A Phenomenological Study Exploring Parental Involvement among Role Model Students in a Private Secondary School

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological study was conducted with the purpose of understanding the role parents played and exploring the extent of parental involvement in bringing up their children to become role model students in a private secondary school setting. This study was conducted based upon the viewpoints of ten role model students from a private secondary school based in Cheras, Kuala Lumpur. Five common interrelated themes were obtained and exhaustively described in the findings of this study. The study found in order to raise a generation of student role models, parental involvement was seen through the laying of strong foundations which came in the form of the upbringing of their children from young, and by giving them the freedom and space to learn, grow and mature as the child grew older, together with providing the best the parents could offer towards their child's education, and in trusting private education that would continue to build upon the foundations first laid by the parents.

Keywords: Parental involvement, role model students, private education, secondary school, phenomenology

INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement has long been an issue discussed among many researchers. Abdul-Adil and Farmer (2006) defines parental involvement as any parental attitudes, behaviours, style, or activities that occur within or outside the school setting to support children's academic and/or behavioural success in their currently enrolled school. In the last decade, parental involvement in schools had been documented to be academically beneficial by researchers, supported by politicians and policy makers, and valued by many educators and individuals in the general public. Research had indicated parental involvement was one of the main contributors to a student being successful (Rumberger, 1995). Arguments had shown student excellence could not be be achieved unless parents were more involved in school activities and programs (Henderson & Mapp, 2000) and a healthy environment of learning for students could only be achieved when both the home and school learned to work together (Macfarlane, 2007). Parental involvement was also said to boost a child's perceived level of ability and independence, offering a sense of security, and helping to internalize the values of an education and performance (Young, Austin, & Growe, 2013).

The role of parental involvement in children's education has also become a central issue in educational policy and research. In the recently launched Malaysian Education Blueprint (2012), the Ministry of Education introduced the element of parental involvement, with the aim of bridging the gap between schools and the family institution. The blueprint states "the Ministry will ensure that parents, the community, and the private sector are fully engaged as partners in education. The focus is to harness the comparative advantages of the different parties to deliver quality education in an integrated, effective, and efficient manner" (p. 194).

However, the journey in promoting parental involvement in Malaysia seems to be an uphill battle. The present education system in Malaysia focuses largely on the school as the key player in a children's education with little concentration being placed in having parents as co-partners in the learning process. Zaidi (1998) found parental involvement in Malaysian schools was given less emphasis, for the school was regarded as an exclusive territory for teachers. This was further supported by Wee (2002) who found most parents in Malaysia would give full responsibility to the school without realizing the importance of their involvement in giving the best education for their children. Furthermore, Wee (1995) had earlier reported school and family partnerships was largely an uncharted territory in the Malaysian education system. Little is known about parental involvement in schools except via the role of the schools' Parent-Teacher Association's (PTA) contributions. In following the current status quo of practising parental involvement in schools through the PTA, the roles and responsibilities between schools and parents are not clearly defined, leading to minimal or almost no parental involvement in the schools (Wee, 1995; Wee 1996).

Another problem worth noticing is the level of parental involvement among secondary school children. While Malaysian parents show interests in getting involved in their children's primary education, there seems to be a growing trend of parents becoming less involved as their children grows older (Aliana, Noorazam & Hashima, 2010). Previous research confirmed this trend by indicating parents are more involved in their children's education at a primary level and tend to reduce their level of involvement as their children proceed to secondary schools (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). According to Leon (2003), the scarcity and lack of research done on parental involvement in secondary schools should be an indication that such involvement occurs much less frequently than it did at the primary school level.

In his research, Coleman (1988) gave a few ideas on why he thought there is a decrease in involvement in children's education at the secondary level. Among some are due to the more challenging curriculum and syllabus, the children in secondary schools are self-reliant and parents want to focus more time on their younger children. What happen in the end is, students in secondary schools tend to lose the opportunity to fully develop their skills and talents which can be acquired through the formation of partnerships with different stakeholders of the schools, and in particular through parental involvement (Epstein & Salinas, 2004).

While it may seem common for parental involvement to decline children grow older, studies have shown that family involvement through secondary school is still important and vital for a student to succeed (Epstein, 2008). Engle (1989) indicated students whose parents remained involved through secondary schools were much more likely to complete college. These students were three times more likely to complete a bachelor's degree than children of parents who were not involved in secondary schools. At the secondary school level, Wheeler (1992) stated that "parental involvement at the middle and secondary school levels is vital if teenagers are to become stable and productive adults" (p. 28). Leon (2003) supported this statement by saying students' habits and attitudes were formed as they grew up into adolescents which could have a significant impact on their success in later life, thereby making it important that "parents or guardians continue to play a significant role in the children's life, both in and out of school" (p. 32).

With the aforesaid issues in mind, this research was conducted based upon the students' viewpoints with the main purpose of exploring the extent of parental involvement in a private secondary school setting, using role model students as a benchmark. This research attempted to answer three specific research questions:

1. How do student role models perceive and think about parental involvement throughout their education?

2. Do student role models feel parents play an important role in their secondary school upbringing and in their achievements?

3. To what extent and in what ways do student role models see their parents practise parental involvement in a private secondary school setting?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Creswell (2002) defined qualitative research as an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore social or human problems. It is a process whereby the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.

The theoretical perspective most often associated with qualitative researches is phenomenology (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Patton (2002) observed phenomenological inquiry requires a "thoroughly capturing and describing how people experience some phenomenon—how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others" (p. 104). The purpose of the phenomenological approach is to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation. In the human sphere this normally translates into gathering 'deep' information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions and participant observations, and representing it from the perspectives of the research participants (Lester, 1999).

For an exploration of the role of parental involvement in raising children to become role models in a private secondary school setting, the phenomenological approach was used. Such a research would require an in-depth understanding of the participants' lives and upbringing during their times in secondary schools, something which a quantitative research method would not accurately provide data for.

Sample and Location

Purposive sampling was used in selecting participants. The participants were selected based on their particular knowledge of the phenomenon, for the purpose of sharing their knowledge and experiences with the researcher (Streubert & Carpenter 1999). According to Creswell (2007), a phenomenological study has a minimal sample size of less than ten, to develop rich results.

A total of ten role model students who obtained the Aspiring Student Award (*Anugerah Tunas Harapan*) for the academic year 2013 from a private secondary school (located in Cheras, Kuala Lumpur) were selected as participants. Chung (2000) stated a role model is someone who has achieved something unusual among the members of his or her group and attracts a lot of imitators or emulators. He went further to say that one person's achievement conveys information which affects the choices of many others. The selected students were chosen on the basis they represented the crème of the crop among students in their school and are looked upon as role models thus allowing them to contribute valuable information towards the research.

Data Collection and Analysis

In qualitative studies, the role of the researcher is to act as the instrument of data collection. The main instrument that was used for data collection was through conducting semi-structured interviews. Interview questions were self-designed by the researcher. Each participant was interviewed separately and lasted between 30 to 45 minutes. All interviews were audio recorded. Notes were also taken by the researcher based on what he observed during the interview process. A non-directive style of interviewing using open-ended questions was used. Additionally, a more directive style of questioning was also used as needed when the researcher required more clarification of information the participants provided. Interviews were geared more towards being reflective in nature as participants were asked questions pertaining to their past experiences while being in a secondary school.

The secondary source of data collection was through observations, and also by keeping a reflective journal throughout the research process. According to Morrow and Smith (2000), the use of a reflective journal adds rigor to qualitative inquiry as the investigator is able to record his/her reactions, assumptions, expectations, and biases about the research process. The field notes would provide additional data for the analysis.

All interviews, field notes, observations and journal entries were transcribed by the researcher before the data was analysed. The process of transcribing was very important as it allowed the researcher to become acquainted with the data. The data was then analysed following the 7-step method of phenomenological analysis designed by Colaizzi (1978). With the emphasis on experience as essential to understanding human psychology, Colaizzi's approach to phenomenology was first used with the motion of "returning to the things themselves" in order to understand a particular phenomenon. Colaizzi's approach investigates phenomena in a deep and meaningful way and recognises the importance of the phenomenological concept of 'being‑in‑the‑world'. The researchers felt by following this method, it would be consistent with the research objectives.

Validation of Research

To ensure a qualitative research demonstrates trustworthiness, Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four criteria for judging the soundness of qualitative research and specifically offered these criteria as an alternative to a more traditional quantitatively-oriented criteria. In any qualitative research, it has to demonstrate trustworthiness in providing consistency and strength in all stages of the research. The four trustworthiness approaches are

credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. The researcher undertook certain measures to ensure all four trustworthiness approaches were met in order to ensure the validation of the research.

Ethical consideration

The risk incurred by participants were deemed to be minimal. Although there were no identifiable risks for participating in this study, a couple of considerations were kept in mind when dealing with a qualitative research. Qualitative researchers focus their research on exploring, examining, and describing people and their natural environments. Embedded in qualitative research are the concepts of relationships and power between researchers and participants. The desire to participate in a research study depends upon a participant's willingness to share his or her experience. As such, it is vital utmost trust is built between the participants and the researcher. Researchers need to protect their research participants by developing trust with them while in the midst promoting the integrity of the research (Creswell, 2009). The researcher undertook certain measures to ensure ethical considerations were constantly taken into acccount throughout the process of gathering data.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Based upon Colaizzi's (1978) method of phenomenological analysis, the information gathered from the interview process was organized into clusters that represented the same themes. Five common interrelated themes were obtained by focusing upon the main purpose of the study. Each theme was stated and exhaustively described by using the words of the participants themselves.

Theme 1: Child's perspective of parental involvement

On being asked what the participants understood by the term 'parental involvement in education', most participants agreed parental involvement included parents playing their part in school and out of school, not only in terms of academic achievements but also in a holistic point of view. Participants seemed to highlight the importance of parental involvement in the areas of attitude, behaviour, character and discipline. Values imparted into the children seemed to play a major part of being involved in a their education. Participants also agreed parental involvement extends beyond parents playing a role in their children's life. It is also about the parents being there for their children and making themselves always available at all times. Participants also highlighted the importance of parents always being in the know about their children's progress in school and out of school.

> *"For me, it is all about parents playing a role in educating their children at home; educating in terms of character building, teaching them discipline, and showing good values...Parents should be involved in every part of a child's life so that when a child grows older, a child will know how to live in the outside world, especially when the parents are no longer there for the child"* (Participant A)

> *"I think parental involvement is basically throughout your education life in school, your parents are always there to assist you, to help you, to advise you, to encourage you, to back you up."* (Participant E)

Theme 2: Parental Involvement – 'Less is more'

This study found a majority of participants responded by saying less involvement should be emphasised as children grow older. Contrary to the belief of the researchers, most interviewed participants objected strongly with the notion parents should be more involved as a children grow older was brought up to them. Parental involvement was still welcomed, but less involvement would be appreciated.

> *"To me, parents should be less involved as the teenager grows up because as they grow, they have their own thoughts, they have their own ideas, their own world. Parents should remain by their child's side, like always, but just to be silent. To stand behind them to back them up and to help them when problems or troubles arise; and of course teenagers can always go back to their parents if they have any questions or problems."* (Participant E)

> *"After reaching a certain age, parents should become less involved. As a teenager grows up, he or she becomes more matured by learning from the outside world. By letting their child go, a child will learn more than if he or she is shielded by the parent's protection. As the child grows older, especially in Form 4 and Form 5, parents should still care but they must allow the children to make more decisions by themselves. Parents should also not be too strict and give the children space to make mistakes."* (Participant G)

The common recurring sentiments that seemed to appear through the voices of the participants were "maturity" and "independence". Many felt because they were growing up as teenagers, space was vital between the parents and themselves in order to learn to grow to be independent and become more matured. A higher level of involvement would only act as a deterrent towards the growth process of a teenager in terms of experience and lessons to be learned.

"I really feel like I want my parents to treat me as I grow older like a matured young adult by trusting me to make my own decisions and learning from my mistakes…When I was in primary school, my parents were closely monitoring me and they were involved in every single thing that I did. Then once I went to secondary school, I could see that they started letting go slowly but still kept a close watch over me. In secondary school they gave me more freedom to choose what I wanted to do and to make certain decisions as compared to primary school where they made all the decisions for me (Participant B)

"I feel that parental involvement in secondary school should be less. It is because during the times of being a teenager, this is where you form your own identity. During that time, the people we meet, the people we talk to, who you interact with, what you watch, these are the things which influence you the most. And as parents, if they are more involved, I feel a teenager would not be able to grow properly." (Participant D)

From the responses given by the participants, the researchers realised when it comes to parental involvement among secondary school students, the concept of 'less is more' needs to be applied. Less parental involvement does not mean a failure on the part of parents, but less parental involvement would equal to a more matured teenager, in which lessons can be learned and skills can be developed.

In his journal, the researcher reflected some parents understandably might find it difficult to be less involved. Parents might have a very hard time learning to let go. They might feel anything their kids did was their business. But if the responses of the participants reflected the general population of teenagers' thinking and reflections, then parents ought to learn to give their children space to grow to become matured young adults.

Theme 3: Parental Involvement vs. Parental Control

While participants responded parental involvement should decrease as the children grow older, none of them stated parents should completely cease to be involved at all. In fact, parental involvement in the teenager's life was still welcomed, but only at a decreased level. Participants indicated they still needed their parents to turn to for advice or help, or even when in times of trouble. Participants also acknowledged parental involvement was still essential and important for teenagers.

"I strongly agree parents should be involved in a teenager's secondary school life, because this is the phase where they are learning about life and they are getting more matured. As teenagers grow older, parents should stand by them and guide them along the way because I believe parents definitely had gone through what the teenagers would go through. So in whatever situation a teenager faces, I believe that parents are the best persons to give advice. That is why I feel parents should be involved in a teenager's education even though they are in secondary schools (Participant B)

"Yes, parental involvement in our education is very important. Growing up as a teenager, outside influences can be negative on a teenager and a parent needs to place attention on their son or daughter so as to help shape and mould their children into positive people" (Participant G)

Participants were also asked how they would feel if their parents were to have increased their level of involvement as they grew older rather than decrease it. The responses participants gave were they would see it as parents crossing the line between getting involved and controlling their children.

"If a parent chooses to be more involved it could go both ways. The child could think of it as his or her parent's being very caring and loving or supportive. On the other hand it can appear to be overbearing and over protective. And as if the parents are unwilling to let their child go…. If it was me, my first reaction would be of course to be upset I am not allowed to grow and learn fully….Parents need to learn to let go and release the child to learn how to be an adult just like how they learn to be an adults when they themselves were growing up." (Participant F)

"From a teenager's perspective, I feel it would be controlling if a parent is more involved than in primary school. Teenagers need their freedom, privacy and parents need to be more flexible. I don't think any teenager would appreciate their parents checking on them all the time… (Participant I)

In his journal, the researcher noted down the analogy of a bar of soap. "Parental involvement in a teenaged child is like holding a bar of soap, whereby the teenager is the bar of soap. Hold on too tightly and the soap will slip away, hold on too loosely and the soap will also drop off." Being involved in a teenager's life has a lot to do with trial and error. What may seem as parental involvement to the parents may seem as intrusion and control by the children.

Theme 4: Parental upbringing of a child before Secondary School

All participants in this study acknowledged the importance of parental involvement in children's educational journey, and this study affirmed this acknowledgement because most of the participants accredited their success in secondary schools due to the ways they were brought up since young. Children at their most impressionable age need the love, care, affection and attention of the parents. Family values, attitudes, behaviour, character and discipline were instilled by the parents from as young as kindergarten and further reinforced during primary schools. Participants stated their parents not only were stricter on them, but also paid much attention to them when they were younger and placed a lot of emphasis on the things that mattered most to the parents, mainly education and character formation. This led the participants to believe that much of who they were, was because of the strong foundations built by their parents since young. In secondary schools, much of the earlier inbuilt foundation was then put to the test as the children grew up with minimal parental involvement and supervision.

"Much of who I am as a leader I would give a lot of credit to my upbringing from a small child…. My parents gave me very good principles to live by. Like teaching me what is right and wrong and this helped me not to compromise with the standards of what is right and wrong."
(Participant F)

"The foundations that my parents laid for me while growing up was very important. In the primary school, they will use real situations to teach us and they will not hide their hardships as well. What they do is they will share it with us so that when we grow up we will know what life will be like… I think my parents played an important role here as I grew up in the way they always advised me and the decisions I made were based on what they taught me." (Participant J)

Another important area which this study found concerning this particular theme of raising children from young was the importance of religious input especially when a child is growing up. Many of the participants recognised their parent's beliefs in terms of the religion they practised seemed to also play an important part in bringing up their children to be role models.

"My parents practise their religion very strongly and always shared with me concerning how to be good in God's sight. My mum would often encourage me as well with religious verses and also bring me to religious events and that helped a lot in my upbringing especially in character and emotions."
(Participant E)

"My mum believes that you should teach your child about God anywhere, and everywhere you are and all the time. Everything I went through, she had something to say about God and I guess you can say that was a form of her way of teaching and bringing me up." (Participant F)

When it came to parental involvement and the way participants were brought up while they were young, the responses given seemed to reflect a general consensus among all participants. 'Home is where the heart is' and 'it all begins at home'. The input and parental involvement these parents sowed into their children while they were young laid a strong and good foundation for the participants to grow into role models. During the course of the interviews, the researcher was reminded of an ancient proverb "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he shall not depart from it."

The researcher in his journal, described this theme through an analogy: "A child is like a seed. In order for the seed to grow, it must first be planted into the ground. As the seed grows into a seedling, much detailed care and attention must be put into taking care of it. The seedling slowly grows into a tree where not much care is needed, but the tree would still require pruning every now and then. Like the seed, a person in his or her years of being a child would need more attention and care. Parents need to put as much as they can when the child is young.

Parental involvement needs to be at a maximum level in order for the child to blossom and grow to become a mature teenager."

Theme 5: Trust that parents place in private schools

This study found, to many parents of the participants, parental involvement in education included giving the best education can offer in terms of private education.

> *"My parents chose private education because they felt I could learn English more and to have better character, making me to be a better person. More attention is given to students in a private school as the school and their classes are smaller. I feel it was a good decision to place me in a private school as I learnt a lot of things in this school which I feel I would not have learned if I was in a public school, especially in the area of character and leadership."* (Participant E)

> *"My parents chose private over public education as they felt a private school will give me a better learning environment not just academic but also in areas such as leadership and other areas as a whole."* (Participant F)

From the responses given by the participants, it could be seen their parents preferred private education for they felt private schools featured not only high academic standards based on smaller class sizes and strong teacher qualifications, but also private schools would help develop the children holistically and guide them into becoming a more mature person as they grow up.

Throughout this study, the researchers also found although the private school maintained a certain amount of open communication between teachers and parents, but most parents hardly communicated with the school. The parents of most participants communicated with the school only on special events and functions such as the Report Card Day or when a teacher called the parents up for some matters regarding their children. While expectations of parents towards the school were high due to the amount of financial resources invested into their children's education, the researchers felt parents should have a certain underlying amount of trust, that is, private schools would somehow be able to update them on their child's progress even without the parents initiating any form of communication.

> *"With the different kinds of technology nowadays, schools are always open at all times for parents to communicate with them…. However, my parents have never initiated any form of communication with the school. It has always been the school that keeps my parents up to date. For instance, when I was in Form 1, I got into trouble by committing an offence and was called into the principal's office. The school then called my parents to come over to the school* (Participant E)

> *"My parents would always wait for the school to call them, should the need arises. They never really initiated any communication with the school by themselves. No news is good news."*
> (Participant I)

Another interesting thing this study found was the level of trust given to the school by parents. Bonds were created and built by creating a sense of community among students, teachers and parents. Through shared values and with the aim of reaching out to each other, some participants shared about the bonds built within the home and the school. This was something which the researcher found unique to exist in a private school setting.

> *"My parents have a constant open channel of communication with the school. My parents have this close contact with one of my teachers in school. And because this teacher is someone that is very good and helped me through a lot of tough times, and a role model to me, he becomes like the middleman between me and my parents. There is always a constant communication between this teacher and my parents… Whenever I try to explain certain things to my parents which they may not seem to understand, I will tell this teacher about it and he will try to explain it in a way that my parents can accept or even understand."* (Participant A)

> *"There is always a constant two way communications between the school and my family. My parents sort of have this 'spy' in my school. He is a good teacher, a good friend and is rather close to me. So my parents would always get all sorts of information from this teacher."* (Participant B)

In his journal, the researcher noted the parents of participants who sent their children to private schools and entrusting the school to educate and build up the child holistically did not mean that they were releasing their responsibility in getting involved in their children's education. By providing financial resources to enrol their

children in a private school, and by building bridges of bonds between the school and the home, were the ways of showing parental involvement. The key point here was the trust the parents placed in the schools and the teachers.

DISCUSSION

The data collected showed an overwhelming support of parental involvement among the participants, especially in raising them up to become role models. The participants fully welcomed the idea of parents being involved in their education. The participants acknowledged and gave credit to their parents involvement who made them who they were as role models. Studies reviewed in literature confirmed what the participants felt. A substantial number of researchers found consistent evidences that the more parents were involved in their children's education, the better their children's performance in school will be (Henderson & Mapp, 2000). What is certain here and confirmed by the participants is parental involvement is associated with academic achievement (Toldson, 2008); is a primary contributor to a student's success (Rumberger, 1995); and is widely accepted as important to a students' academic performance (Reutzal, Fawson & Smith, 2006).

In as much as the participants felt parental involvement was important, a majority of them however indicated parental involvement should decrease as the children grew older, especially when they became teenagers. Parental involvement was still welcomed but less involvement would be appreciated. Literature stated the developmental needs of children would change alot during the time of being teenagers and therefore, parental involvement which was effective in primary schools might lose their effectiveness in secondary schools. As children grow to become teenagers, they are increasingly faced with the developmental tasks of wanting to be independent (Steinberg, 1998). In addition, the increase in the teenagers' cognitive development raises their sense of self-efficacy as well as their ability to make decisions, thus allowing them to control as to how academic achievement and extracurricular activities help them achieve their goals and aspirations; and as a result of this growth, less direct parental involvement is needed (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Therefore, at this developmental stage, parental involvement which supports children in learning to be independent may proof to be more successful rather than those actions taken during primary schools such as seeking to supervise and controlling their behaviours. What this means is that parents can no longer use the same methods or techniques of parental involvement which they had been using once their children start to become teenagers (Seginer, 2006). Parents often have to tread carefully to try and remain actively involved in teenagers' education while at the same time giving their children the opportunity to experience greater freedom and responsibilities (McGrew-Zoubi, 1998).

While a decrease in parental involvement was encouraged, participants also acknowledged some form of parental involvement was still needed during their times in the secondary schools. Participants agreed their parents still played an important and vital role in their secondary school upbringing and also in their achievements. These responses from the participants were in line with literature reviews which stated parental involvement especially during secondary schools is vital for a teenager to become a stable and productive adult. It is at this time when teenagers form lifetime values and grow to be more mature, making continued parental involvement an important aspect in their lives (Wheeler, 1992). At this stage of secondary schooling, parental involvement may also have a stronger connection to other holistic outcomes rather than just achievement in academics. Given the new developmental tasks of teenagers, parents' efforts that support and guide their children's quest for independence may be particularly important (Steinberg, 1998). Recent findings have also indicated the importance of parental involvement and how it affects the self-esteem of a child. There is a positive effect that parenting by both mothers and fathers—as indicated by involvement, quality relationships, and availability—has on a teenager's self-esteem (Bulanda & Majumdar, 2009).

While all participants in this study indicated they gave credit to their parents for their achievements and for them becoming role models in their schools, many of the participants felt that it was more towards their upbringing during their younger days, especially during the times when they were in kindergartens and primary schools that made them into who they were. A literature review confirmed what the participants felt.

Parents play the role of being the earliest teachers in educating their children and in developing children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth and development (Steinberg, 1998). Therefore their level of involvement is crucial especially in young children. Further studies indicated children from the ages of 7 to 10 years old would require more guidance, attention and motivation from parents (Carter & Wojtkiewicz, 2000).

This study also found parents of the participants preferred private education as they felt private schools featured not only high academic standards based on smaller class sizes and strong teacher qualifications, but also private schools would help develop the children holistically and guide them into becoming more matured persons as

they grow up. The ultimate aim of a holistic education approach is not only to educate but also develop the individual to his/her fullest possible extent; moving the beyond academic development (Forbes, 2003). In a holistic education environment, developing children's cognitive, intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative and spiritual side are as important as academic achievement. Holistic education is geared towards producing socially, morally and mentally developed persons.

In enrolling children into a private school, this study also found parents were seen to be involved in their education by means of providing the finances in order to be enrolled into a private school. While education is a basic fundamental right that a child needs, and providing education should be the responsibility of all parents, private education is seen as a way parents want their children not only to excel academically, but also holistically as well, thus making it an indirect way of parental involvement. Epstein (2001) stated that one of the major factors that is believed to be the decision basis of any parental involvement is the ability for parents to realise the need and to feel that it is their responsibility in helping their children succeed in school.

In the area of communication between school and parents, literatures suggested communication problems often exist between parents and teachers resulting in a decline in parental involvement as children progress through the educational system (Halsey, 2005). Some parents feel the school and home consist of two separate roles in bringing up children, and their role is to care and nurture their children outside the school. This however does not seem to be the case in a private school setting, especially the school in which the research was conducted. It was clear from the responses of the participants, parents not only trusted the private school in helping to build their children through holistic education, but they also put a certain amount of trust that the school would communicate any concerns or problems that might arise should there be a need to.

As a children grow into teenagers, parents become more concerned about their children's further education and the learning opportunities that the school can provide, especially in the holistic sense. It is therefore crucial that during secondary schools, parents increase their communication with the school (Catsambis & Garland, 1997). French and Bell (1984) remarked that schools are to be considered as an open system in which it receives influences from its external surrounding and environment. Therefore, a school must not be isolated but should be an institution which receives consistent assistance and support from external parties, especially from parents who are able to provide support and cooperation in ensuring its success (Ramaiah, 1990).

In placing their trust in private schools, this study also found there was a healthy environment for teacher-student bonds to grow. Previous researches found close, positive student-teacher relationships were positively related to a wide range of a child's social and academic outcomes in school (Hughes, Gleason, & Zhang, 2005). A positive student-teacher relationship is defined as the teacher's perception that the relationship with the student is characterized by closeness and a lack of dependency and conflict (Birch & Ladd, 1997). Closeness is the degree of warmth and open communication that exists between the student and teacher. Dependency is the over-reliance on the teacher as a source of support, while conflict is the degree of friction between student-teacher interactions (Birch & Ladd, 1997). Previous researches had also found parental involvement in children's education positively influenced the nature of the student-teacher relationship (Hill & Craft, 2003; Stevenson & Baker, 1987).

IMPLICATIONS

The implications of this study are mainly for the parents themselves and the way they practise parental involvement. The findings of this study would cause parents to rethink their ways of getting involved in their child's education. Firstly, for parents who do not practise any form of parental involvement, and who believe in leaving it to the school to educate their children, the implications of this study would be for parents to have a paradigm shift in their thinking and to begin to take steps to be involved in their children's education, directly or indirectly. Secondly, parents who have children in the preschool and primary age group, the implications would be for parents to pay more attention towards their children especially in the areas of attitude, behaviour, character and discipline. Parents must realise foundations built in their children are very important and must begin at an age that is as young as possible. Parents also need to understand that in order for their children to become role models, they themselves must be role models to their children first. Thirdly, for parents who have children in the secondary school age group, need to learn how to balance between getting involved and giving their children space and freedom to grow and mature into young adults. Parents would have to rethink of ways as to how to be involved in their children's education during the time they are in secondary schools.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, a statement of identification was formed condensing the exhaustive description of the themes into a concise statement that would embrace the essence of the study being conducted. The researcher presented the concise statement together with the five themes to all of the study's participants in order to verify and validate the findings. All participants fully agreed with the concise statements and findings were reached, without having anything to add to it. Participants felt the concise statements truly represented their experiences and what they went through in terms of parental involvement in their lives.

Based upon the results and findings of the study, the statement of identification were formulated as follows:

In order to raise a generation of student role models, parental involvement is seen through the laying of strong foundations which come in the form of the upbringing of their children from young, and by giving them the freedom and space to learn, grow and mature as the children grow older, together with providing the best that the parents can offer towards their children's education, and trusting private education would continue to build upon the foundations which the parents had first laid.

This qualitative study was initiated with the intentions of understanding parental involvement in raising their children to be role models. The main purpose of this study was to explore the extent of parental involvement among role model students in a private secondary schools setting from their children's viewpoints.

In most cases, the perceptions of the parents themselves together with school administrators and educators were the only viewpoints taken into account when parental involvement was concerned. Perceptions of and attitude towards parental involvement from the childen's viewpoints were seldom taken into account. In this day and age where teenagers are crying out to be heard and where their opinions seem to be taken lightly, a paradigm shift in the mind-sets and attitudes of educators and parents pertaining to the level and importance of parental involvement among secondary schools children need to be taken into consideration. Secondary school children face new developmental tasks related to wanting to be given more space and freedom for autonomy and independence.

Therefore parental practices that were once linked with the upbringing and success of younger children, such as supervision and behavioural control, should be less used by parents and as these are no longer connected to students' success during secondary schools. Instead, parental involvement that supports a teenager's quest for freedom, autonomy and guide their decision-making efforts are deemed to be important at this stage of life. It is important to hear from the perspectives of the teenagers themselves. More efforts should be taken whereby the opinions and perspectives of teenagers should be considered as of equal importance and be given due attention and should be taken into account in framing what and how educators together with parents practise parental involvement, and pursuing holistic education in raising children to be role models in society.

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