A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON DIFFERENCES OF STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT BETWEEN MORE AND LESS PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN BANGKOK CHRISTIAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

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Abstract: This study mainly aimed to compare the primary school students' academic achievements between more and less parental involvement in Bangkok Christian International School (BCIS), Thailand.

The instrument of this study was a questionnaire, including questions to survey the student parents' demographics, the levels of parental involvement and to obtain the students' academic achievements. The questionnaires were distributed to all 60 students' parents in Grade 5-6 in Bangkok Christian International School (BCIS), Thailand, 57questionnaires were returned and validly completed.

The study used frequency and percentage to report the student parents' demographics firstly; used means and standard deviations to identify the levels of parental involvement in BCIS, lastly used a t-test (one way) to determine the difference of students' achievement between more and less parental involvement.

A significant difference of students' achievement between more parental involvement and less parental involvement was found by the end of the study. Therefore, discussion and recommendations on how to provide more parental involvement for the students were provided in the last part of the study.

Keywords: Students' Academic Achievement, Parental Involvement, Bangkok Christian International School

Introduction

People in modern society are struggling to adapt to the fast pace of life, especially in the big cities. Nowadays, both men and women need to work hard as either business owners or employees. As a result, parents send their children to school when they reach school age, simply supplying money and materials to their children. However, parents do not have a lot of time to take an interest in their children's school life, including their achievements and character development.

On the other hand, some research showed that parental involvement in children's education led to higher grades, test scores, and graduation rates. Parents also seemed to agree about the importance or parental involvement in children's education, but how to create effective communication channel between families and schools, to increase the parental involvement is still an exploring topic for schools and parents.

Therefore, even though schools and parents often realized the importance of parental involvement, participation in various activities in the school or at home may not have improved students' academic achievement as much as their parents expected. Then, some parents felt they were lacking of confidence to help their children with their education (Mark Peters, etc. 2008). Meanwhile, in the school management there was also another problem, which is, sometimes, many parents and schools find themselves unable to contact each other timely even though they find a need because of a variety of reasons.

The early years of a child's life are so important for their growing up and development. School age children spend about 70% of their waking hours (including weekends and holidays) outside of school (Clark, R.M. 1990). Therefore, the education of children is not only the responsibility of school. The parents take on a very important role in their children's education. The earlier in a child's educational process parental involvement begins, the more powerful the effects on the achievement of the child (Cotton, K., Wikelund K. 2001).

The importance of parental involvement is obvious. First, the parents should be involved in the education of their children because they are the first educators of their children. Second, parents have long-term responsibility for their own children. Third, parental Involvement, as mentioned, can increase their children's chance to be successful in their learning.

In fact, researchers believed when the parental involvement is effectively used in school education, all schools, families, and students can benefit from it. Parental involvement is important in the children's education. Since more and more schools are evaluating the effectiveness of parental involvement and continue to encourage parents to be more involved in school education, this researcher as a parent would also like to prove and strengthen the great importance of parental involvement on the students' achievement.

Objectives

There were three objectives for the study:

1. To survey the demographics of student's parents, including their marital status, occupation, family income, education level, and English communication skill in Bangkok Christian International School (BCIS), Thailand.

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2. To identify the levels of parental involvement in Bangkok Christian International School (BCIS), Thailand
3. To compare the students' academic achievements between the more parental involvement and less parental involvement students in BCIS.

Literature Review

Theoretical Explanations of Parental Involvement
Theories of cultural and social capital have been used to explain why parental involvement has an impact on children's achievement and adjustment to school. While there are some inconsistencies in how these theories have been used to explain the impact of parental involvement, there are also commonalities (McNeal, 2001).

According to theories of social capital, parental school involvement increases parents' access to social networks and information (Coleman, 1988). Social capital is represented by parental contact and involvement in the organizational and social aspects of the life of the school. As parents establish relationships with teachers, they learn important information about the school's policies and practices. They also meet other parents, who provide information and insight about the school's expectations. Social capital is also represented through the extent of conversation that parents have with their children about school and through parental monitoring of their children's school engagement. Discussion with the child about school conveys interest about the importance of education.

Cultural capital is usually explained as the level and nature of direct parental involvement in the educational process (Lareau, 1987). The theory of cultural capital proposed by Bourdieu (1977) argued that there are inequalities in the amounts of cultural capital that individuals either hold or can obtain. Higher levels of cultural capital, developed through access to relevant resources over time, increase the likelihood that any individual can access additional capital. For example, parents who hold strong cultural capital because they completed school and hold post-secondary educational qualifications are more likely, as a consequence, to have a higher SES, as well as knowledge of educational systems. Because schools represent and produce middle-class values and forms of communication, teachers are more likely to communicate more effectively with these parents from middle and higher SES backgrounds, with whom they are more likely to share similar values and beliefs. Teachers are likely to have more difficulties relating to parents who have a different cultural frame of reference because of socioeconomic circumstances or ethnic backgrounds. This bias of schools to represent, but also to promote more middle-class values, places many parents at a disadvantage and makes it more difficult for these parents to participate in their children's education. Families with more social and cultural capital tend to be more involved at school because these families are more comfortable with teachers and schools and are more likely to have supportive social networks. This allows them "to construct their relationships with the school with more comfort and trust" (Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

The Importance of Parental Involvement
Parental involvement with children from an early age has been found to equate with better outcomes (particularly in terms of cognitive development). What parents do is more important than who they are for children's early development – i.e. home learning activities undertaken by parents is more important for children's intellectual and social development than parental occupation, education or income. A greater appreciation of the beliefs that underlie parents' decisions about becoming involved in their children's education is needed (Taylor et al., 2004).

The way in which parents feel about schools and the emotional connections that they had to school may influence the kinds of attitudes to school and learning that their children assume. These feelings may be positive or negative, depending on the nature of those previous experiences. Negative feelings about school may prevent parents from making connections with their children's schools. Positive feelings about school experiences are likely to enhance parental involvement. Additionally, the expectations that parents hold for their children's future achievement are important. If parents expect high levels of academic achievement and commitment to schooling, the child is more likely to adopt these positive attitudes (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

There is a need for increased understanding about how, and why, parents understand and construct their involvement in different ways. Parental participation may be active because parents believe that they bear the primary responsibility for children's educational achievement. Other parents may hold a notion of partnership with schools that responsibilities for children's learning are shared between parents and schools. Still other parents may not believe that they should take on an active role or may lack the confidence to be involved. For these latter parents, developing personal self-efficacy beliefs that one can be effective in supporting children's learning at home and at school requires encouragement by teachers and schools, as well as opportunities to participate (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Socio-demographic Characteristics of Families and Parental Involvement
Variation in levels of parental involvement in children's learning at home and at school is strongly influenced by family socio-economic status (SES) (Boethel, 2003). Parents in families with lower SES often have fewer years of education and, possibly, have had more negative experiences with schools. They may feel unprepared to be involved. Parental involvement may also vary because of differences in ethnic and cultural backgrounds between

parents and teachers (Desimone, 1999).

Teachers are less likely to know the parents of children who are culturally different from their own background and are more likely to believe that these parents are less interested in their children's schooling (Epstein& Dauber, 1991). Parents' language difficulties may also cause difficulties in understanding participation opportunities. It is unfortunate that parents with low SES and from different ethnic and cultural background than the mainstream culture, whose children would most benefit from parental involvement, are more likely to find it difficult to become and remain involved (Lee & Bowen, 2006).

Parents with social and cultural backgrounds different from the dominant social groups in the society may also have quite diverse expectations and interpretations of what it means to be educationally helpful to their children. For example, Vogels (2002; cited in Drissen, Smit, & Sleegers, 2005) distinguished four groups of parents in research conducted in the Netherlands. The first group, partners, were highly active in informal and formal engagement activities, from volunteering to engagement in the formal governance of the school. These parents were more likely to have a high SES. A second group was called participants. They were highly involved in informal activities at the school and had middle to high SES. The third group were delegators, who viewed teachers as the appointed experts and therefore responsible for the education of their children. The fourth group was the invisible parents, who were not engaged or visible to the school. The invisible parents were primarily parents with a low SES.

Types of Parental Involvement
Epstein, J.L.(1992) had developed a framework for defining six different types of parent involvement. This framework assists educators in developing school and family partnership programs. Epstein's six types of parental involvement as follows:

Type 1 --- Parenting: help all families establish home environments to support children as students at each age and grade level. Assist schools in understanding families, families background, cultures, concerns, goals, needs, and views of their children.

Type 2 --- Communicating: communicate effectively with families about student progress, school services and programs, and also provide opportunities for parents to communicate with the school. Such as: phone call, newsletters, emails, etc.

Type 3--- Volunteering: find ways to recruit and train volunteers for the school and classroom. Try to accommodate parents' schedules to maximize support for students and programs. This category also includes opportunities for parents to attend events at school in which their children participate.

Type 4 --- Learning at Home: share ideas with families to improve students' homework strategies and other kinds of at-home learning, and provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-linked activities.

Type 5 --- Decision Making: include families as participants or partners in school decisions through PTA/PTO, school councils, committees, and other school – parent organizations. It can help to develop parents' leaders and representatives.

Type 6 --- Collaborating with the Community: create two-way connections between the school and community that encourage businesses and other groups to take an interest in schools and offer students and their families ways to contribute to the well-being of the community.

Three Factors of Parental Involvement
Three major factors of Parental Involvement (PI) in the education of their children are as follows:

1) Involvement in the homework or home learning activities by signing in the homework tracker form: although most parents do not know how to help their children with their education, with guidance and support of the school, they may become increasingly involved in home learning activities and have opportunities to teach, and find themselves being role models for and to guide their children. On the other hand, when school encourages children to practice reading at home or doing some other activities at home with their parents, the children will make significant gains in reading achievement and some other abilities compared to those who only practice at school. Parents who read to their children, have books available, take trips, guide TV watching, internet browsing, and provide stimulating experiences contribute to student achievement (Wang Zhengqing, 2006).

2) Involvement in school activities, meetings: most of the students, at all levels, especially the primary school students, want their families to be more knowledgeable parents about schooling and are willing to take on active roles in assisting communications between home and school. When parents come to school regularly, it reinforces the view in the children's mind that school and home are connected and that school is an integral part of the whole family's life (Joyce L. Epstein, 2010).

3) Involvement in the organization or association of the school: to strengthen the home-school partnership for the children's education, encourage Parental Involvement at school, guide parents in how to help their children at home, and supply more specific information on how to help the parents some organization or association are formed. It arranged meeting or activity periodically.

Previous Studies on Parental Involvement and Students Achievement

Taggart, B (2004) found that Parental involvement in children's education from an early age has a significant effect on educational achievement, and continues to do so into adolescence and adulthood.

Goldman, R (2005) in his book of Fathers' Involvement in their Children's Education mentioned the quality and content of fathers' involvement matter more for children's outcomes than the quantity of time fathers spend with their children.

Family learning can also provide a range of benefits for parents and children including improvements in reading, writing and numeracy as well as greater parental confidence in helping their child at home. (Brookes, G., Gorman, T., Harman, J., Hutchinson, D., Kinder, K., Moor,H., and Wilkin, A. 1997).

Gutman, L.M. and Akerman, R. (2008) found the attitudes and aspirations of parents and of children themselves predict later educational achievement. International evidence suggests that parents with high children's educational activities than parents of low-achieving students".

Overall, research has consistently shown that parental involvement in children's education does make a positive difference on pupils' achievement.

Conceptual Framework

This research mainly aimed to study the demographics of student's parents, including their marital status, occupation, family income, education level, and English communication skill; to identify the levels of parental involvement; and lastly to test whether or not there is a difference in the student academic achievement between the students of more parental involvement and less parental involvement in Grade 6 in Bangkok Christian International School (BCIS).

The Figure 1 below was the conceptual framework of this study which consisted three main parts of investigation: demographics of parents, levels of parental involvement, and the student academic achievements.
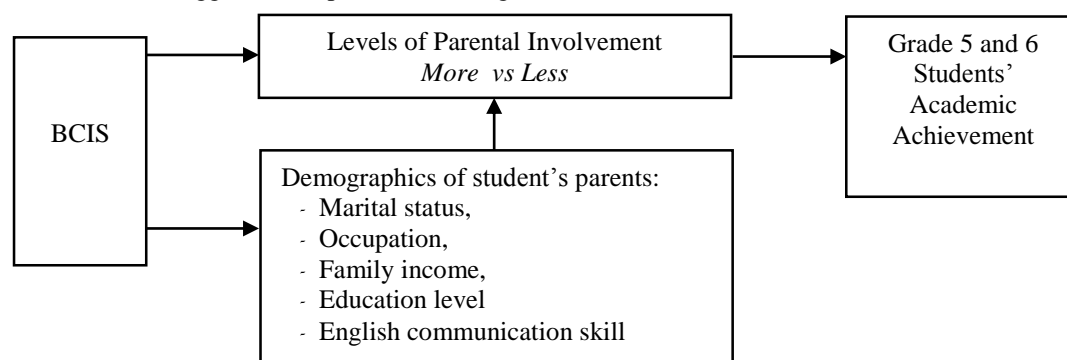

Figure1: Conceptual Framework of The Study

aspirations are also more involved in their children's education.

The Children's Plan published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in 2007 also highlights the importance of partnership between parents and schools to support children in their learning, and how greater support will be provided for parents to involve them in their child's education (in the early years and throughout school).

Walberg (1984) in his review of 29 studies of school–parent programs found that family participation in education was twice as predictive of students' academic success as family socioeconomic status, and some of the more intensive programs had effects that were 10 times greater than other factors.

Cotton, K., Wikelund, K. (1987) proved and found that the more intensely parents are involved, the more beneficial the achievement effects in their Parent Involvement in Education.

Clark, R.M. (1990) in his Parental Involvement study found that students' academic achievements were impacted by more parental involvement, because "parents of high-achieving students set higher standards for their

Method/Procedure

This research compared the primary school students' academic achievements between more and less parental involvement in Bangkok Christian International School (BCIS), Thailand. This research was designed as a quantitative research using descriptive statistics for a survey consisting of three parts. In the first part, the researcher tried to survey the student parents' demographics. In the second part, the researcher tried to identify the levels of parental involvement. In the third part, the researcher tried to compare the primary school students' academic achievements between more and less parental involvement in Bangkok Christian International School (BCIS).

The participants were all 60 students' parents in Grade 5-6 in Bangkok Christian International School (BCIS), during the year 2012-2013.

To conduct this study, the researchers requested for permissions from the principal and the Grade 5-6 homeroom teacher of Bangkok Christian International School (BCIS) firstly, and then distributed the questionnaire to the parents' of Grade 5-6 in BCIS during

Oct 12 to Nov 15, 2013. Finally, when the questionnaires were collected from 60 parents, 57 of them were validly completed.

Findings/Results

For Research Objective 1: The demographics of student's parents, including their marital status, occupation, family income, education level, and English communication skill in Bangkok Christian International School (BCIS), Thailand were reported by this study.

and eight (2.9), which meant not many parents send (pick up) their child to (from) school by themselves, and not many parents answer and provide comments to school letters/emails very often. The overall parental involvements in Grade 6 in Bangkok Christian International School (BCIS) are 3.3, which meant they got involved into the school parental activities "often".

Table 1: Levels of Parental Involvement in BCIS

	Items	Mean	SD
1.	I attend all meetings or activities of the school	4.3	1.1
2.	I send (pick up) my child to (from) school by myself	2.9	1.6
3.	I check my child's homework	3.8	1.2
4.	I help my child with his (her) homework or project	3.3	1.1
5.	I ask my child's classroom teachers about his performance at school	3.3	1.1
6.	I told my child's classroom teachers about his performance at home	3.3	1.0
7.	I read the emails/letters from school/teachers	3.0	.9
8.	I answer/ comment to school emails/letters	2.9	1.0
9.	I even teach my child for some subject before class	3.0	1.1
10.	I let my child to set up his/her goal of learning	3.0	1.1
	Total	3.3	1.0

As results showed, 96.3% of the parents were in the status of married, 3.7% of them in fact only one parent was in the status of divorced.

37% of the parents were employees, 33.4% of them were housewives, 14.8% of them were employers, and another 14.8% of them were doing other jobs, as they specified those as missionary work, pastor, or church work.

37% of the parents income were 30,001~70,000 baht, 33.4% of them were getting more than 100,000 baht, 22.2% of them were having income of 70,001~100,000 baht, and 7.4% of them were having income less than 30,000 baht.

63% of the parents had Bachelor Degrees, 29.6% of them had Masters Degrees and Higher, 3.7% of them (only 1) had Technical/Vocational License, and 3.7% of them (only 1) had High School Diploma/GED or Lower.

37% of the parents perceived themselves had "Good" English skills, 26% of them had "Fair" English skills, 18.5% of them had "Excellent" English skills, and another 18.5% of them had "Poor" English skills.

For Research Objective 2: Means and standard deviations were used to identify the levels of parental involvement in Bangkok Christian International School (BCIS), Thailand. As Table 1 shown, the results showed that most parents got highly involved in the school meeting and activities since the mean score of item one is 4.3, while the lowest mean scores appeared in item two

For Research Objective 3: In order to compare students' achievement between more parental involvement and less parental involvement, according to the parents' responses, the levels of Parental Involvement were measured by the Grade 5-6 parents' answers to 10 questions for both terms were divided into 2 trypes: more parental involvement and less parental involvement.

According to the questionnaire, if the summed scores of all 10 questions of Parental Involvement are between 26-50, this student was regarded as received "***More Parental Involvement***". Meanwhile, if the mean scores of all 10 questions of Parental Involvement are between 10-25, this student was regarded as receieved ***Less Parental Involvement***. As for ***Student Academic Achievement***, in this study, it refered to the students GPA as parents reported in the questionnaire.

Then, for the comparison of students' achievement between more parental involvement and less parental involvement, an independent sample t-test's was computed as Table 2 showed, and the significant difference of students' achievement between more parental involvement and less parental involvement was found finally even at .01level . Meanwhile, this table also revealed that 42 parents from the respondents were regarded have more parental involvement, while 15 parents from the respondents were regarded have less parental involvement, based on the categorizing criteria—whether or not their summed scores of all 10 items is within 26-50, or with 10-25.

Table 2: Differences of Students Academic Achievement with More and Less Parental Involvement in BCIS

GPA Parental Involvement	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
More Parental Involvement	42	3.70	.20	5.60	0.000**
Less Parental Involvement	15	3.40	.10		

** $p < 0.01$

Discussion

1.Demographics of Student's Parents
The different demographics of students' parents indicated the students family education environment, which will impact on students' growth and education achievement as well, therefore, to study and understanding the demographics of the students' family is very necessary and important. Here in this part, the researcher would like to discuss about the findings like this way:

- Family income: the study found most parents income were 30,001~70,000 baht, but quite many of them were getting more than 100,000 baht and having income of 70,001~100,000 baht, but not many families had income less than 30,000 baht.
- Marital Status of the Parents: this study found most parents were classed as 'married', but some were classed as 'divorced'.
- Parents' Occupations: since BCIS is a middle class school as long as school tuition fees were concerned, more parents were employees, but also quite many of students' mothers were housewives, because some families were doing business by themselves and they were employers; since the school is Christian, there were some parents who worked as missionaries, pastors, or did other church related work.
- Educational Level: the study showed most parents had Bachelor Degrees, quite many of them had Masters Degrees and Higher, but the the number of parents with Technical/Vocational License and had High School Diploma/GED or Lower was low.
- English Communication skills: the study found the majority of parents perceived themselves to have "Good" English skills, but the number of parents who had "Excellent" English skills and "Poor" English skills were similarly low as well.

Epstein& Dauber (1991) believed that teachers are less likely to know the parents of children who are culturally different from their own background and are more likely to believe that these parents are less interested in their children's schooling.

Lee & Bowen(2006) Parents' language difficulties may also cause difficulties in understanding participation opportunities. It is unfortunate that parents with low SES and from different ethnic and cultural background than the mainstream culture, whose children would most benefit from parental involvement, are more likely to find it difficult to become and remain involved.

Vogels (2002) found that parents with social and cultural backgrounds different from the dominant social groups in the society may also have quite diverse expectations and interpretations of what it means to be educationally helpful to their children.

2.Levels of Parental Involvement
This study found that most parents got highly involved in the school meeting and activities, but not many parents send (pick up) their child to (from) school by themselves, and not many parents answer and comment to school letters/emails very often. Generally speaking, the frequency of the parents' involvement in the school parental activities was "often".

Epstein J.L (2010) also found most of the students, at all levels, especially the primary school students, want their families to be more knowledgeable parents about schooling and are willing to take active roles in assisting communications between home and school. When parents come to school regularly, it reinforces the view in the children's mind that school and home are connected and that school is an integral part of the whole family's life.

Wang Zhengqing(2006) mentioned that although most parents do not know how to help their children with their education, with guidance and support of the school, they may become increasingly involved in home learning activities, have opportunities to teach, and find themselves being role models for and to guide their children.

3. Differences of Students Academic Achievement with More and Less Parental Involvement in BCIS
The significant difference of students' achievement between more parental involvement and less parental involvement was found.

Taggart, B (2004) found that parental involvement in children's education from an early age has a significant effect on educational achievement, and continues to do so into adolescence and adulthood.

Family learning can also provide a range of benefits for parents and children including improvements in reading, writing and numeracy as well as greater parental confidence in helping their child at home. (Brookes, G., Gorman, T., Harman, J., Hutchinson, D., Kinder, K., Moor,H., and Wilkin, A. 1997).

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