

TARANNUM JAFRI

PROF. NAJMA AMIN

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

A STUDY OF PARENTS' PARTICIPATION IN THE PRESCHOOLS OF DELHI

**ABSTRACT**

Research shows that parental involvement in their children's learning positively affects the child's performance at school (Fan & Chen, 2001) in both primary and secondary schools leading to higher academic achievement, greater cognitive competence, greater problem-solving skills, greater school enjoyment (Sutherland, 2010; Kostuch, 2008), better school attendance and fewer behavioural problems at school (Melhuish et. al., 2001; Kaul, 1993). The study was conducted to look into the process of collecting information about the child and parents and the modes used at the time of admission by the preschools; the activities conducted by the schools for enhancing participation of parents in the preschool programme; the modes of communication between the preschools and the parents regarding the performance and development of the child in the various learning activities in school and at home and the activities conducted and efforts made by the parents at home to reinforce what the child learns in school. For the present study the researcher had randomly selected 25 privately run preschools. Five schools from each zone of Delhi were selected at random. From this initial sample of 25 preschools, 50 parents (two from each school) having children in the age group of three to four years were selected at random. Two self-constructed interview schedules were used as tools to collect data.

To get to know the child and his /her parents, around 40 percent school principals reported that their schools followed the norms and collected thorough information about the child and the parents through detailed admission forms only. The remaining 60 percent of schools expressed that they found the Point System recommended by the Delhi Government unfeasible and were found to be conducting a face to face interview of the child along with both parents though the school principals expressed that it is mostly the parents who were interviewed and the child was excluded. Out of these, eight percent principals were those who revealed that the information they sought through their admission forms was insufficient hence, they also interviewed the child and the parents.

76 percent preschools conducted a one to two hour long orientation programme for the parents before the commencement of the session. 48 percent schools organised PTA meetings on a monthly basis. Parent Volunteer Programme existed only in 3 preschools (12 percent). 52 percent school organised workshops for parents while the remaining 48 percent did not. Nearly 54 percent schools held workshops for parents twice during the preschool programme while the rest 46 percent schools did it once a year only. Only one school developed some resource material to educate parents on the vital areas related to Early Childhood Care and Education. Guest lectures for parents and teachers were organised in only 36 percent schools.

Only three schools (12 percent) were found to be having the arrangement of Study Groups for the parents of the young learners. Most of the schools (88 percent) involved parents of the preschoolers in celebration of festivals. Quite a large number of schools (72 percent) involved parents in children's work exhibitions also.

88 percent schools invited parents in all their cultural events. They invited the talented parents who helped the teachers and children in preparing dance, music or drama shows while most of the schools and the principals reported that the parents lend their help in assisting the teachers in

dressing up the participants for the show. A small number of schools (16 percent) organised fetes in the preschool programme wherein they also sought the parents' participation. Excursions, picnics and graduation ceremonies were found to be an activity in which 24 percent of schools invited and involved the parents of the preschoolers. Only 12 percent schools sought involvement of parents in their community work/community outreach programmes. Only a quarter of the schools (24 percent) were found involving parents by seeking their assistance in enriching the library resource of the school. A large 84 percent of the schools maintained a detailed cumulative record of every child. Of all the schools, 28 percent schools sent home the progress report of the child thrice a year. 16 percent schools did it four times in a year. Only a quarter (24 percent) of the schools was found to be doing it every month and a quarter was those who did it two times in an academic year and the rest (eight percent) were doing it five times in a year.

A diary; that goes home with the child and comes back to the teacher through which notes are sent to parents was maintained by most of the schools (96 percent). A very few number of schools had their teachers visiting the preschoolers' homes (16 percent) once in the preschool programme.

36 percent of the parents spent only 1-2 hours with the child in a day which also included talking to the child about the day's happenings. 32 percent were those parents who spent less than an hour in a day. 16 percent parents reported that they spent 3-4 hours after work doing some interesting and fun-filled teaching-learning activities with the child which also includes talking to the child about the day's happenings especially at school. 16 percent parents spent around 4-5 hours with their child where in they expressed that they try and do activities that pave way to learning and they do the activities suggested by the teacher.

As far as making the child indulge in various learning activities at home goes, that foster different aspects of development, i.e., fine motor development, gross motor development, socio-emotional development, cognitive development and language development, the parents were found to be lacking the knowledge about what kind of activities and how often they must be done by the child. Quite a few parents were not found to be giving the developmentally sound stimulation for the optimum cognitive and language development of the learners. Fine motor activities that are essential for a three to four years old child like sand play, beading, threading and manipulating play dough were also not done very often by the children of most parents.

The profile of the parents showed that most parents were well educated and quite a few were teachers themselves but as the significance of the early childhood education and the developmentally sound activities is not known to most parents as laymen, they need to take a step forward in getting themselves educated about the right ECE curriculum and it is the school where they should seek this information and knowledge from.

Parents must provide for developmentally sound activities and teaching learning material should be used by the parents especially for the cognitive and language development of the child where most parents were not found giving the right reinforcement to the child for optimum development. Provision of study groups and home visits done by the preschool teachers were an unknown territory for majority of preschool establishments, which they must start to boost parent-participation. Teachers must encourage parents to keep lines of communication open and flowing between school and home. The findings of the present study may also have impact on teacher education; both pre-service and in-service. There is also a need for a massive advocacy campaign using all the available media. To sensitize the public at every level, from parents to policy makers, an extensive and sustained campaign for advocacy involving the mass media is needed. This requires that adequate resources be provided and that the government take the lead in preparing the requisite materials in various forms. The advocacy campaign should convey the significance of this period in the life of children, warn against the dangers of neglect, and describe the proper scope, meaning, and purpose of early childhood education.