

A Study of Primary School Parents' Interaction with Teachers' in Malaysia

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Abstract—This study explores the interactions between primary school parents-teachers in Malaysia. Schools in the country are organized to promote participation between parents and teachers. Exchanges of dialogue are most valued between parents and teachers because teachers are in daily contact with pupils' and the first line of communication with parents. Teachers are considered by parents as the most important connection to improve children learning and well-being. Without a good communication, interaction or involvement between parent-teacher might tarnish a pupils' performance in school. This study tries to find out multiple emotions among primary school parents-teachers, either estranged or cordial, when they communicate in a multi-cultured society in Malaysia. Important issues related to parent-teacher interactions are discussed further. Parents' involvement in an effort to boost better education in school is significantly more effective with parents' involvement. Lastly, this article proposes some suggestions for parents and teachers to build a positive relationship with effective communication and establish more democratic open door policy.

Keywords—Multi-cultured society, parental involvement, parent-teacher relationships, parents' interaction.

I. INTRODUCTION

IN a multi-cultured society like Malaysia, schools, teachers, and parents have an important role to play and shape a brighter younger generation in education. A mutual co-operation or interaction can be achieved between parents and teachers in order to further the advancement of education, pupils' welfare and development of human capital. Communication is a networking process when parents and teachers are sharing experiences about his/her children (pupils) in their daily learning basis together. According to [1], the involvement of parents in their children's education, communication or interaction between teachers is considered as vital in school organization. However, there are some misinterpretation and dilemma in building a good network of relationships between the school, teachers and parents in the multi-cultured society of Malaysia. So far, there are not many available studies are carried out to collect the views or voices from the parents regarding the parent-teacher relationship, notably in Malaysian primary schools. Previously, most of the research studies focused mainly on the teachers' perception towards the parents' involvement in school. From this study, the main issue can be seen whether parents provide a positive or negative perception of the role of teachers as an advantage or disadvantages in their children education. This is a descriptive type of study. Three aspects are discussed

including, school management (headmaster/headmistress leadership), social interaction between teachers- parents (pupils) relationships and teacher-communicating styles. This study will also try to answer the question; does the attitude of the primary school teachers such as sense and style of speech (body language) result in the lack of parental involvement in communication and co-operation? It is a difficult question, what exactly is the best course of action to bring the ties between the teachers (e.g. headmaster/principal and school administrators) and parents closer?

Most educationists would like to achieve these aspects when it comes to interaction with parents, examples:

- (a) If it is wrong to tell the truth to the parents about their child's performance in school? What is an educationist supposed to do? All I want to do is speak my mind, and if it is wrong to do so, what is right?
- (b) How to inspire creative and effective communication between parents?
- (c) How to bring out the best in one another?

Lastly, the author presents a guide to enhance a better direction to maximize the interaction benefit between parent-teacher relationships and how to put the children's education as a first priority. To produce a good quality education, support and co-operation of parents play an important role in making the school great and successful. Many headmasters and teachers in Malaysian primary schools believe that the interactions between parents are not necessary and should not be given as first priority in school organization. Schools need to be more proactive in building relationships with parents. Each school issue should be discussed with parents whether it is connected with the school programs or the progress of their children in academia or sports. Therefore, the school and teachers have to take advantage of the existing relationships to create "chemistry" between the two parties. This allows the school to use the opportunities that exist for help, support and combine forces to enhance a better education. This study aims to assess the level and quality of the networking relationships between parents and the school including teachers, parental involvement in school programs and the challenges faced while building the relationship. The results obtained in this study will help the school to find the best methods and approaches to the parents as a "smart partnership" in strengthening education in the school system.

II. RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What are the inherent qualities of communication between parents and the school?
2. How proactive (passive) is parental involvement in

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- programs that are organized by the school?
3. How and what challenges are faced by parents in building networking relationships with schools and teachers?
 4. From the parents' perspectives- what is the relationship of teacher commitment to school climate and its elements?
 5. What are the suggestions to increase the effectiveness of interaction or communication between parents and schoolteachers?

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature used in this study contains information global and local context. The purpose is to analyze studies and research from a global and local context to point out the interaction between parents-teachers in the school organization from the parents' point of view. When searching for literature and relevant sources, these became an apparent struggle to find specific information with regards to the relationship of parents-teachers interaction in the Malaysian context.

A. The School Management and Public Relations

The quality of a school is not just measured by its academic, sports and extra co-curriculum programs solely but through the strength of relationship with parents. According to [2], interpersonal human relations are important in school organization. However, nowadays many problems between the school and parents have emerged, especially in terms of dissatisfaction with the school management and teachers, whether expressed through the mass media, police reports and legal actions. Many studies show that an effective school leadership can be generated by headmasters and teachers through efficiency. Reference [3] determined that one important element which influences the success of the school management is how teachers and school administrators interact with parents. School administrators and teachers cannot escape from the challenges to build closer and diplomat ties with parents. If the challenges are not dealt with carefully, the school will be considered as an education institution that fails to work.

B. Networking between Parents and School (Teachers)

The quality and effective networking relationship between the school (teachers) and parents is an important major determination of school success. References [4] and [5] stated that schools should have a strong network and an intimate relationship with the parents for making the national education system a success. The school should be aware that there are many approaches that can be used to establish a good relationship with parents. According to [6], the success of developing human capital not solely depends on the school authorities or the government, but must gain support through the parents too.

C. School Climate

Early instrument development by [7], assesses climate as teacher characteristics on a scale from "open" to "closed" in primary schools. Climate has been associated with school

spirit, teacher morale and efficiency [8]. High morale and commitment to openness, whereby teachers work well together, obtain job satisfaction or responsibility and keep the school organization moving. They are proud to be associated with the school organization and work hand-in-hand with parents and pupils. Schools with a positive climate for teachers are more likely to have dedicated and devoted teachers [9] or vice-versa. A closed climate is inhospitable, unhealthy and hazardous. Teachers do not work well with the organizations including parents and pupils. Reference [3] commented that the close climate resulted in the joint interaction between members of the school community, especially between (pupils and parents), in being less intimate or unfriendly, and this undermines efforts to promote the school positively. Sincerity, trust and tolerance between parents, schools and teachers do not exist.

D. Parents Involvement in School

According [10], the role of parental involvement in the education process is very important to build self-concept of a child. Parental involvement such as discussions, care and effective communication or interaction with the school administrators and teachers is essential to determine the child success [11]. Parental involvement is important because it reflects the development of social and academic success of their children. [12], [13] also noted that the school should have a strong and intimate partnership relationship with the parents because the success of the national education system depends on how well all the elements work together such as volunteering is kind of parental involvement.

E. Mutual Understanding/Cultural Differences/Body Language

According to [14], cultural difference can create communication challenges and great barrier if teachers use "their own cultural lenses" or impose their culture when interacting or working together with different ethnicity, religions, races; culturally and linguistically diverse parents. Knowledge regarding culture is not adequate according to [15], teachers must act professionally to understand the uniqueness and distinctiveness of each family based on their cultural background by growing a sense of awareness of the difficulties or hardship faced by immigrant parents, foreign parents, foreign single parents and mixed marriage parental background children [16]. For example, teachers can slot in the faces of the diversity of culture and body language into the children's literature, history, civilization studies or language lessons in the classroom teaching [17].

IV. RESEARCH DESIGN

For qualitative research in education-sociology studies, it is most important to protect the respondents' confidentiality while presenting detailed, far-reaching comprehensive accounts of social life of the respondents. Reference [18] refers to confidentiality as an ultimate goal to protect every research participant from the beginning of data collection.

In this study, the author makes assurances and takes responsibility in deciding what aspects of a person's stories and life circumstances in the interview maintains confidentiality and the respondent's names have been replaced with pseudonymous. The writer presented a confidentiality agreement at the beginning of the data collection process (interview) with the research respondents to build trust and to protect the respondents. It is easier when the intended use of the data is clear, specific and distinctive [19].

The literature review (library based study) remains the basis of the data collection to illustrate and exemplify the significance of the existing literature and research. The study also employs interviews with eight parents from different academic, professional and cultural backgrounds based on their perspectives and interaction with their children's teacher. They are mutual friends and neighbors of the author of this study. The nature of the study requires a considerable amount of contribution from the participants, as they are required to allocate time and effort to be interviewed and creating responses.

The selection of the participants is based on two essential criteria. Firstly, they are willing to participate in the research interview on a volunteer basis. Secondly, they must have at least a child who is currently attending primary school. The researcher faced difficulties when recruiting participants from random sampling from the public due to time the consuming task. Therefore, it was decided to turn to mutual friends and neighbors who volunteered as participants and expressed an interest in hearing more about the study. Based on the tradition of studying and representing "friends" and "neighbors", it requires the researchers to maintain a distance from the subject of the research in order to present an unbiased view. Ethically, this study requires a higher level of commitment and participation. Honesty is the primary principal when working with mutual friends and neighbors. It is essential to keep a high level of flexibility and ingenuity throughout the interview process. Since the participants came from different backgrounds, they would tell their stories from different aspects as a parent. The advantage of working with mutual friends and neighbors is that rapport or bonding can be simply formed by mutual trust efficiently and in less time than would be needed for an icebreaking stage.

TABLE I
BASIC INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Name of Participants	Occupation	Academic Level	Nationality
Ada	Cleaner	High School	Pilipino
Ben	Entrepreneur	University	Malaysian
Carl	Technician	University	Malaysian
Dan	Mechanic	University	Malaysian
Fifi	Cleaner	High School	Indonesian
Eve	Housewife	High School	Indonesian
Gina	Housewife	University	Malaysian
Hans	Businessman	High School	Malaysian

The researcher of this study spent three weeks to analyzing, interviewing and recording the conversations between these eight parents. While interviewing the parents, the same open ended questions were used to obtain sincere and profound

answers. This approach facilitated faster interview approach that can then be more easily analyzed and compared. The interview has proved to be a useful tool to gather information when researching to help support and show information given by existing research and real life experience. And at the same time, it is meant to prevent and avoid bias.

Interview Outline

1. How comfortable do you feel talking with your child's teacher?
2. How often do you contact the school regarding your child's learning development?
3. How often the teacher(s) return your phone calls, short message system (SMS) or e-mails?
4. How well informed are you about your child's learning progress?
5. How often does the teacher(s) or school give you adequate information about your child?
6. Do the school personnel coordinate or co-operate with one another around your child's need?
7. Do you feel you child is properly supervised or neglected?
8. How clearly or openly is/are the teacher(s) communicating the learning goals he/she has for your child?
9. How respectful or courteous is/are the teacher(s) towards your child or you?
10. Does the school community as a whole provide a positive/negative social climate for the parents?
11. Reflection: Do the teacher(s) notify me of the positive work my child has done in class or vice-versa?
12. Review: The teacher(s) has a positive/negative impact on my child's well-being and characters. The teacher(s) motivates, inspires, and encourages my child in his/her learning.
13. What are your expectations of your child's teacher?

V. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The relationship between parents and teachers can be contented team instead of a hostile partnership. Ineffective interaction or communication is often the beginning of misunderstandings; however, it can be improved. Positive interaction between parents and teachers can lead to the development of flourishing school partnerships or vice-versa. When parents are judgmental and start making unreasonable demands on teachers based on feedback, comments and remarks from their children. At the same time, teachers' judge parents and their pupils based on their academic performance, financial background, parentage background and social skills. This is how the hostility develops and it is very common to see it in most primary schools in Malaysia. This situation is upsetting to both parties; the teachers and parents; however, in the end, the one who suffers is the child. Blame creates no winners, only losers.

A parent participant, Ada expressed that an effective parent-teacher interaction requires essential interpersonal and intrapersonal skills on the teacher's part [20]-[22]. Communicating in a moderate polite tone, caring for people

genuinely, showing empathy and interest on underprivileged children, reflecting affect can reduce miscommunication among teachers and parents. Parents want to be treated with respect as equal when communicating with school personnel. Take for example this quote describing her disappointing experience when communicating with school staff.

"I have two sons neither of them is good in their studies. I try my very best to provide them everything as best as I could. Sometimes my strength is limited. My youngest son is often labeled as dim-witted, lazy, and impolite by his schoolteachers. I have been to my son's school many times to explain to his teachers about his learning difficulties. Instead of guiding him in the effective ways of reading, they put him in the classroom for children with learning disabilities. I am very disappointed with the arrangement. I have spoken to the headmaster on several occasions and no action is taken. My presence at the school is frowned upon by certain teachers. I am not a troublemaker, I just want to make things right. Sometimes, I come home from work and find my son crying or harming himself from the mistreatment he is getting at school. Whenever, there is a fight between my son and other children at school, he is always the scapegoat. I am not trying to defend or see no fault in him. He is a loner and he would never go pick a fight with someone unless he has been provoked. At times, I feel hopeless and unable to defend him as a mother."

From the author's point of view, a teacher ought to have good listening skills. Parents are not seeking for a cold, harsh, inhospitable professional approach from school personnel. Teachers who know how to develop "personal touch" or "healing hands" in their communication/ interaction style definitely the relationship between parents, school and teachers will be flourishing. Your eyes are the windows to your soul; meaningful silence is better than meaningless chatter, be sensible with your speech and action.

Ben expressed that a "customer-friendly" school environment reflects how highly the school staff appreciates parental involvement in school activities [23]. Effective parent-teacher interaction is a good opportunity to create flourishing and mutual partnership, but they may be anxiety provoking for both parties when there is no co-operation [24]. The quality of school management, teachers and parents' co-operation/interaction is not simply reflected on the level or success of a child's academic or sports achievements, but it is the expression of feelings and mutual understanding between them. Ben elaborated by saying:

"As a father, I give the very best education to my children. I put them in a private school. My wife and I are very busy with our own careers, but we never once neglect our duty as parents; whatever, if the school is asking for sponsorship for annual activities, we support this because our children love the school. There are occasions where I go to the school to ask about their academic performance. Some teachers are very proactive and dedicated. They give us good parental advice. But there are a few, where we are seen as just "good" for

sponsorship. But, there is one mathematics teacher who simply disappoints me in terms of her speech and body language. She asks me to "coach" my child's mathematics homework at home. I do realize one of my sons is weak in mathematics. He shows no interest in mathematics but excels in sports. I have hired a home tutor to help him. I am not a life "coach". All I need is some "enlightenment".

The researcher reckons that if a dedicated teacher could design a proper teaching method by building up positive interactions when parents are seeking for their advice that it would definitely encourage more interactions between parents and pupils, and perhaps, the child's understanding of mathematics will be increased. Systematic, diplomat interaction inclusion of parents into school activities or academic program will improve the pupils' learning discipline and ability [25]. If a teacher believe that "teachers are experts" and should not be questioned or challenged at all, especially by the parents'; the mutual trust, co-operation and interaction between these two parties would definitely never work.

Carl recalled how his daughter's teachers communicate with him unpleasantly when he went to see them, even with good intentions. Some teachers often doubt that parents have good intentions or purpose when they decide to get involved in their child's school life and are skeptical about the presence of non-professionals involvement in their teaching career or classroom routine [26], [27].

"My wife is a foreigner. We have an 8-year old daughter together. We both try to educate her to appreciate her mixed-heritage background since birth. As she enters formal school, she feels miserable. She is average in her studies but her social development is disturbing. Schoolchildren make fun of her features and sometimes mock her accent; the worst part is that some teachers ask her to speak in her mother tongue or perform traditional folk dances in the classroom. She does it as a courtesy. She barely has any friends to play with. There are few times, she asks us not to drop or pick her in front of the school. She does not want to be seen with us at school activities and hides all the school invitation letters or stops us from preparing traditional meal for her to take to school. I have spoken to some of her teachers, especially her class teachers, and ask them not to single her out in class lesson and to treat them all equally. She has a right to enjoy her childhood. However, the situation never dies off. I am disappointed with the school teachers. I have also called up the headmaster and senior assistants a few times, and they did apologize on the teachers' behalf. My wife and I are concerned about her well-being in later years and we do believe that racial identity is more complicated than what someone looks like on the outside. We intend to choose a school that celebrates cultural diversity."

The author of this study thinks that if a teacher does not have any knowledge or respect of other cultures, particularly with ways of communicating, then their interaction with foreign parents will definitely be a challenge. The interaction

and communication could become more mortifying than memorable. Each society or nationality has a unique and complicated repertoire of acceptable and unacceptable behavior such as facial expression, eye contact, personal space and body language, and the best way to show an interest in the needs of foreign children or parents is to practice subtle ways of expressing speech, concealing thoughts and emotion. Teachers ought to be respectful, sensitive, and diplomatic, and remember that on the whole we are much more similar than we are different. Never assume that everyone else is just like you. As educators, we want to reduce cross-cultural miscommunication.

If the interaction or communication between teachers and parents is frequent, diplomatic, clear and cordial, pupils' attendance will improve and chronic absences will decrease [28]. Meanwhile, the influence of teaching strategies on pupils' academic achievement would produce similar positive results. A parent needs to feel welcomed, invited and encouraged to attend school meetings. However, does a parent's employment or occupation have direct influence on their child and their participation as a member of the school? Dan and Fifi have witnessed different treatment based on their socio-economy status. Dan mentioned in the following quote that,

"I think I am a bad father but one of my son's teachers has made me feel I can be a good father. I am bankrupt. Every day, I am chased by the bank to pay off debts and loans. All of my family members are suffering. My children constantly skip school because of me. We do not have enough money to cover our daily expenses. One of my son's teachers noticed it. She called me several times to school, but each time I make up many excuses not to go. However, one day she was waiting for me with my son after school. She approached me and asked politely about my dilemma and situation. I could not hide it from her. I told her the truth. She expressed her sympathy. What surprised me most was that she offered to pay for my son's books and school fees. She helped us from day one. One thing she said that I will never forget is that "We as parents, we cannot stop our children from schooling because of our personal issues, we must have faith to go on living."

Dan expressed that when the teacher showed concern for the child's welfare it had a positive influence on the development of the child. However, Fifi has different a belief and perceptions as a struggling hardworking immigrant single mother who tries to give her children the very best. Fifi thinks parents' concern and interest in their child's school development and achievement is at the core of their support and co-operation with the school [29]. Parental involvement in education is starting to gain importance and positive thinking among immigrant parents in Malaysia, such as Ada, Fifi and Eve. They know the importance of education and how it can improve their lifestyle, the author reckons. Fifi elaborated by saying:

"I have to keep three jobs to save enough money for my son's education. My son is filial and has a good

academic performance. He makes me very happy. I send him to a good primary school situated in an elite neighborhood. His school is near to my work place. It is easy for us to commute. I only go to my son's school to attend two events, Open Day and Prize Giving Day Ceremony. Each semester on Open Day I would go to his school to collect his report card and talk to his teachers about his school performance. Usually, I hear positive remarks from his teachers. Each time, on these two occasions, I try to put on something nice and be careful with my speech. As a mother, I do not want to embarrass my son. For three consecutive years my son has been placed with the same class teacher. I notice, however, that each time she speaks to me there is no eye contact, with an edgy and uneasy feeling. Our conversations are quick and short. When I compared myself with other parents, I see she is very happy to see them, but when she is with me it is completely the opposite. I feel quite out of place. Sometimes, she sees me outside of school; and she would pretend I do not exist. It is a similar situation on Prize Giving Day Ceremony, she never greets me. If I am sitting next to the upper or middle class parents', they always get attention from the school's staff members, but I never do. I know where I stand; I may not be highly educated and well-dressed in branded attire, but I am also part of the school."

The researcher also thinks that the notion of an elitist attitude is totally absurd, especially when someone who is not rich or well-educated, but still has a solid profession and is perhaps well-dressed, is considered as a failure. What kind of mentality is that? Some teachers do develop a sense of privilege when teaching in elite neighborhood schools. However, the author believes that the teachers need to remember that they are employed to educate and inspire the younger generation to do well in life. Stay grounded, stay humble; that is the real meaning of education. Everyone is entitled to fair and just education regardless their economic status.

Eve acknowledged the benefits of parental involvement in school. Parental involvement in school is related to the pupils' achievements either in academic performance, sports or moral well-being [30]. Parent-teacher positive interaction is shown to increase pupils' motivation, trust, commitment and performance [31]-[33]. Eve elaborated by stating that:

"I wish I could have the same teachers as my children do. How much I wish my parents could have afforded to send me to school a bit longer instead of marrying young and being poor. Since, I am a foreigner, and my husband is a carpenter and not so highly educated, most of the time we are not able to help our children in their studies, even at primary school level. There are two teachers that touch our hearts. One of them is my daughter's class teacher. She teaches English. My daughter adores her even though she is afraid to speak English. Her class teacher never fails to greet us even though we live quite shabbily. Her husband is also a teacher; they always send us books; sometimes they drop by to teach our

children to read in English and play with them with no questions asked. Her husband always advises us about the importance of education and encourages us to attend parent-teacher meetings or motivation programs that are held at the school. We participate actively. My husband and I start learning to read because of them."

The author of this study reckons that parental involvement is the best predictor of their willingness to become involved in the children's school life and learning. Parents from different social economy background/groups, ethnicity or nationality, have different experiences and expectations with regard to the success or performance of their children in school. The quality of interaction between parents-teachers can be different from school to school. Research has shown that the parental involvement contributes to better educational outcomes such as fulfilling school obligations and responsibilities [34], [35].

A good partnership between parents-teachers is based on good communication (listening) skills, positive influence on perseverance, as well the trust and reliance of both parties. In this following quote, Gina shared that:

"I am a full-time housewife. I think I must have been "blind" all these years to not notice that my youngest daughter has dyslexia until her Malay Language teacher enlightened me. I barely attend school activities or programs except Open Day. I used to think she is dim-witted, slow and playful. When she was little, I used to tell her teachers, she could not read nor write. They told me, she was a slow development child. I believed them. When she was 10, her class teacher approached me and told me that she might be dyslexic. I was quite unhappy with her, even though she sounded quite diplomatic. I would turn away or ignore her each time I saw her. I knew she was searching for an opportunity to talk to me. One day, my daughter showed me a note from her class teacher attached with some work from my daughter and other pupils. Then, I realized I was so wrong about her. I was skeptical. That very week, I went and apologized to her. She patiently explained dyslexia to me. She even had all the relevant information about dyslexia prepared for me. I could not thank her enough. I enrolled my daughter at specialist dyslexia center and now she can read."

In this regard, the author thinks that teachers should be observant and fully understand the situation before they can proactively be involved in talking to parents' regarding their child's academic performance or learning difficulties. A teacher ought to know how well parents would be able to understand or accept their child's condition. If the parents' concern is carefully interpreted and decoded, a teacher can make suitable approach strategies to help the parents and the child based on their identified needs [36]. Parents of children with learning difficulties such as dyslexia and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), for example Gina and Hans, can develop a sense of negative emotional reactions for instance hostility, rejection, guilt, anger, self-blame, embarrassment and withdrawal [37]. Teachers need to develop very good intrapersonal communication skills especially with regard to body language, speech tone and empathy, in order to

show how much they care for their pupil's development at school.

Hans shared similar sentiments as Gina. Hans expressed that,

"I am short-tempered and strict. My children are afraid of me. I believe in good discipline, and if my children are misbehaved I considered myself a failure. One of my sons constantly gets a bad scolding from me. I do not quite understand him. I received many negative complaints and remarks from the school, even from the day he started. I feel bad when I read the negative comments from teachers. I wish they could write in a more professional and subtle way. Sometimes, I feel embarrassed to show myself at the school because of my son's behavior. One day, I went to see the school's discipline teacher. He told me that almost everything that my son did in school went from bad to worse. He advised me to see the school counselor. She told me that he might have Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD). I have never heard about it. I was advised to see the pediatrician. If I could have found out earlier, it would be better. I am grateful to know that my son's school teachers are aware of his behavior from this early stage."

This researcher agrees that in the modern technology era, teachers have become very tech-savvy. Many teachers are starting to communicate with parents using the Internet and social media such as short message system (SMS), Facebook or Twitter. Teachers should be alert and subtle when conveying message, especially to parents, and particularly with regard to negative messages. Educational "jargon" should be avoided in all cases. Parents are the teacher's valuable customers, and they should not want to displease or provoke them. Teachers must act professionally. Reference [38] thinks that it is essential for a teacher to have a face-to-face meeting with a parent rather than a written exchange; however, it depends on the issue.

The parent-teacher relationship is one of the most influential elements in a school education system. In Malaysia, most educational initiatives that create controversy between parents-teachers are aimed at teaching, learning and solving discipline problems. Parents always worry about what their children have learned in school, for example Ada, Ben, Carl and Fifi. While teachers are more concerned with how their pupils learn. Parents can remind teachers about the realities, for example, even the best prepared and delivered curriculum will not be successful if pupils and parents are unsure about it. Parents who understand the complex situation faced by teachers who teach a full class will have a more productive relationship, such as Dan, Eve, Gina and Hans. To build a professional and yet positive relationship between parents-teachers requires a lot of compromise on both sides, but it can be achieved with a little tolerance from all parties.

VI. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

It is expected that the findings of this study will help and encourage teachers (e.g. headmaster/principal and school

administrators) to communicate and interact better with parents. Based on the findings, the aim of this study is to provide some guidelines for the Ministry of Education to draw up programs to bring the ties between the schools and parents together such as establishing training workshops on the ethics of communication for teachers (including headmaster and school administrators) and provide general practical guidelines or specific knowledge for all schools with regard to how to interact with parents positively. Parents are the most important “clients” or “customers” for a school, without the presence of parents, a school organization would not be able to run smoothly.

Based on the perspectives of Ada, Ben, Carl and Fifi, when parent-teacher interaction or communication breaks down, it reflects on how poor the headmaster/principal leadership is since they are the head of the school. They ought to be the role model to teachers and lead by examples. A great deal of compromise and conciliation is needed in order to achieve a professional relationship and interactions between parent-teacher. A good character trait of any teacher is treating other people with respect and showing genuine interest, such as the courtesy that were shown to Dan, Eve, Gina and Hans by their child’s teacher. Through this research, the writer hopes more schools will implement a variety of school programs to increase positive parental involvement. Best communication practices will help educators to build a creative and friendly atmosphere in the school environment and beyond.

The author of this study would also like to recommend that the Ministry of Education develop a teacher evaluation form for parents to review their child’s teacher(s) before the close of the academic school year. Parents are stakeholder of the school, and the action of including their perspectives in any evaluation may help to stimulate parent-teacher (school) relations. This is a meaningful step towards enhancing the quality of education. It serves as a tool or formative feedback to measure the quality of teaching and helps to improve teaching practices. Parents’ perspectives with regard to their child’s teachers have received minimal attention as a potential evaluation measure. Feedback from parents may provide useful information on key aspects of teacher’s work such as involving parents’ in their children’s academic performance and upgrading teachers’ professional competency. The following present some guidance on how to build positive relationships between parents and teachers (from the teacher’s perspectives):

- (a) Make your first interaction a positive one: If parents greeted a teacher warmly during a meeting, the problems among them will be solved easily, and vice-versa. A genuine gesture or smile can ease all misunderstandings.
- (b) Parents should not get angry before knowing all the facts: Sometimes a child can distort or twist information related to the school or particular issues. There are always two sides to every story. Fair minded parents would hear both sides before passing judgment.
- (c) Parents should not be overly aggressive or judgmental: As a teacher (headmaster/principal or school administrator), it can be quite upsetting when a parent complains to the

headmaster/principal about them, particularly without attempting to talk to the teacher first. Only after attempting to speak to the teacher should they consult with the headmaster/principal or school administrator. This would also help to limit unnecessary misunderstandings and conflicts.

- (d) Human Behavior - most teachers are sensitive: Teaching is a very personal career - teachers are those who are paid to be responsible for the thoughts and feelings of others, most of all educate. Parents ought to speak in a tone that does not sound offensive. It is not what you say, but how you say it.

A good teacher will welcome dialogue with parents because it allows them to better understand their pupils. Parents have the right to get feedback from the teacher as often as possible and should be notified immediately about any academic or discipline issues occurred. As in any relationship, communication is the key to a flourishing partnership between parents and teachers.

Communication or interaction is about content and delivery, it is a two-way exchange of messages. A school is a huge communication ground to generate positive networking between parents and teachers. However, how many teachers are “well-trained” or equipped with the knowledge of communication skills or body language ethics to speak to parents or pupils? This is one of the main factors that the Ministry of Education should address by providing adequate training or workshops to inexperienced teachers (e.g. headmaster/principal and school administrators) at teachers’ college or university, or through in-service/in-house training by a professional mentor; such measures would benefit all parties.

Teachers’ core business just not teaching, teachers ought to be an attentive listener and proactive communicator. Play your role as an educationist; do not ever think that the parents or schoolchildren are talebearers or troublemakers when they coming to seek for your help, opinion or guidance. Teachers should not be ignorant about school surrounding. Put away your arrogance too. Your biggest clients/customers are the parents and schoolchildren. Teachers’ perceptions and concerns towards the needs of parents and schoolchildren are important to bring the communication between parents work.

Parental involvement in school can increase their child’s academic and sports achievement. The benefits include achieving better grades, fewer discipline issues, and more satisfactory in school attendance. To get a positive result, teachers should be proactive and involve the parents in school programs. Most parents have never been invited to participate in an education program in schools. Often times, parents are only called when their child is facing disciplinary problems or learning difficulties. Actually, parents generally wait for teachers to make the first move to get them involved in their child’s education.

Due to high cost of living in urban areas in Malaysia, both parents are working to cover daily expenses, and the majority of them are not taking the initiative to get involved in school programs because of their tight work schedules. Also, some

parents used to think that their children were always a problem at school, and therefore, are not interested to participate in any school programs, such as the example of Hans. Teacher's attitudes also contribute to inactive parents' participation in school such as ignorance and arrogance.

To benefit from greater parental involvement, schools should propose proactive measures to include the following activities in their organization. Firstly, teachers ought to assist parents in matters relating to child care techniques by providing technical assistance with the aim of more effective education in the home. Second, schools should be encouraged to communicate with parents about their children school performance proactively by giving positive recommendations or available option. Lastly, schools need to inspire parents to participate in school programs or activities voluntarily in order to promote better teaching and learning environment in the school or home; eventually the pupils' achievements will improve.

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