

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents (1) summary of the study, (2) summary of the findings, (3) discussions, (4) conclusions, and (5) recommendations for further research.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This section summarizes objectives of this study, subjects, materials, and procedures as follows:

5.1.1 Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study were to explore Thai parents' attitudes towards the importance of pre-kindergarten schooling and to explore their criteria in choosing pre-kindergarten schools for their children. In addition, the sub objective of this research was to find out about Thai parents' opinions on advantages and disadvantages of pre-kindergarten schooling.

5.1.2 Subjects, Materials, and Procedures

The study was conducted with 100 Thai parents who lived in Bangkok area. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed to respondents randomly by hand and email. All respondents were informed about the objectives of this study verbally or on the cover page of the questionnaire. 100 completed questionnaires were returned within two weeks after distributing.

The 25-item-questionnaire was used to collect the data. The questionnaire was designed to explore the respondents' opinions and was divided into four parts. In part one which had six questions, the respondents were asked to fill out their personal data. In part two which consisted of eleven questions, they were asked to express their opinions towards the importance of pre-kindergarten schooling. In part three which comprised six questions, they were asked to express their major considerations in choosing a pre-kindergarten school for their children. In the last part which had two open-ended questions, they were asked to express their opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of pre-kindergarten schooling.

After all questionnaires were completed, all data were analyzed using SPSS program version 11. They were then reported in the form of percentage, frequency, and mean.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The results of the study can be summarized as follows:

5.2.1 Parents' Profile

The results showed that majority of respondents were female (66%) while the rest of them were male (34%). Almost all respondents were aged between 26-40 years old (79%), the remaining twenty one aged more than 41 years old. The majority of the respondents graduated with Bachelor degree (70%). Most respondents were married with children (68%). Most respondents were private employees (84%). In addition, most of them (33%) earned about 30,001 – 50,000 baht a month, while 26 % of them earned more than 90,001 baht a month.

5.2.2 Parents' Opinions on the Importance of Pre-Kindergarten Schooling

The results showed that the respondents realized pre-kindergarten schooling was important for children aged below 3 years old (average mean score 4.13). The respondents believed that learning experiences in the first three years of children was a crucial period for their brain development and profoundly impacted children's lives. Besides, they believed that the enriched environment with proper stimulation would help the child's brain to generate neurons connection, which resulted in brain development and other developments such as body movement, vision, hearing, speaking.

Thai parents strongly agreed with six statements in this part that learning during the first three years of life would result in the children's brain development (mean = 4.69), surrounding environments was important to children's brain development (mean = 4.68), proper stimulation would develop children's ability such as body movement, vision, hearing, speaking (mean = 4.66), learning in the first three years of life profoundly impacted children's life (mean = 4.55), the connection of neurons resulted in children's development, especially during their first three years

(mean = 4.43), and children could learn more from an enriched environment than an impoverished one (mean = 4.37).

Thai parents agreed with four statements in this part that less stimulation during the first three years of life would lower children's brain efficiency or slow response to stimuli (mean = 3.87), children's intelligence was related to their learning experience during their first three years (mean = 3.85), pre-kindergarten learning suited for first three years of children (mean = 3.74), earlier learning was better, especially in children's first three years (mean = 3.53).

The respondents were not sure whether children's intelligence was ascertained from genetics or their learning environment (mean = 3.11)

5.2.3 Parents' considerations in choosing pre-kindergarten schools for children

The research results revealed that the respondents strongly agreed that attentive teachers and staff, affordable tuition fees, class size, school facilities, non-academic oriented school's syllabus, and outside class learning were their major concerns in choosing a pre-kindergarten school for their children aged below 3 years old. The average mean score of this part was 4.58.

This was, Thai parents strongly agreed with all six statements in this part that pre-kindergarten schools should have small class size (mean = 4.69), pre-kindergarten school's syllabus should not aim at academic achievement only (mean = 4.65), learning in pre-kindergarten school should not be limited to the class room (mean = 4.62), pre-kindergarten school should have attentive teachers and staff (Mean = 4.56), pre-kindergarten school should set affordable tuition fees (mean = 4.52), and pre-kindergarten school should provide adequate facilities for children and parents such as school bus service, playground (mean = 4.46).

5.3 DISCUSSION

The findings of the study about the parents' opinions on the importance of pre-kindergarten schooling strengthen the importance of the Brain development in infancy proposed by Heterington and Parke (2003, p. 180). The important period of brain development was the first three years of life; the neurons at birth with proper stimulation level would grow stronger and reflected rapid development in brain and

their physical development. Two thirds of the parents strongly agreed that learning in the first three years of life with proper stimulation would result in children's brain and other ability development.

Another finding from parents' opinions on the importance of pre-kindergarten schooling complied with the Brain Plasticity concept. The stimulation from enriched environment played an important role in brain development which would result in improving the brain's efficiency. Most parents agreed that the surrounding environment was a part of children's brain development; and that children would learn more from an enriched environment than an impoverished one

The last finding from parents' opinions on importance of pre-kindergarten schooling was that around two thirds of parents agreed that pre-kindergarten schooling was suitable for children below 3 years old (Table 7: Statement 17) and half of them believed that earlier learning was better (Table 7: Statement 14). These results went along with the study of Srichol Nakmai (2006) which explained that most parents preferred to provide education to their children at an early age; they believed that early learning of English would result in their children's intelligence and communication skills.

The findings of the study about the parents' considerations in choosing pre-kindergarten schools for children showed that in selecting the proper school for their children, Thai parents used all six criteria respectively: class size (mean = 4.69), school's syllabus (mean = 4.65), learning environment (mean = 4.62), teachers and staff (mean = 4.56), tuition fees (mean = 4.52), school facilities (mean = 4.46). These findings went along with parents' suggestion on disadvantages of pre-kindergarten schooling that they were worried about pre-kindergarten school standards in terms of professional teachers, proper curriculum, appropriate teaching style, proper ratio of teachers and students (class size), and school safety & hygiene. Only a few parents mentioned that tuition fees of pre-kindergarten level were an unnecessary expense since they believed that children could learn from their family members and learning should not be limited to the classroom.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn from the discussion above

5.4.1 Regarding parents' opinion on the importance of pre-kindergarten schooling, the results showed that most parents saw the importance of pre-kindergarten schooling. They also perceived that early learning was better, especially in the first three years of life. Besides, they believed that proper learning stimulation under in an enriched environment would result in children's brain development including other developments such as body movement, vision, hearing, speaking.

5.4.2 According to parents' consideration in choosing pre-kindergarten schools for their children, the findings showed that all parents used all six factors in choosing schools for their children. Class size and school's syllabus were the first two factors for them in choosing pre-kindergarten schools which related to their suggestions that current Thai pre-kindergarten schooling standards were in doubt such as inappropriate number of teachers for one class, and too much emphasis on academic achievement for children below 3-years-old. Tuition fees and school facilities were considered as the last two factors which related to parents' suggestion that tuition fees were unnecessary expenses and children's learning was not limited to the classroom.

5.4.3 The study results would benefit Thai educators and concerned government sectors to review current educational curriculum for children so as to focus on individual intelligences rather than on academic achievement only. It also reminded current and future pre-kindergarten schools to be aware of the importance of providing effective learning to children below 3 years old and to change their positioning from day care centers to be learning centers which provided new experiences to stimulate children's development. Besides, it also helped Thai parents to understand that the effective period of children development was at the pre-kindergarten level; proper learning stimulation for children below 3 years old would enhance children's individual intelligences significantly; the purpose of early learning was to achieve holistic development (brain, physical, moral, sensory skills) and prepare children for further educational level, not academic achievement.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made for further research.

5.5.1 This research was conducted with limited subjects in limited areas and time period. Future research should explore Thai parents' opinions in other provinces.

5.5.2 This survey would be more beneficial if all gathered data were analyzed to find out Thai parents' opinions in different income levels, educational backgrounds and age levels.