
Title	The effects of parent training programmes on children's preparedness for school and on parent's support of children's development and learning in school
Author(s)	Christine Clarke
Source	<i>The NIE Researcher</i> , 1(2), 1-2
Published by	National Institute of Education (Singapore)

This document may be used for private study or research purpose only. This document or any part of it may not be duplicated and/or distributed without permission of the copyright owner.

The Singapore Copyright Act applies to the use of this document.

CONTENTS

The Effects of Parent Training Programmes on Children's Preparedness For School and on Parent's Support of Children's Development and Learning in School <i>Christine Clarke</i>	1
Developing Thinking Skills Through Problem Solving <i>Lucille Lee Kam Wah, Goh Ngoh Kheng and Chia Lian Sui</i>	3
Land Use Development in Singapore: A Modernisation Process in Geographical Perspective - A Summary of Research Results <i>Wong Tai Chee</i>	4
Root to Shoot Communication in Certain Temperate and Sub-Tropical Crops Grown Aeroponically In The Tropics <i>Hie Jie and Lee Jung Kong</i>	6
An Exploratory Analysis of Current Pedagogical Practices In Primary Mathematics Classrooms <i>Agnes Chang Shook Cheong, Berinderjeet Kaur, Koay Pheng Lee and Lee Ngan Hoe</i>	7
Application of Lasers in the Diagnosis of Diseased Tissues <i>Chia Teck Chee</i>	8
Learning Mathematics Through Exploration and Connection <i>Dongsheng Zhao, King Cheng Ang, Gerald Cheong, Rosalind Phang and Wee Kee Tang</i>	9
International Collaborations Young Children's Views of their World <i>Gillian Potter</i>	10
Mathematics - Whose Domain Is It? Views from Australia and Singapore <i>Helen J. Fogasz, Berinderjeet Kaur, and Gilah C. Leder</i>	12
Degrees Awarded	14

Members of the NIE Researcher Editorial Board:
Lionel Pereira-Mendoza, (Editor)
S. Gopinathan,
Chang Shook Cheong, Agnes,
Diong Cheong Hoang
Cameron Richards

From the Editor

This is the second issue of the NIE Researcher. It includes articles on many pedagogical areas such as mathematics education and early childhood, as well as articles associated with the disciplines of science and arts. The first two issues show the diversity of research interests of the NIE Academic Staff. We hope that the reader will find it informative and in future issues we will build on this base so the readers will have a picture of NIE's Research interests and achievements.

The Effects of Parent Training Programmes on Children's Preparedness For School and on Parent's Support of Children's Development and Learning in School

Christine Clarke

The purpose of this three year experimental study (1997-2000) was to investigate whether two parent training programmes could increase working-parent's (lower and middle income) direct involvement and confidence in preparing their K2 children to start school and to support their children's learning at home, particularly after school entry. The sample comprised mainly of parents considered to be less likely to participate in school activities and who might find it more difficult to assist their children with their homework.

Research Questions

There were four research questions for this study.

- i Do children's **academic**, language and school entry skills improve as a result of the two parent training programmes!
- ii What are the effects on parent's knowledge, confidence and level of involvement in their child's development and education by attending the training programmes?
- iii Are there any differences in **outcomes** between the two types of parent training programmes?
- iv Are **any** differences between the three groups maintained following school entry?

Methodology

An investigation was designed to identify the **effects** of two types of parent training programmes. One provided interactive parent-child guided-play sessions and the second focussed only on the parents through **parent** workshop sessions. The programmes were conducted in the childcare centres that the children attended. The effects of the training upon the parents and their children were compared

with a control group from the same childcare organisation but where no parent training sessions were provided.

There was a one-year follow-up phase to identify whether any gains made during the pre-school intervention period had been sustained over time and in the changed environment of the school. A replication of the study was conducted in the following year with a new cohort of families in the same six childcare centres but with treatments alternated to counter any centre effects.

The children's progress and the level of the parents' support for their development and learning was measured before and after a five month intervention phase by standardised and informal tests, checklists, structured interviews and questionnaires. Their progress was also followed-up at two points during Primary One by school exam results and by teacher, parent and child questionnaires,

Results

The results of the study are summarised in point form.

- i Significant improvements ($p < .001$) were made in language and cognitive skills by the end of the K2 intervention period by the children whose parents had attended the parent training sessions when compared with those in the control group, whose parents did not attend the parent training sessions.
- ii Parents who attended the training sessions increased their knowledge of their child's strengths and weaknesses and likes and dislikes. The time spent completing educational activities with their child, especially reading together increased. There was also an increase in their confidence in being able to assist their child with their learning in primary school compared with the control group.
- iii There were no significant differences between the outcomes of the two different methods of parent training. Both methods of parent training (parent-child interactive learning sessions and the parent workshops/talks) were equally effective.
- iv Although there were no significant differences between the three groups in the Primary One examination results (SA1 and SA2), there was a clear trend where children who had attended the Guided Play sessions with their parents scored higher results than did the children whose parents attended the workshops who, in turn, performed better than the children in the control group.

Most children settled well into school. The number of children in this study failing their school exams was very small. The main areas of difficulty cited by parents related to heavy school bags, coping with Hanyu Pinyin and how to help their children with project work. Many parents considered that there was insufficient school-home communication compared to pre-school. There was a plea from parents who were not confident in English for more school-home communication (written and verbal) to be conducted in the different mother tongues as well as in English. These parents were also having some difficulty in

helping their children with their homework which they feared would get worse as the standard of work got harder as their children progressed through the school.

Conclusions

The overall conclusion from this study was that the parent training programmes held during the last year in preschool was successful in improving the children's skills and in empowering their parents by increasing their knowledge, skills and confidence. The project also demonstrated that even busy working parents, whose main home language was not English and whose educational qualifications were generally limited, were interested in learning how to support their children's learning at home. The fact that the group differences were not maintained in primary school are in line with others reported in the literature. The consensus of research is that in order to achieve longer lasting benefits, the interventions need to consist of fully comprehensive services in health, education and social support services, be longer-term, and have follow through support in primary school for at least two years (Zigler, 1993; Horace, 1987; Fuerst & Fuerst, 1991).

Recommendations

This study had sufficient beneficial effects during the final year in Kindergarten for consideration to be given to similar projects being set-up in other preschool centres to increase parent involvement throughout the preschool years and not just in K2. Increasing parent involvement during primary school is also recommended. However it should be noted that parents have differing skills and needs. It is important that schools consider these differences when communicating with parents and in terms of the roles expected and activities offered.

References

- Clarke, C. (2000). *The effects of parent training programmes on children's preparedness for school and on parent's support of children's development and learning* in school. Academic Research Fund Report. Singapore: National Institute of Education.
- Horace, H., Ramey, C., Campbell, F., Hoffman, R., & Fletcher, R. (1987) Predicting school failure and assessing early intervention with high risk children. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 26: 758-63.
- Fuerst, J. S. & Fuerst, D. (1991).. *Chicago experience with early childhood programx.: The special case of the Child Parent Center programs*. Unpublished manuscript . Loyola University, Chicago. In Slavin, R.E; Karweit, N. L; & Wasik, B. A. (1994). *Preventing early school failure, Research, policy and practice*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon
- Zigler, E, and Styfco, S. J (Eds) (1993) *Head Start and beyond. A national plan for extended intervention*. New Haven: Yale University Press

This study was supported by the **Academic Research Fund (AcRF)**