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Models of School-Family Partnerships: The Malaysian Context

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ABSTRAK

Kajian ini memperlihatkan persepsi guru besar dan guru-guru terhadap konsep, kepentingan, dan amalan sekolah dalam penglibatan ibu bapa untuk mengenal pasti model perkongsian yang wujud di sekolah rendah. Lima ratus lima puluh tiga responden menjawab soalan soal selidik. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa persepsi responden terhadap konsep perkongsian adalah separa. Ramai responden mempersepsikan bahawa penglibatan ibu bapa adalah penting dalam pendidikan anak-anak, terutama untuk perkembangan kognitif, emosi, dan sosial. Dapatan juga menunjukkan hanya beberapa amalan sekolah dalam penglibatan ibu bapa sahaja dikendalikan oleh sekolah. Terdapat beberapa model perkongsian digunakan oleh sekolah tetapi model-model ini adalah model perkongsian yang separa. Hasil kajian ini mencadangkan bahawa untuk menghasilkan perkongsian yang holistik, sekolah perlu mengamalkan suatu model perkongsian yang komprehensif di mana penglibatan ibu bapa seharusnya meliputi bukan sahaja aktiviti di rumah tetapi juga pada peringkat sekolah.

ABSTRACT

This study examined the headmasters' and teachers' perceptions towards the concepts, importance and school practices in parental involvement in order to identify the partnership models that existed in primary schools. Five hundred and fifty three respondents answered the questionnaires. The findings showed that the respondents' perceptions of the concepts of partnerships were partial. Majority of them perceived that parental involvement was important in the children's education especially for the children's cognitive, emotional, and social development. The findings also showed that only a few school practices in parent involvement were carried out. A few partnership models were adopted by the schools but these models were partial partnership models. The findings suggest that a holistic partnership requires schools to adopt a comprehensive model where parental involvement should extend from home-based activities to school-based activities.

INTRODUCTION

Our present education system focuses largely on teachers as the key players in the children's education with little consideration being placed in having parents as partners in the children's learning process. The partial parental involvement is not only inadequate but it also fosters a society of individuals unprepared to engage in competent cooperative interactions. It is essential then, that teachers be adept not only in working alone but also in having parents as partners.

Family involvement and collaboration are needed to assist the school in attaining its goals, after all parents are the children's first teachers and they are indirectly involved in the education of their children too (Berger 1991). The support and cooperation of families in improving the children's education have also been accentuated by Hallinger *et al.* (1992) and Epstein and Becker

(1982). Stoll and Fink (1996) note, virtually every reform effort has placed a heavy emphasis on parent involvement in schools. Likewise, Dreeben (1968) and Lightfoot (1978) indicate that although there are important differences between schools and families, there is a need to recognise important similarities: overlapping of goals, responsibilities, and mutual influence of the two major environments which simultaneously affect children's learning, growth and development. The reciprocal interaction between these social systems can focus efforts to establish a collaborative partnership to support and fulfill the needs of the children.

Obviously, the concept of "separate responsibilities" of institutions, which assumes that the schools and the families have different goals, roles and responsibilities, is not practical anymore (Epstein 1987a). The assumption of "separate resposibilities" maintained by our education system need to be reviewed if we plan to achieve the nation's educational goals of attaining highest quality education in the twenty-first century. Therefore the first measure that must be taken is for the school and family institutions to abandon their concept of "individualism" and move towards the concept of "partnership" in attending to the children's cognitive, emotional, social, physical and spiritual needs. There is a need for a paradigm shift in the school systems whereby the concept of "separate responsibilities" must be transformed into "shared responsibilities" where the schools and the families share responsibility and accountability in providing the children with their social, emotional and psychoeducational needs of the children.

Viewing the significant contribution of parents and families in the West, can the Malaysian schools be successful if schools welcome parents to play more concrete roles in assisting their children in their learning process? Can the schools involve parents extensively in their children's learning activities? Currently, parental involvement is only via the Parent-Teacher Association or also known as 'Persatuan Ibu Bapa dan Guru' (PIBG) platform (Wee 1996; Wee 1995). Parental involvement must be extended beyond the horizon of just being involved in the school's PIBG and in other school support activities. This means parental involvement should not be confined to serving as commitee members in the PIBG's or in supporting the school in its out-of-classroom activities, and in the children's home-based learning activities. Parents are to play a key role in providing assistance in their children's education. Their involvement should expand beyond these practices and they should be directly involved as active partners in the children learning activities at classroom and school levels.

In this article, school-family partnerships in the context of our centralised education system will be discussed. The focus of this article is to examine the perceptions of headmasters and teachers on the concepts, importance and practices of school and family partnerships in order to understand models of partnerships that exist in the Malaysian primary schools.

Concepts of Partnerships

The term "partnership" is widespread, invoked to describe any number of relationships and activities. Partnership - like change-is a process, not an event. A partnership is a relationship between institutions (and people within those institutions). Partnerships often start modestly, with one or two partners providing specific services, and grow through the years to include increasing numbers of partners working on larger and larger concerns. Partnerships are, after all, developing reciprocal roles and sharing resources in order to accomplish a goal that cannot be addressed successfully by any one party (U.S Department of Education 1993).

Seeley (1982) describes partnership as a common effort toward common goals whereby partners may help one another in general or specific ways but none is ever a client, because the relationship is mutual. Seeley's definition is supported by Moore and Littlejohn (1992) who describe partnership as an interactive process in which all the parties are equal partners. In this context, equal partnership is more than just an annual parent-teacher meetings, rather it includes parents in a variety of roles over time. In the field of education, the partnership concept provides a more prolific framework. Partnership in education is the ideal school and family connection where both the school and the family recognise, respect and support each other in the children's learning (Epstein 1992). The primary aim of creating partnership is for the school to reach out to families and prompt families to realise that they have a role, and are responsible toward the children's learning process. As Epstein

(1995) states the principal goals of partnerships are to develop and conduct better communication with families across the grades in order to assist students to succeed in school.

The Importance of School and Family Partnerships

Several studies have indicated that the children's learning outcomes will be enhanced when the family and the school learning environments are supportive and in harmony with each other. (Swap 1993). School and family partnerships represent a shared approach to the education of children. Partners recognised their shared interests in and responsibilities for children, and they work together to create better programmes and opportunities for students (Epstein 1995). The collaboration between the school and the family institutions are essential for the accomplishment of school and family partnerships. A strong partnership between the school and the home is needed if quality education is to be provided to all children (Haley and Berry 1988). Teachers who work effectively with parents really believe in the concept of involvement. By working together, they can reinforce each other's effort and without this cooperation, neither the teacher nor the parent can be fully effective. Hence, a partnership between teachers and families is essential for the children's success in education.

The importance of school and family partnerships can be examined within the three philosophies suggested by Swap (1993), so that schools and families could collaborate in designing more effective educational activities to enhance children's success in their education. The three philosophies are as follows:

a. A philosophy of school-home transmission, in which the school educators specify what parents should do at home to support the child's progress and to instil the values of the dominant culture.
b. A philosophy of interactive learning, in which school educators would work with parents to establish continuity between the classrooms and the homes and assist parents in understanding the rituals and values of the schools.
c. A philosophy of partnership for school success, in which parents are welcomed as assets and resources, are respected as equals in the educational organisation, and are empowered as a means of improving their lives, and their children's lives.

Research on parental involvement has focused primarily on educational outcomes for children. The majority of this work is correlational, not experimental, in nature. Reviews of several research literature revealed that family involvement in the children's education has proven to increase students' achievements, school improvement, students' psychoeducational and social development, improvement in attendance, motivation, self-esteem and behavior, and improvement in parent-teacher relationships (Dietz 1997; Epstein 1995, 1992; Henderson and Berla 1994; Stevenson and Baker 1987; Henderson 1987; Walberg 1984; Epstein and Dauber 1991; Chavkin and Gonzalez 1995).

The perceptions of the concepts of partnerships and the importance of partnerships held by the educators are important in determining the model of partnerships practised by the schools.

Models of School-Family Partnerships

Various types of models have been designed by researchers in their study of school-family partnerships. A review of some of these models may provide some insights into the model of partnerships adopted by the schools in this study. Gordon (1977) proposes the family-impact and the school-impact model. Seeley's (1989) introduces the delegation model whereas Swap's (1993) forwards the protective model, the school-to-home transmission model and the curriculum enrichment model. However, Epstein's (1988) proposes a comprehensive six-type parental involvement model and this model is used as the framework in identifying the model adopted by the schools in partnerships.

Gordon's (1977) Model of Partnerships

The Family-Impact Model

This model is designed to show how family members cope with the demands of the educational system. In this model, the school reaches out to the families via various communication techniques that is unidirectional and parents are expected to respond to the directives of the professional. However, this model does not always stimulate active or sustained parent participation.

The School-Impact Model

The existence of this model is to show how parents could be involved in the school as volunteers or in parent advisory committees, in an effort to change the schools to be more responsive to the needs of the parents and the home.

Seeley's (1989) Delegation Model

This model emphasizes that parents delegate to the school the responsibility of educating the children and that educators accept this delegation of responsibility. In this model the school is given the burden and responsibility in educating the children, and having parents as advocates or decision makers is seen as an interference with the educators' jobs.

Swap's (1993) Models of Partnerships

The Protective Model

This model shows how conflict is reduced between parents and educators, and how the school is protected against parent intrusion in most circumstances. This model is identified as the blueprint for avoiding intensive interactions between home and school and for keeping the roles of teachers and parents separate.

The School-to-Home Transmission Model

This model emphasizes the importance of continuity between home and school, and the important role that parents play in enhancing the educational achievement of their children. Educators have a responsibility to communicate with parents to enlist them in supporting the objectives of the school, and to inform them about children's progress.

The Curriculum Enrichment Model

This model gives importance to the expansion and extention of the school's curriculum by incorporating into it the contributions of families. The assumptions of this model is that parents and educators should work together to enrich curriculum objectives and context. Parents have important expertise to contribute and that the interaction between parents and the school personnel will enhance the educational objectives of the school.

Epstein's (1988) Model of Partnerships

Earlier studies and reviews suggest that the key to partnership is via Epstein's six-type parental involvement practices (Epstein 1995; 1988). Even though this model is culturally biased, it is used in most studies because of its comprehensiveness and it delineates several types of activities in which parents can be involved to enhance their children's education at home or at school. This model is based on Epstein's thirty years of research and advocacy for parental involvement in more than 50 elementary and middle schools in Baltimore, Maryland.

Type 1-Parenting: Basic Responsibilities of Families

This refers to the basic responsibilities of families to ensure children's health and safety; to provide parenting and child-rearing skills needed to prepare children for school; to respond to the continual need to supervise, discipline, and guide children at each age level; and to build positive home conditions that support school learning and behaviour appropriate for each grade level.

Type 2-Communication: Basic Responsibilities of Schools

Type 2 refers to the communications from school to home about school programmes and children's progress. In the light of the school's responsibilities in this parent involvement practices, school should design effective forms of communication so that families could be informed of the school's programmes and the children's improvement.

Type 3-Volunteer: Parent Involvement at School

This type refers to parent volunteers who assist teachers, headmasters, and children in classrooms or in other school-based activities. It also refers to parents who come to school to support students' performances and sports activities; to attend workshops or other educational and training programmes; and to improve themselves so that they are able to assist their children in their learning.

Type 4-Home Involvement: Parent Involvement in Home Learning Activities

It refers to parent-initiated activities or child-initiated requests for help, and instructions from teachers for parents to monitor and assist their own children at home on learning activities that are coordinated with the children's classwork.

Type 5-School Governance: Leadership and Participation

This refers to parents taking decision-making roles in the PTA/PTO, advisory councils, or

other committees or groups at the school, district, or state level. It also refers to parent and community activists in independent advocacy groups that monitor the schools and work for school improvement.

Type 6-Collaboration: Collaborating with the Community

A sixth type of involvement has been suggested as an important component in school's comprehensive programmes for involving families and communities in their children's education (California State Board of Education 1988). Type 6 practice refers to school having connections with agencies, businesses representatives, religious groups and other groups that share responsibility for the children's education and future successes. It refers to connections that schools, students and families contribute to the community (Epstein 1988, 1992; Dietz 1992).

Epstein (1988; 1992; 1995) six-part model encompasses all the aspects of parental involvement practices in the children's education. This comprehensive model acts as a bridge for teachers, families, and communities to cooperate toward the attainment of school and family partnerships. Apparently, school and family partnerships will only be successful when students, families, teachers and communities collaborate and interact with one another in the children's learning.

Objectives

A study was carried out to identify the model of school-family partnerships by examining the headmasters' and teachers' perceptions of the concepts, importance and school practices in parental involvement. Specifically this study seeks answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the headmasters' and teachers' perceptions of the concepts of school and family partnerships ?
2. What are the perceptions of headmasters and teachers on the importance of parental involvement in the children's education?
3. What are the school practices in parental involvement as reported by the headmasters and teachers?
4. What are the partnership models adopted by the primary schools?

METHOD

Design

The study focused on the headmasters' and teachers' perceptions of the concepts, importance and practices of school and family partnerships. This study was primarily quantitative in nature, using a descriptive research design. As this study was exploratory in nature, a descriptive survey methodology was employed to gather information about parental involvement.

Samples

Samples were selected from 10 high-achieving and 10 low-achieving schools. Samples consist of 533 teachers selected using proportionate stratified random sampling and 20 headmasters representing the headmasters' population of these schools.

Instrumentation

Questionnaires were used to gather data from the respondents. The headmasters' and teachers' perceptions of the concepts of school and family partnerships comprised 19 items identifying what were the aspects that parents should and should not be involved, followed by an open-ended question. The questionnaires on the perceptions of headmasters and teachers on the importance of parental involvement in the children's education consisted of 10 items, using a four-point Likert scale with the following anchors: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Agree, 4-Strongly Agree.

The instrument was pilot tested with thirty teachers, selected randomly to determine the reliability coefficient. The reliability coefficient of the instrument using Cronbach alpha was found to be .70. No item was deleted from the instrument when the actual study was conducted and the reliability coefficient of the instrument was found to be .79.

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis was used. The respondents' responses on their perceptions of the concepts on school and family partnerships, their perceptions on the importance of parental involvement in the children's education and the school practices were analysed using frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation.

DISCUSSION

Concepts of Partnerships

Overall, the findings revealed that the respondents' perceptions on the concepts of partnerships were partial and confined to school support activities and home-based learning activities. Most of the headmasters and teachers indicated that the need for parental involvement was higher in Type 1: parenting practice (96.4%); Type 2: communication practice (74.5%); Type 4: home involvement practice (91.3%) and Type 6: collaboration practice (90.1%). However, the respondents' perceptions on the need for parental involvement in Type 3: Volunteer practice (14.8%) and Type 5: School Governance practice (4.3%) were low. Majority of the respondents perceived the need for parents to be involved only in out-of-classroom activities, but not in classroom instructional activities and school governance practices, especially in curriculum development, and in matters related to the school's management (Table 1).

This finding is not surprising as most teachers believe that their classroom is their private domains and that parents' intervention in the classrooms may jeopardise their professional status and interfere in the children's progress. Perhaps, the educators' belief systems and preconceived concepts on the need for parents and families to be involved only in the non-instructional activities might have influenced the teachers' overall perceptions on the concept of school and family partnerships, thus restricting and confining parental involvement to only school support activities and home learning activities. In addition, perhaps, the teachers' lack of knowledge and skills on how they can solicit parents/families to be involved in the children's education may be one of the reasons leading to their partial perceptions on the concept of partnership too. The findings of this

TABLE 1
Frequency distribution and percentage of respondents' perceptions of concepts of partnerships

Practices	% of Respondents indicating the Need for parental involvement				
	Headmasters		Teachers		Total (n=553)
	HA n=10	LA n=10	HA n=281	LA n=252	
Parenting	9 (90)	10 (100)	269 (95.7)	245 (97.2)	533 (96.4)
Communication	8 (80)	9 (90)	197 (70.1)	198 (78.6)	412 (74.5)
Volunteer	2 (20)	1 (10)	46 (16.4)	33 (13.1)	82 (14.8)
Home involvement	9 (90)	10 (100)	249 (88.6)	237 (94)	505 (91.3)
School governance	1 (10)	0	3 (4.6)	10 (4.0)	24 (4.3)
Collaboration with community	9 (90)	10 (100)	242 (86.1)	227 (90.1)	488 (88.2)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentages
HA - High Achieving Schools (n = 291)
LA - Low Achieving Schools (n = 262)

study were supported by Leitch and Tangri's (1988) findings which indicated that teachers' stereotypes and misperceptions were the major impediments to school and family partnerships.

The respondents indicated that it was the teachers' roles to educate the children in school and teaching should be left to the experts. The teachers' perceptions are supporting Epstein's (1987a) theory of separate spheres of influence which stresses on the separate roles and responsibilities of educators and parents in the children's education. Similarly, the findings are supporting Seeley's (1989) delegation model and Swap's (1993) protective model of partnership.

Importance of Parental Involvement in Children's Education

The findings showed that majority of the respondents perceived that parental involvement was important in the children's education especially in practices pertaining to the children's cognitive, emotional and social growth and development; but less important in practices that were related to the effectiveness of teachers' teaching and children's learning activities; and in the organisation and management of the schools (Table 2).

More than 90% of the respondents perceived that parental involvement was important in *fostering closer relationships between the school and family* (93.7%), and in the *regularity of the children's school attendance* (92.6%). Similarly, more than 80% of the respondents perceived that parental involvement was important for the *enhancement of children's self-concept in the school* (89.7%); for the *improvement of children's academic achievement* (89.2%); for *diagnosis of academic difficulty faced by the children* (82.6%); and for *school improvement towards excellence* (81.0%). More than 75% of the respondents perceived that parental involvement was important in helping teachers to *organise out-of-classroom activities such as Sports Day, etc.*

The findings also indicated that from the total ten items, only three items indicated a higher negative responses of *'disagree'* and *'strongly disagree'*. The items were *'organisation and management of the schools'* (78.%); effectiveness of classroom learning activities (54.3%); and *teachers' effectiveness in carrying out their daily tasks* (48.8%)

The respondents' perceptions on the importance of parental involvement in the children's education were parallel to their perceptions on the need for parents to be involved in the children's learning process as discussed in the preceding section on the respondents' concepts of partnerships. The findings on the respondents' perceptions on the importance of parental involvement in the children's education were supported by Swap (1993) research.

School Practices in Parental Involvement

The findings on the school practices in parental involvement will be discussed using mean score. The mean score of the school practices range from 1.00 at the lowest end to 4.00 on the highest extreme. On the whole, the respondents reported that the schools only organise a few practices to involve parents in the children's education (Table 3).

a. Home involvement practice, that is parental involvement in the children's home learning activities was the most predominant and popular practice carried out by the high-achieving and low-achieving schools as indicated by the mean of 3.25 and 3.33 respectively. Parental involvement in children's home-based learning activities were mostly in assisting their children in their homework and in their reading activity.
b. Communication practice was also carried out by the both the schools. The high-achieving schools had more communication with parents/ families (mean=3.00) whereas the low-achieving schools indicated otherwise (2.95). A variety of communication tools, such as telephones, letters, notes, memos and newsletters were used by the schools to communicate with parents/families. The schools' contact with parents/ families were mostly pertaining to children's academic difficulty and classroom disruptions, rather than informing parents of their children's success or soliciting parents to be involved in the children's learning activities.
c. Collaboration practice was seldom carried out by the school as indicated by the mean of less than 3.00. The low-achieving schools had more collaborative support from the community (mean=2.56), and they differed significantly with the high-achieving schools at the level of .05. The schools received support from various agencies and organisations.

TABLE 2
Frequency distribution and percentage of respondents' perceptions on the importance of parental involvement in children's education

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	HA n (%)	LA n (%)	HA n (%)	LA n (%)	HA n (%)	LA n (%)	HA n (%)	LA n (%)
Improvement of school towards excellence	68 (23.4)	105 (40.1)	156 (53.6)	119 (45.4)	52 (17.9)	34 (13.0)	15 (5.2)	4 (1.5)
Teachers' effectiveness in carrying out their daily tasks	29 (10.0)	31 (11.8)	99 (34.0)	124 (47.3)	123 (42.3)	69 (26.3)	40 (13.7)	38 (14.5)
Improvement in children's academic achievement	105 (36.1)	121 (46.2)	148 (50.9)	119 (45.4)	29 (10.0)	17 (6.5)	9 (3.1)	5 (1.9)
Effectiveness of classroom learning activities	24 (8.2)	22 (8.4)	89 (30.6)	118 (45.0)	135 (46.4)	97 (37.0)	43 (14.8	25 (9.5)
Organising out-of-classroom activities, such as Sports Day	84 (28.9)	78 (29.8)	126 (43.3)	139 (53.1)	63 (21.6)	37 (14.1)	18 (6.2)	8 (3.1)

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	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	HA n (%)	LA n (%)	HA n (%)	LA n (%)	HA n (%)	LA n (%)	HA n (%)	LA n (%)
Organisation and management of the school	11 (3.8)	13 (2.4)	43 (14.8)	55 (21.0)	114 (39.2)	111 42.4)	123 (42.3)	83 (31.7)
Diagnosis of academic difficulty faced by the children	47 (47.2)	62 (23.7)	192 (66.0)	156 (59.5)	38 (13.1)	37 (14.1)	14 (4.8)	7 (2.7)
Closer relationships between the school and the family	93 (32.0)	132 (50.4)	176 (60.5)	117 (44.7)	17 (5.8)	10 (3.8)	5 (1.7)	3 (1.1)
Regularity of children's school attendance	117 (40.2)	122 (46.6)	150 (51.5)	123 (46.9)	19 (6.5)	13 (5.0)	5 (1.7)	4 (1.5)
Enhancement of children's self-concept in the school	83 (28.5)	87 (33.2)	173 (59.5)	153 (58.4)	32 (11.0)	18 (6.9)	3 (1.0)	4 (1.5)

HA - High Achieving Schools (n = 291)
LA - Low Achieving Schools (n = 262)

TABLE 3
Means, standard deviation and t-test of respondents' perceptions of overall school practices in parental involvement

Practices	School	Mean	S.D.	t	df	sig. (p)
Parenting	HA	1.76	. 70	-2. 62	539.42	. 009**
	LA	1.92	. 73			
Communication	HA	3.00	. 54	1. 22	545.90	. 221
	LA	2. 95	. 53			
Volunteer	HA	2.07	. 58	5. 72	551	. 000**
	LA	1.81	. 48			
Home Involvement	HA	3.25	. 62	-1. 75	550.80	. 080
	LA	3.33	. 56			
School Governance	HA	2.60	. 66	-2. 03	551	. 043*
	LA	2.71	. 59			
Collaboration	HA	2.41	. 74	-2. 36	549.37	. 018*
	LA	2.56	. 70			

LA - Low - achieving schools (n = 262)
HA - High - achieving schools (n = 291)

Scale: (1) Never (3) Sometimes
(2) Seldom (4) Never

*significance at p<. 05
**significance at p<. 01

However, there were some practices that were not popular in the schools studied. The practices were as follows:

a. School governance practice was seldom carried out by the school, as indicated by the average mean score 2.65. Parental involvement in this practice was minimal as their only involvement was via the school's PIBG. The high-achieving schools reported that their schools differed significantly from the low-achieving schools in carrying out this practice at the level of .05 as indicated by the t-test.
b. Volunteer practice was not a popular practice in the high-achieving schools (mean=2.07) compared to the low-achieving schools (mean=1.81). The high-achieving schools reported that parent volunteers in their schools differed significantly from the low-achieving schools in carrying out this practice at the level of .01 and .05 as indicated by the t-test. Parent volunteers were mainly in school support activities but not in classroom instructional activities. Headmasters, teachers and the school's PIBG were used to solicit parent volunteers.
c. The findings also indicated that parenting practice, that is basic responsibilities of parents was the least popular practice carried out by the schools as indicated by the mean of less than 2.00. Although the schools hardly carried out this practice, yet both the schools differed significantly at the level of .01 and .05 when a t-test was conducted.

Interestingly, from the above findings it was found that home involvement practice and communication practice were not significant at all. The findings indicated that these parental involvement practices carried out by the high-achieving schools were similar to the practices carried out by the low-achieving schools.

Models of School-Family Partnerships

The findings of the overall school practices provided an indication of the type of partnership models adopted by the schools. On the whole, a partial school-family partnerships existed based on Epstein's six-part comprehensive model. The findings indicated that Epstein's Type 4 home involvement practice, that is the involvement of parents in the children's home-based learning activities were the most predominant and popular practice carried out by the schools in Petaling district. Teachers' perception of parental involvement in the children's home-based learning activities shows that teachers and parents strongly advocate to Epstein's (1987a) theory of separate responsibilities of institutions which stresses that the schools' and the families' roles and responsibilities are best achieved independently. Type 4 practice is similar to Seeley's (1989) delegation model and Swap's (1993) protective model. These models also stress on the separate roles played by each institution in the education of the children. In addition, Epstein's Type 2 communication practice was predominantly carried out by the schools. Type 2 communication practice is congruent to Swap's (1993) school-to-home transmission where educators have a responsibility to communicate with parents in order to inform them about their children's progress, school policies and programmes and opportunities for involvement.

Models of partnerships that exist in the Malaysian schools show the tendency that the schools advocate the separate spheres of influences of institutions and do not exhibit an integral and holistic model of partnerships.

Recommendations

Parental involvement in home-based and school-based support activities indicate that a partial partnership existed. This partial involvement did not reflect an integral partnership between the school and family organisations. An integral and holistic concept of partnership requires teachers, parents /families and communities to be involved in all aspect of the children's schooling. A full partnership emphasises on the involvement of educators, families and communities in all aspects of the children's schooling and school organisations. Parent should be involved in classroom instructional activities, and in the school governance practice and decision making process so that families and communities are informed and involved in all aspects of the children's education and the school's organisation and management. Thus, a partnership strategy which focused on the "wholism" concept of everyone is involved in the children's learning process is recommended. Hence, schools are advised to adopt Epstein's (1988) six-type parental involvement practices. Each type of involvement leads to different

results for students, families, teachers, schools and communities. All types include two-way connections to reflect the shared responsibilities of home, schools and communities to help the young generations of today develop skills and character to be successful in the schools, and in the future.

CONCLUSION

With the fast-paced time and an increased focus on smart technology, educators, parents and families, local communities, businesses and corporate organisations are encouraged to cooperate and collaborate towards the improvement of the children's education. The education system of the twenty-first century should encourage all schools to promote and adopt smart partnerships in their improvement efforts. Schools need assistance, support, recognition and on-going guidance in order to develop and maintain successful programmes of partnership. Any efforts to include parents and families in the children's education require a shift in the educators and public attitudes and mindsets regarding the importance of partnership in our children's learning. Families need to be more involved in improving the children's learning not only in the homes, but also in the school's environments so that an integral partnership between the school and the family institutions could be established.

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