parents are aware of their roles...> (*Manager 10*)

Centres also include family members in their definition of parental involvement. This is to ensure that everyone in the family can get involved at the centre:

<... elder siblings attend so as to be involved with the activities of their younger sibling ... to represent their parents during the involvements... > (*Manager 11*)

Centres also encouraged parents to participate by making it convenient especially for mothers with babies:

<... as for mothers with babies, they may bring them along to the centre...> (*Manager 10*)

Centres ensure that parents feel they are important stakeholders by taking into consideration parents' opinions and views:

<... parents' opinion are taken into account... and decisions are made based on majority's ...> (*Principal 8*)

... taken into account and discussed among the teachers first before the final say in the meeting...> (*Manager 3*)

Centres make it a requirement that parents attend program on children's progress:

<... Progress Day program... educators will inform and display the children's work for the past 6 months... its compulsory for parents to attend...> (*Principal 10*)

Centres ensure that parents feel at ease when they come to the centre:

<... the way parents communicate among themselves and also with teachers are not too formal... so that there exists good relationship...>(*Principal 4*)

Programs are held during weekends so as to ensure parents can be involved at the centre:

<... programs are held during weekends so all parents can attend together...> (*Principal 1*)

Centres prepare a schedule for parents to come to the centres:

<... certain dates are fixed for parents to attend the activities that will be carried out...>(*Principal 2*)

Centres prepare a daily log book to ensure parents know what happens to their child at the centre:

<... information sharing is done through the log book which needs to be carried and done daily by parents and teachers. In the morning parents will write down the condition of their

child before sending her/him to the kindergarten. Later,.. teacher will write the happenings of the child while at the kindergarten and parents will read it at home...> *(Principal 1)*

3.7 Research Question 6: What Are The Feasible Practices Of Parental Involvement At The Centres?

Principals/managers believed that these are the feasible practices of parental involvement:
Centres must encourage parents to communicate:

<... parents need to communicate not only with their own child but with other children too so that they will know the progress of these children...> *(Principal 2)*

When parents talk to other children they learn more about children's behaviour:

<... when parents talk to other children they will learn to know how these children behave in certain manner and they can use it to instil in their own children... therefore we always inform parents that they should always mingle among themselves so as to enhanced closer relationship...> *(Manager 1)*

Centres must create conducive environment for communication between childcare providers and parents:

<... childcare providers too feel at ease to communicate with parents if they are consistently present involved in the school...> *(Principal 3)*

Centres need to constantly remind parents why they need to be involved at the centre:

<... normally at the end of each gathering with parents, we will request that parents cooperate for the sake of the children's development...> *(Manager 2)*

<...parents' views and suggestions in terms of administration, program and relationships with parents may also be taken into consideration for the betterment of the centre ...> *(Manager 4)*

Centres must organize programs that are parent-centered:

<... there are also programs for fathers alone to create friendliness among them...> *(Manager 5)*

<... the most effective is when parents are together with their children doing an activity because it is at that moment that children will feel that their parents are concerned about them...>*(Principal 5)*

Create programs that are "light" and friendly:

<... set programs that are "light" such as family day and BBQ that can create friendliness as well as close the gap between parents and educators...> *(Manager 7)*

Organize orientation day prior to the registration:

<... 3 days from the day of registration are orientation days for children and parents...the first day is registration where parents who just registered gather including existing ones.... The objective of the orientation program is to bring closer the relationship between parents and also to allow the educators to gauge each parent's personality...> *(Manager 10)*

Centres need to be sensitive to parents' needs:

<... parents prefer to participate in activities that are outdoor rather than indoor...>
(Principal 2)

<... informal meetings with parents are held everyday... formal meetings 6 times a year according to procedure... held on Thursdays, 3.30 p.m. where parents would have finished working. Parents who can't be present can be represented...> (Principal 9)

There must be sharing of information between centres and parents:

<... parents, children and educators are seen as a family... if a child is out of control then parents can share this problem with us and we can advise and help parents to find a solution...> (Principal 5)

<... before any program is launch there will be a briefing and discussion between parents and us...> (Manager 3)

<... while the activity is on, parents and educators will take this opportunity to discuss about their children...> (Manager 6)

<... parents and childcare providers will exchange information concerning the children at the centre and also at home. It is from here that parents and childcare providers get to assess the child's level of progress...> (Manager 8)

Centre need to create various ways to disseminate information to parents:

Planner

<... we set the yearly planner and placed it on the notice board... any announcement, memo or from time to time, notice should also be pinned on the notice board...> (Manager 6)

<... program that are placed in the planner will be briefed during the meeting where it covers the daily, weekly, monthly and also yearly programs...>(Manager 4)

Through educators

<... educators play an important role in explaining to parents their role as educators and the learning concept at the centre so that parents will not get confused and will understand...> (Manager 9)

On special event

<... during the "Children's Development Day" they will share and discuss information on children's emotions and skills children acquire during certain duration...> (Manager 10)

Briefing by the management

<... the management will give a briefing on the correct ways of learning at the centre which highlights the correct way of educating children where it is more towards learning through play...> (Manager 11)

4.0 DISCUSSION

The results showed that teachers/childcare providers/childcare officers rated parental involvement at their centres as high. This could be true as they encouraged parents' participation and involvement in their centres. This is seen when they make an effort to establish and maintain good relationships with parents as they believed that it is parent's responsibility to volunteer at the centres. If parents are at the centre, should there is a problem they can talk about it immediately with the parents. They also believed that the child's parent is someone who knows about how to take care of their child thus, they value parents' opinion on most matters. In addition, teachers believed that they are supposed to work closely with parents in order to gain a better understanding of the children.

Furthermore, principals/managers create a positive approach towards parents' involvement. They see the centre, teachers and parents as a family and to them this relationship is meaningful. They avoid making parents feel that the centre alone should take care of their children but instead parents should see the adults in the centre as parents to their children. According to them this partnership is important as it helps to make it easier to solve the children's problems when parents are consistently present at the centre. In addition, this cooperation is also healthy as both parties are able to share information on children's learning and behaviour, thus, enabling a transfer of learning from centre to home as parents learned how to handle young children when they are at the centre.

Similarly, parents reported that their beliefs towards teachers/childcare providers/childcare officers in managing their children are high. This could be due to parents who value childcare providers/teachers' opinions on most matters especially when they see the adults in the centre as caring and genuinely care for their children. Parents too feel free to discuss their children's problems with the childcare providers/teachers and this may make them want to establish and maintain good relationships with the centre. Thus, the findings in this study seemed to support earlier studies on parental involvement at the centres (Chan, 2004; Collignon, et al., 2001; Garcia Coll et al., 2002; Hwa-Froelich & Westby, 2003; Morrow, 1989, Smith, 1999).

The foremost important practice that centres agreed as the best parental involvement practice is the communication between the centre, parents and children. Communication is identified by Atkin and Bastiani (1999) as the key component of a good parent/school relationship. It is also seen as a means of linking the child's experience in the home to the centre where mothers and childcare provider share information about the child's behaviour and development. Therefore, centres should always remind parents of their involvement at the centre.

The findings from the survey revealed that teachers/childcare providers/childcare officers believed that parental involvement at their centres is high. This is because they believed that parents should visit and be involved with their children's activities as parents' consistent presences do make a lot of difference to their children's learning. This belief is similar to those found in Plowden Report (1967) and Wolfendale and Topping (1996) study.

Thus, belief is an important indicator to successful parental involvement. Once teachers/childcare providers/childcare officers believed that parental involvement is the key to children's learning and development then, they are more likely to welcome parents to their centres. Therefore, this element of belief needs to be instilled in teachers/childcare providers because they are the key player in a successful parental involvement activities and programs.

Strong bonding is built on the beliefs that such relationships will help in children's learning. For example, when parents are in the centres there is sharing of information with

teachers/childcare providers/childcare officers. This also presents an opportunity for teachers/childcare providers/childcare officers to enquire about the children's behaviours and learning at home. Whether what is being learned at the centre is being continued at home with parent-child discussing it. Thus, this involvement also helps parents to understand the learning and activities that are being carried out in the centre (Robson & Smedley, 1996). This continuity involvement by parents from the centre to the home will help build the parent-child relationship into a more sensitive, stimulating and supportive interaction (Owen, Ware, & Barfoot, 2000) which in turn is linked to a more positive socialization process and this is how it will benefit the child's development (Rentzou, 2011).

Such strong teachers/childcare providers/childcare officers-parents relationship is unlikely to exist if parents don't have high regards of the adults in the centres. Based on the findings, parents reported that they believed that teachers/childcare providers/childcare officers can manage their children well. Parents value teachers/childcare providers/childcare officers' opinions concerning their children, believed that they cared for the children, believed that they are the best people to take care of the children, and they are approachable.

All these positive attitude of parents towards the teachers/childcare providers/childcare officers may translate into a positive effect on parents too. According to Elliot (2003) parents are more likely to take this opportunity to ask questions at the centre so as to gain a better understanding of their child's progress which may lead to influencing parents to get more involved at the centre (Kim & Rohner, 2002; Martini, 1995).

However, all these initiatives by teachers/childcare providers/childcare officers would not translate into successful parental involvement if parents are unable to participate. As most of the parents are employed and this posed as an obstacle to their involvement at the centres even though they are willing to be involved. Therefore, centres need to plan strategies that could help overcome this hindrance. Based on the interviews, several steps have been taken and were found to help reduce parents' attendance issues. Centres have included other members of the family to represent parents at the centre. This step is seen as a positive approach to getting all family members involved and not just parents. In addition, mothers with babies are also allowed to bring them along so as not to use it as an excuse not to be present.

Centres also showed that they take parents' involvement seriously. In terms of organizing activities and programs, parents were consulted on the most convenient date and time that will not only allow them to be present at the centre but also make them feel as an important member of the centre. Therefore, decisions are only made after taking into account parents' opinion and views.

Most of the time, mothers were the ones who are more involved in the parental involvement activities, leaving fathers out. Thus, there is a need to educate fathers on their contribution at the centres. During the interview, principals and managers voiced their concern on this matter and they have initiated programs for fathers alone. This helps to close the gap between the centre and fathers.

Principals and managers have expressed their best parental involvement practices that could be applied to other centres. Firstly, centres should consistently remind parents they need to cooperate with the centres for the sake of their child's development. Therefore, parents need to be regular at the centres. Parents who are constantly present at the centre will make the teachers/childcare providers feel at ease to communicate with them. This atmosphere of friendliness will lead to both parties being more approachable, open to share and exchange

information concerning the child at the centre and at home, listen to behavioural and learning problems, give advice and find solutions to existing issues on the child, and give feedback on changes made by the child.

It is important to ensure parents, teachers/childcare providers/childcare officers are aware on the progress and development of the children, centres require parents to write the condition of their child in a log book before leaving the child at the centre. Teachers/childcare providers/childcare officers will then continue reporting what happens with the child at the centre in the log book. At the end of the day, the log book is handed to parents to be read at home. In this way, parents and teachers/childcare providers are informed of the progress of the child:

Parents mentioned that they believed they are just average when it comes to the skill in raising their children. Therefore, to ensure parents can help to develop their children's behaviour and learning abilities, centres have proposed courses on parenting skills to educate parents on the correct approach to handling young children, and conduct sessions on the correct way of educating young children.

Lastly, centres need to plan activities and programs that are parent-centred. This would mean that whenever parents drop in at the centre they are welcomed to join the activity that is being done on that day. In addition, announcements on future activities and programs that involved parents need to be in the yearly planner and given to parents at the beginning of the year so that they can block the dates and apply for leave. In order to ensure that parents are aware of the daily and weekly activities and programs at the centre, notices on them need to be placed early so parents can prepare their children with the necessary materials and knowledge of the activities and programs for the next day or week. In order to ensure parents understand what they have to do in order to participate, briefing and discussion on the activities and programs need to be disseminate at centre-parent meetings. This will allow for less confusion and misunderstanding when the activities and programs are carried out.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The findings of the study have enlightened certain aspects of the centres' management policies concerning parents' involvement. Even though the sampling is limited and focused only on two states but generally what has been reported may helped the early childcare industry to look seriously in allowing parents to be more involved at the centres than just at home. Some of the practices do help to improve parents' knowledge on child raising, learning and behaviour. It would be ideal if centres could identify some of the practices in this study and create their own parental involvement guide to their parents. This will greatly help to improve teachers/childcare provider/parents/principal/managers knowledge and understanding of the importance of parental involvement and its contributions to children's development.

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