

# **STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION: A STUDY IN PHILIPPINE AND INDONESIA**

Yosef, Sofendi, Sri Sumarni & Azizah Husin

*Sriwijaya University, Indonesia Rita B. Ruesco, Salve Favila, Celia Ilanan Philippine Normal University, Philippines*

**Abstract:** This study aimed at describing parent involvement in education according to perception of students of Philippine Normal University (PNU), Philippines and of Sriwijaya University, Indonesia as well as related policy stipulated by both universities. To achieve the aims, this study employed interview and student questioner as methods of gathering data. Respondents involved in this research were heads of study programs and senior students majoring in early childhood education and elementary education of PNU and students majoring in elementary education of Sriwijaya University. The study found different perception among students of both universities where in general students of PNU had slightly higher scores to the importance of six aspects of parent involvement: parenting, communication, learning at home, volunteering, decision-making, and collaborating. It was suggested the latter university to have parent involvement in education course in its curriculum and both universities develop model of parent involvement concept suitable to its own setting.

**Keywords:** Elementary Education, College Students, Parent Involvement **Introduction**

Parents are recognized as the first and main educators for their children. In this respect Berger (1995) labels parent as an active partner and education leader at home and school. Most teachers acknowledge the role of parents in education although they have professional expertise in educating children. A University of New Hampshire statements (2008) should be valued as rationale for involving parents in education, where it is not income or social status as the predictors, but the extent to which that student's family is able to create a home environment that encourages learning, communicate high, yet reasonable, expectations for their children's achievement and future careers, and become involved in their children's education at school and in the community.

Some studies cited by NCSE (2005) show that the “power of out-of-school time” is significant and the quality of home environments strongly correlates with students’ academic achievement and school performance. Fullan (1985) identifies parent involvement and support to school as one of effective school indicators. Meanwhile, Henderson (1988) finds a number of facts showing

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parents who are involved in formal education will have some benefits such as higher achievement and better behavior of their children. After reviewing family involvement research over 10 years, Van Voorhis, Maier, Epstein, and Lloyd (2013) summarize that learning activities at home, family involvement at school, school outreach to engage families, supportive parenting activities contribute greatly to children learning.

Involving parents in education requires to some extents collaboration between parents and teachers. Such collaboration has several characteristics such as trust and respect, parity in relationship, voluntary participation, and shared resources (Friend & Bursuck, 1996). As collaborators parents are assumed some roles. Berger (1995) portrays six roles parent that emerge in the interaction of parents and schools. They are parents as teachers of own children, parents as spectators, parents as temporary volunteers, parents as volunteer resources, parents as employed resources, and parents as policymakers.

As stated by Desforges and Abouchaar (2003:52) efforts to promote parental involvement in education might be organized into three categories. They are activities focusing on the immediate connectivity between schools and parents, activities issuing of involvement more broadly into family and community education programs, and parent training programs aimed at promoting parental psychological health and/or relationship skills which are known to be foundational to parental involvement. The work of Epstein (2002) could be a beneficial source for those who want to promote parent involvement program.

There are important differences between these approaches. Meanwhile, Mapp and Henderson (2002) elaborate Epstein proposal of six types of involvement by giving sample practice. The type can be classified into parent involvement at

home and school. Specifically, they consist of program relating to parenting, communicating, learning at home, volunteering, decision-making, and collaborating with community school.

Involving parents in child education especially at elementary school level is valued as positive practice by many countries, including Philippine and Indonesia. For instances in Indonesia, currently, under a new curriculum, labeled as Curriculum 2013, teachers are suggested to ask for parental participation in children learning at home. They are encouraged to develop instructional designs that enable parents to accompany their children learning at home. Some remain unclear questions related to no extensive research available are how well teachers and parents are prepared to do this involvement, how parent involvement is practiced, and how successful is the

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involvement.

Reflecting from such research, recently there is no clear information of how colleges of education prepare their students to understand the concept of parent involvement in education as well as the practice such involvement. Since today students in college are prospective teachers, they are expected to comprehend the theory and practice of parent involvement. A deep understanding of how the students of both universities perceive parent involvement in education will be a cornerstone to predict continuity of educational efforts between homes and schools by future teachers. Comparing how students of both countries perceive parent involvement in education are not only necessary to strengthen the existing efforts but also both can gain many ideas that can be shared and implemented in each country. This survey aims at describing elementary education students' perception of the importance of parent involvement in children education and portraying curriculum practice of parent involvement defined in elementary education major course of Philippine Normal University and Sriwijaya University.

### **Research Method**

To achieve the objectives this study chooses survey method as its design. As

suggested by Shaughnessy, Zechmeister, & Zechmeister (2012), it is used to design, analyze, and reporting the research results relating to thoughts, opinions, and feeling. To answer the research questions this study recruited available students of Philippine Normal University (PNU) in Manila and Sriwijaya University in Palembang. Due to a difference in categorizing study program at PNU and Sriwijaya University where early childhood education would be assigned to teach K- 3<sup>rd</sup> graders and elementary education students of PNU would be assigned to teach 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> graders, and elementary education students of Sriwijaya University would be assigned to teach 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>, the respondents of PNU consisted of 66 senior students majoring in early childhood education and 65 senior students majoring in elementary education. Total students of PNU in this study were 131 students. Meanwhile the respondents of Sriwijaya University consisted of 83 students who were majoring in elementary education. All of those students had been practicing teaching in school so that they started to be familiar with school atmosphere. They participated voluntarily as shown by informed consent forms they filled out before responding the questioners. In addition, the study also involved the head of elementary education and early childhood education of PNU and the head of elementary education of Sriwijaya University who had suitable information of curriculum practice.

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Questioner, suggested by Gray (2000) as one of effective methods in collecting data, was chosen to such purpose. The Questioner of Students Perception to Parent Involvement in Education was administered to the respondents. The questioner written based on Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement was written in Indonesian and English. It has 30 5-point Likert scaled items (from “strongly important” to “strongly unimportant”) on parental involvement. Data were collected from paper copies of the questioner distributed to students of PNU and Sriwijaya University. In addition to questioner, the study employed an interview guide questioning curriculum practice of parent involvement in PNU and Sriwijaya University. The interview was addressed to the head of elementary education and early childhood education of PNU and the head of elementary education of Sriwijaya University. The data gathered from the respondents was presented in table, graphs, and statistics. Specifically, this study also analyzes students’ perception to parent education in term comparing of the students’ perception of both universities.

## Findings

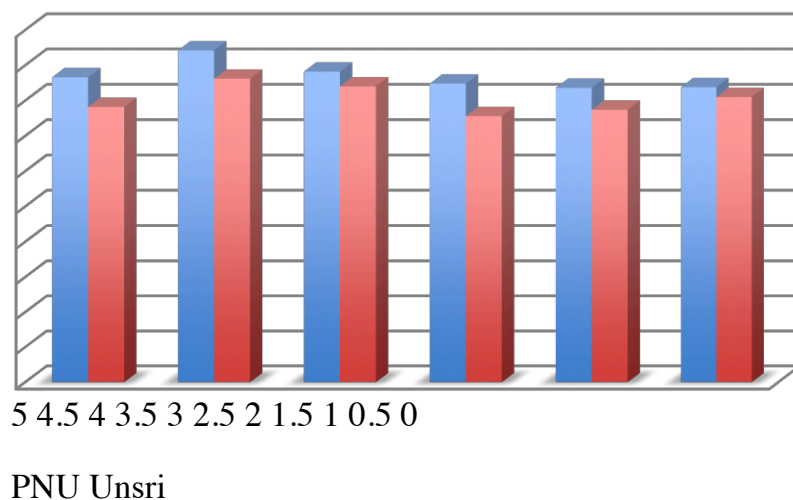
The objectives of this study are to describe elementary education students' perception of parent involvement in children education and curriculum practice available at both universities. To achieve these objectives researchers had collected data and analyzed them properly. For quantitative data, they were entered into **Excel Windows Release 6.0** for data analysis. Returned questioners included 133 students of PNU and 83 students of Sriwijaya University. Students' responses to questioner were scored by using Likert Scale, 5-very important, 4-important, 3- undecided or unanswered, 2-unimportant, and 1-very unimportant.

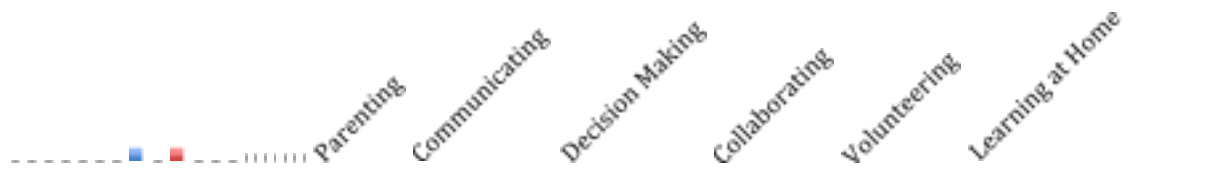
As discussed in the previous part, parent involvement activities in education were grouped into six types: parenting, communicating, learning at home, volunteering, decision-making, and collaborating. Figure 4.1 below portrayed differences of students of PNU and students of Sriwijaya University (Unsri) surveyed to parent involvement in education in six types as pertained above. It seemed in all types the students' score of PNU were slightly higher than students' score of Sriwijaya University.

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Figure1 Students' Responses to Parent Involvement in Education Table 1  
Results of the t-Test between Students of PNU and Students of Unsri





**Categories**

Parenting Communication Learning at Home Volunteering Decision Making Collaborating

**Mean SD Mean SD**

4.33 0.4 3.9 0.53

4.71 0.2 4.3 0.24

4.41 0.47 4.2 0.29

4.24 0.6 3.8 0.47

4.18 0.66 3.9 0.34

4.19 0.62 4 0.3

*t-Test*

6.007 8.017 3.062 5.438 3.861 1.764

**Students of PNU**

**Students of Unsri**

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Table 1 above showed descriptive statistics by categories. Both Students of PNU and Sriwijaya University valued communication as the most important compared to others. The mean score of communication was 4.71 and 4.3. The

scores also indicated that the lowest aspect of parent involvement rated by PNU students was decision making and collaborating. On the other hand, Sriwijaya University students rated volunteering aspect as the lowest (3.8). Parenting and decision making is slightly lower by 0.1 compared to volunteering (3.9).

As revealed in the findings, there was strong evidence from this study that all of students' PNU and Sriwijaya University surveyed responded positively to importance of parent involvement in education. A further analysis indicated students rated parent involvement in education as important aspect of school system. Students wanted parents to be involved in a variety of children learning at home and expected to play active role in school program as well. At this respect, parent involvement encompassed parenting, communication, learning at home, volunteering, decision-making, and collaboration. Instead of the similar perception to such involvement, students of both universities showed different perceptions at each aspect of involvement.

In Likert Scale of 1-5, students scored parent involvement in education reached averagely 4.05- 4.34 of 5. Specifically, the total of mean score reached 4.34 (SD = 0.62) for students of PNU and 4.05 (SD = 0.3) for students of Sriwijaya University. It meant that their perceptions to the involvement had been reached between important and very important level. This perception level indicated that parenting, communication, learning at home, volunteering, decision-making, and collaborating were action that according to students should be perform ideally by parents in order support children learning.

Across all categories of parent involvement, mean scores of Sriwijaya University's students were below its counterpart PNU's students. For PNU's students, communication was valued almost very important (4.71). This value was higher than Sriwijaya University's (4.3). The t test of 8.017 between two groups of students indicated that although the differences were wide enough, each group of students felt communication was primary compared to other categories. Learning at home was the second category that was in agreement between two groups. Mean scores of PNU's students was 4.41 (SD=0.47) and Sriwijaya University' students were 4.2 (SD=0.29). The students responded positively to this category indicating that learning at home was expected action that should be performed by parents. For the rest categories of parent involvement, the mean scores of PNU' students were above 4.0, meanwhile Sriwijaya University's was less than 4.0 except for collaborating categories that reached 4.0.

For qualitative data obtained through interview they were described as follow. First, there are difference policies between curriculum at PNU and Sriwijaya University related to this concern. The College of Teacher Development of PNU provided parent involvement course in its curriculum. It was placed in fifth semester. This course was intended to give students with theory and practice of parent involvement in school. Meanwhile, Sriwijaya did not provide exclusively a parent involvement course in its curriculum. It was part of introduction to education course given to first semester students. The content spent for 150 minutes (3 credit hours) focused on the importance, responsibilities, roles, collaboration between parents and teachers in educating their children.

## **Discussion**

**First**, finding of this study in general shows all of students of PNU and Sriwijaya University has positive perception to the importance of parent involvement in education. Their average responses to six types of parent involvement activity, parenting, communication, learning at home, volunteering, decision making, and collaboration, are above important level. However, in closer look, there are differences in all aspect of students' perception on parent involvement between students of both universities where students of PNU is somewhat higher compared to their counterparts. Another finding indicates a similarity between both universities in perceiving parent involvement. They are in agreement to the importance of parental role to children in all types of involvement. There is a major difference of curriculum practice between PNU and Sriwijaya University in teaching prospective elementary teachers. The first provides parent involvement course and the latter only part of introduction to education course. However, when students are in field experience at school, there is no program required the students to practice such involvement.

**Second**, all of students participating this study are those who have been practicing teaching or field experience in schools so that they started to be familiar with school atmosphere. Even though they are not required to practice some of types parent involvement activities, as the students entering school



gates, classrooms and play grounds, observing teaching and learning activities, student learning and social behaviors, and taking notes a number of difficulties faced by teachers in directing students in classroom or out classroom activities, they may start to discover that educating children was challenging instead to say it was not easy task. These experiences may open students' mind that educating children cannot be done only by teachers. By further observation and discussion with teachers and principals pertaining to school facilities,

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school management, and school financial students may realize that in order to educate children properly schools need some more resources or helping which are not always available in there. Parents were considered to be such resources.

Students who participate at this study has long education experiences since they entered school for the first time (e.g. elementary school). When the questioner administered to them their ages are 21 years in average. It is possible they have satisfied or unsatisfied past educational experiences. The satisfied experiences may be perceived as they feel that their education successful cannot be separated from their parent efforts in helping their learning. These experiences in turn result a belief that parent involvement in education is a must. The same perception may be stated by students who feel their past educational are unsatisfied. Although they have graduated from high school and have been in college, they might feel that they will be more successful if their parents are able to engage in their learning more deeply. At this respect, they probably perceive that parent involvement in education are also a must.

Unlike its counterpart, Sriwijaya University do not provide a course of parent involvement in education in its formal curriculum. This can explain why the perception rate of Sriwijaya Univeristy's students are lower than PNU's. Perception, a process by which individuals detect and interpret environmental stimuli, can be shaped by direct experiences and/or indirect experiences. Taking a course of parent involvement in education, students of PNU gain some benefits particularly their knowledge of such involvement have expanded. They may clarify the relationship between their past educational experiences and theories pertaining parent involvement. Although students are not required to practice the types of parent involvement, when they come to field experience in

school, they gain more insight of such involvement. The accumulation of both theory and experience finally shapes positively their perception to the importance of parent involvement in education. Meanwhile having little content of parent involvement in introduction to education course, students of Sriwijaya University although have rated positively of such involvement, their perception are not systematically shaped. It is presumably affected by their past experience instead of along with theoretical foundation. This explanation gives impression why all of students still have positive perception to such involvement instead of having different background educational experiences.

College students will be teachers of the future. They have to accomplish a set of competencies that enable them to educate children properly. As such having been knowledgeable, having positive attitude, and having proper skills of how to involve parent in education will be a

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modality for students to be professional teachers. The more they have positive perspectives of parent involvement the more they may implement such perspectives in actual educational practice.

**Third**, the respondents of this study are students who have not been real teachers, so their perception might be ideal and different from teachers as indicated in the following findings. A study of Sharifah and Wee Beng Neo (2001) to teachers of primary schools in Malaysia finds different findings. Their finding indicates teachers value parenting, learning at home, communication, and communication as the main need of parental involvement. Meanwhile, the main school practice on parental involvement are preferably in learning at home, communication, and decision making. Another related study focus on secondary school teachers' perception by Reduan (2008) finds the four types of parental involvements specified by teachers are parenting, communication, home learning, and collaboration with community. Study of parental involvement by Moon and Ivin (2004) indicates that the vast majority of the parents feel attendance, learning at home, and communication with school as extremely important activity in their involvement.

**Fourth**, this study has been shown that all students have positive perception to

parent involvement in education and there are differences to such perception between students of PNU and Sriwijaya University. However, there are still some limitations of conducting this study. Using Epstein's model of parent involvement which proposed six aspects of such involvement will not always fit to different cultures. Another limitation of the study is the number of participated respondents that only involved one university in each country. The data will not be representative enough to generalize the findings.

**Fifth**, considering the limitation of the study, particularly the college students as research participants, future studies may be focus on how parental involvement perceived by students from different backgrounds. Future research is also expected reach other subjects with different background, such as teachers and parents. Knowing their perception is important in order to build more comprehensive picture of parent involvement.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Students of PNU and Sriwijaya University differed moderately in aspects of parent involvement such as activities related to parenting, communication, and volunteering. Meanwhile in the activities related to learning at home, decision-making and collaboration the differences are not

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*Proceeding of 1<sup>st</sup> World Conference on Education, Vol. 1, 2017, pp. 101-112* significant. In sum the students of both universities perceived the importance of parent

involvement in educating their children.

In case of Sriwijaya University, this higher education institution should support the importance of parent involvement education in light of a recent policy of Ministry of Education and Culture in implementing Curriculum 2013 where parents are crucial agents in supporting children learning. The support will be adding a course in its curriculum containing parent involvement theory and practice as well as gives students to practice it in field experience in elementary schools.

The research design of this study is based on Epstein's framework. Even though students have positive responses to the importance of parent involvement,

Epstein's framework will not always fit to Philippine or Indonesian context. It is suggested that each university initiates to develop a model of parent involvement in education suitable to the need of each country.

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