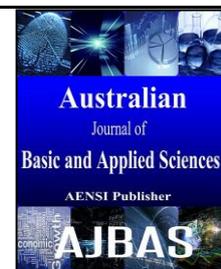




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Epstein Model Application for Measuring Parents' Participation Level In The Individual Education Plan (IEP) Students With Special Needs

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to examine the Epstein model application to assess the level of parental involvement in the construction of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) in terms of parenting, communication, providing voluntary assistance, collaborating with the community, learning at home and decision making. The instrument consists of a set of 60 items was used to assess the level of parental involvement in the IEP. About 50 parents were respondents using simple random sampling technique. R Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between the constructs in the research and socio-economic factors in the level of involvement. While descriptive analysis using frequency, mean and standard deviation to look for the level of involvement. The study found differences in the coefficient of reliability of the instrument pilot test alpha value 0.9455 and the real test alpha value 0.9200 is 0.025 and has a strong relationship between the constructs of the study. The study also found that the level of parental involvement in the construction of the IEP is higher for parenting aspects (mean = 3828); communicating (mean = 3,755); providing voluntary assistance (mean = 3,609) and in collaborating with the public (mean = 3,519), while the average level of the decision-making with mean = 3352. The study also found that socio-economic factors have no significant association with the level of engagement with $r = 0.012$ and $p = 0.136$. The study clearly shows that Epstein model has six types of involvement that can assess the level of involvement and their engagement with socio-economic status.

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INTRODUCTION

Epstein *et al* (2002) introduced six types of parent involvement where in each type affects many different practices and the implementation of the partnership and will also vary. Nevertheless, if all are implemented it will have a positive impact on students, teachers and parents. Parental involvement in children's education will have a positive impact throughout their learning process, either directly or indirectly. Parents can get involve in school either for their children's education, such as participating in school activities, placing a high value on education and involvement in the field of intellectual cognitive (Hill & Craft , 2003) .

Although parental involvement is important in contributing to the achievement of their children's education, the level of parental involvement can be enhanced still further. Problem of lack of parental involvement in children's education is not only caused by the parents. Teachers should also play an important role in efforts to attract parents to be

involved. Conversely, most teachers in Malaysia, do not realize that all parents should be involved in the learning process of their children. Parents are not given adequate disclosure by the school to enable them to really understand the concept of cooperation with the school (Fatin Aliana, 2006).

Parents should also be aware that what is learned at home and at school is complementary. Thus, children will feel that learning is not only derived from the teachers at school but can even be obtained at home, around them and from both of their parents. Everything that happens in daily life is interrelated. This was stated by MacBeth (1997), in which the school is part of the education that happens in schools, homes and communities.

When discussing the importance of the role of parents, studies show that 70 percent of the time spent by children outside the school, including at weekends and school holidays. Thus, the power of time spent outside of school hours is very significant for children (Clark, 1990). Thus, previous studies found that quality home environment is closely

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related to academic achievement and ability in school children (Christenson, 2004). Therefore, it is very necessary parenting skills to parents learn how to create an environment that supports and promotes the child's development stage (Kellighan, Sloane, Alvarez & Bloom, 1993).

Problem statement:

The importance of active parental involvement in the education of children is undeniable. Several studies have been conducted by researchers such as Epstein (2002), Bhering (2002) and Wolfendale (1983) proved the effectiveness of parental involvement in helping to facilitate the teachers, develop children's self through the emotions, behavior and self-concept. According to Henderson and Mapp (2002), studies have shown students whose parents are actively involved in their education have obtained excellent results, passed the exam, good attendance in school, good social skills and behavior, adapted themselves well at school and managed to finish school. While previous studies abroad have described an increase and benefit of the various programs that involve parents and the school, but it appears that in Malaysia is still lacking of parental involvement program model with the school's special education in particular and is rarely practiced. Review by Razak *et al* (2009) found that parental involvement is important to the success of education.

Masitah (2010) found that in the United States many positive results of parental involvement in special education programs. Parents of child with disabilities are undoubtedly gained a better understanding of their child. Therefore, it is very advantageous if teachers involve parents in their children's education. While parental involvement is seen as very important in the education of children, ironically in Malaysia, parental involvement can only be seen during the day to give progress reports, sports day and also in the Parent Teacher Association

(PTA) according to Badaruzaman (1992). Parents are usually not given the opportunity to participate in the classroom to help improve students' achievement. This was reinforced by a study conducted by Ting (2005) who found that the level of parental involvement in rural areas is low. Many studies conducted in the country focus on the aspects of parental involvement in the school's role, the role of the PTA, the types of parental involvement and obstacles in establishing cooperation with parents (Badaruzaman, 1992; Wee, 1995; Wee, 1996). Therefore, the involvement studies in the Epstein model perspective need to be implemented specifically for parents of students with special needs.

Literature review:

Lunenburg and Irby (2002) has formulated seven models of parental involvement other than Epstein Model namely Gordon System Approach, Systems Development Corporation study, Berger's role categories, Chavkin and Williams 'parent involvement role, Honig's early childhood education model, Jones' levels of parent involvement and minority language parents involvement approach. In addition, among other models, including the Seeleys Delegation Model (1989), The Protective Model, The School-to-Home Transmission Model and Curriculum Enrichment Model of Swap (1993) and Epstein's Model of Partnership by Epstein (1988).

Mohd Salleh (2004) reported that the three-dimensional relationship of school, home and community should be emphasized. All three entities need to have strong and intimate relationships because of the success of the national education system depends on how the three elements are able to function, complement each other and helping one another. In re-appointed the three-dimensional engagement ever to be undertaken in Malaysian context, Epstein Model (1988) provides six types of involvement of focus.

Types of Collaboration	Practice
Parenting skills	Recommendation for the environment at home which supports learning in school. Implement the relevant support program for health , education and nutrition.
communication	Seminar with parents and an open day with teachers on information relating to the child's progress.
Voluntary aid	School voluntary program with parents.
Learning at home	Share information in teaching and learning through proper techniques and methods.
Decision Making	Involvement of Parents and Teachers in the program and events organized by the school
Work With People	Information sharing, integration of services and alumni involvement.

IEP team should consists of parents or guardians of students, at least one typical classroom teacher, special education teacher, and a representative of the district who know the general education curriculum and know the resources available to students with special needs (Hardman , Drew & Egan , 2008) . According to IDEA, IEP should be written by parents

or guardians, teachers and administrators who know the student.

According to Solit (1993), the program and the organization for families who have children with special needs must have some purposes. Among those considered normal is (a) support the emotional, physical and financial implications of the family ; (b)

parent education ; (c) involvement in the IEP ; and support towards the children. Gorman (2004) suggests that teachers explain to parents the purpose of the IEP meeting so that they know the purpose of the meetings and know what to expect and understand why they should attend. In some previous studies on the typical classroom teacher, Menlove, Hudson & Suter (2001) found that they often do not attend IEP because " usually, no one talked to them before the IEP meeting to give description of what will happen at the meeting, what their roles are and what information needs to be provided. The teachers usually do not know what to prepare for the meeting. "

Malaysian education system, in terms of legislation is based on the Education Act 1996, but there is no specific term stated or special provisions regarding the IEP (Education Act, 1996). Compared to other countries, in Malaysia, the IEP is written information about special education students containing information of students, academic and non-academic plan, existing knowledge and existing problems, long-term and short-term goals, facilities required for IEP, implementation strategy, evaluation and the list of committee members. Many families who have children with special needs have now received a lot of services and education from agencies that supply management systems for educating children with special needs (Fiene & Taylor, 1991). However, according to Russel (1995) in Azmi *et al.* (2002), parents who have children who need special treatment should not depend solely on the quality of education and programs that are already in place. Instead, they need to be involved in the education process.

Family involvement is very important because a lot of advantages and benefits gained if their parents also play a role in the activities done by children. Children will have self confidence from the full support of their parents. Parents should show interest not only at home but also at school. Thus, parents can find out the problems and development of children in school specifically the development of education (Hassan, 1996). According to Beveridge (2005), the impact of learning difficulties in students' achievement, social interaction and behavior are influenced by the environment and the continuous support that they experience. This proves that they will be well developed when parents and teachers share a positive commitment to meet their needs. This statement has been clearly stated in the Warnock Report (DES, 1978). On the other hand, educating students with special needs require something more than the school. A high level of expertise is required from specific sources, such as monitoring and modification of individual learning (Block, Peetsma & Roede, 2007). In situations like this, very simple misunderstanding can easily occur between parents and schools. The school thinks that the parents' expectations were too high to assess the

ability of their children, while parents have accused the school authorities only focus on the limitations of their child (Russells, 2003).

Clarke-Stewart (1981) outlines five key features parents need parenting skills education that parents are the primary influence on a child's development; the school was found to be effective in shaping behavior and minds of children; the family institution is under stress of the challenging society; there is evidence that many parents are not effective in carrying out their duties and are finding ways to educate children based on scientific research. If you look at one of parenting practices suggested by Epstein in the parenting commitments, skill in taking part in the child's homework is needed by parents. This includes monitoring and helping children in completing work assigned by the teacher.

Thus, given the importance of the role played by parents in this aspect, Cooper (2007) has given some guidance to parents in managing their children's homework. According to Cooper (2007), the role to be played by parents is; The first, being a stage manager, by providing a quiet place with enough light and a good supply of materials. This is because an interference-free environment is very important. Second, parents need to be a motivator because the attitude of parents against homework process will affect the willingness of the child to finish his work. Third, being a role model where the parents are advised not to watch television when children are doing their homework.

According to Wright, Stegelin & Hartle (2007), with the passage of time and through the impact of technological development, methods of communication with parents has increased and improved. Ways to communicate with parents are more sophisticated than a decade ago. Parents, teachers and caregivers can use several strategies to ensure communication between home and school to remain strong and healthy. According to Wright *et al.* (2007), another strategy can be classified into two categories: one-way and two-way strategies. Volunteer program will be successful if managed properly. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 1998 (Grant & Ray, 2010), to recruit parents to be involved in school activities is a challenge as parents prefer to engage in activities outside of school. However, the strong elections school volunteer program could increase the number of schools' and classrooms' volunteers if the family is given flexible opportunity to share their time and talents (National Network of Partnership Schools, 2006).

Davis (2000) listed three benefits to enhance cooperation with the community in which the schools feel that they are supported from a variety of sources where with the support of the community, schools could accomplish their goals , and in returns may generate more public support to increase school funding. In addition, people can come together in a

shared responsibility to educate young people, and schools can also expand the number of positive role models. Community partners can offer a wealth of experience and advice to students. Benefit from the business community enable people to realize their support for the school and the benefits to be obtained as a result of a positive relationship to work closely with the school.

Objectives:

The objective of this study was to determine the level of parental involvement in the implementation of IEP students with special needs through the types of involvement of examined. Parental involvement is reviewed based on six types of involvement, namely in terms of parenting skills, communication, voluntary aid, learning at home, decision-making and cooperation with the community.

Research question:

- What is the Value of the Instrument Coefficient Reliability Using Epstein Model?
- What is the level of parental involvement in the IEP students with special needs in terms of parenting, communication, voluntary aid, learning at home, decision-making and cooperation with the community ?
- Is there a significant relationship of socio-economic factors with parental involvement level in IEP ?

Research methodology:

This study used survey method using a set of questionnaires as an instrument to collect data. The data collected through the questionnaire containing 60 items with five options using 5-point Likert scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Not Sure), 4 (agree) and 5 (Strongly Agree). These items representing each of the six types of parent involvement in the Epstein model of parenting skills, communication, voluntary aid, learning at home, decision-making and cooperation with the community. Each theme of participation is represented by ten items. About 50 parents of children with special needs are selected using simple random sampling technique.

Result:

The results showed that the Cronbach alpha coefficient for the instrument as a whole is 0.9455 for the pilot study and 0.9200 for the actual study. This analysis shows that the coefficient of reliability (Cronbach's Alpha Reliability) for instruments used in the pilot study and the actual study is very high where the Alpha earned is more than 0.8, with the difference alpha obtained from the pilot study and the actual study was - 0.02. Therefore, according to Majid (1990) and Alian (1992), an instrument that has a high reliability, also have a high validity. This

means that the instrument is valid and can be used on parent respondents for this study and other studies

This analysis was based on the formulation of the six surveyed involvement aspects of parenting skills, communication, voluntary aid, learning at home, decision-making and cooperation with the community. The analysis was based on the findings of the mean, standard deviation, and the percentage level of parental involvement in the IEP students with special needs in accordance with aspects disclosed. The results showed that all aspects are at a high level unless the decisions are moderate. Overall, the level of parental involvement in the IEP students with special needs is at a high level with the mean value is 3.612 (sd = 0.448), a 72.24% level of involvement (diagram 1.1 and table 1.1).

Aspects concerning the involvement of parents in the IEP students with special needs with the highest mean score is the mean value of parenting skills by 3.828 and the standard deviation is 0.415 , which is in the ' high ' (76.56 %) . This is followed by the communication in which the mean value of this ratio is 3.755 and the standard deviation is 0.519 which is also at a high level (75.10 %) . The third highest aspect of parental involvement in the IEP students with special needs is to provide voluntary aid (mean = 3.609 ; sd= 0.572) and aspects of learning at home (mean 3.609; sd = 0.602) in both of these aspects are at a 'high' level of involvement that is 72.18 % .Aspects of cooperation with the community is also a fifth aspect which is in the ' high' with the mean value and standard deviation is 3.51, sd = 0.510 (70.38 %). Level of parental involvement in IEP students of special needs is typical for this area. Whereas the mean value of the lowest level of parental involvement in all aspects of decision-making aspect is the mean value and standard deviation = 3.352 ;sd= 0.535 (67.04 %), which is in the ' medium '.

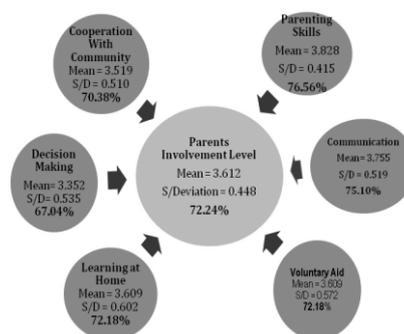


Diagram 1.1: Level of Involvement.

The results of Pearson correlation analysis found that aspects of parenting skills, the value of the correlation obtained was 0.170 with $p = 0.237$. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no correlation between economic status and aspects of parenting skills where the strength of the relationship

is very weak. Communication aspect also shows the value of the correlation obtained is 0.191 with the value of $p = 0.184$. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no correlation between economic status and communication with the strength of the relationship is very weak. In addition, the value of the correlation obtained for learning at home aspect was 0.165 with $p = 0.253$. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no correlation between socio

Table 1.1 Correlation of Variables

Variables	Correlation Value (r)	Sig Value (p)	Strength of relationship
Parenting skills	0.170	0.237	Very low
communication	0.191	0.184	Very low
Voluntary aid	0.406*	0.003	Mild
Learning at home	0.165	0.253	Very low
Decision Making	-0.033	0.822	Very low
Cooperation with community	0.214	0.136	Low

Discussion on findings:

The study found that the level of parental involvement in terms of parenting as a whole is set at a high level. Parents realize that their role is particularly important in ensuring that their children get the comforts of home and is constantly monitoring the health of their children. These two are seen to be a priority of parents compared with other things. Aspects of parenting skills is actually very closely related to the IEP students with special needs. In the drafting of IDEA for example, discussion has been made on the importance of strengthening the role of parents in ensuring that families have meaningful opportunities to participate in their children's education either at school or at home (Gestwicki, 2010). While the level of parental involvement in the IEP students with special needs in terms of communication as a whole is at a high level. This is not surprising because Finders & Lewis (1994) have said that the economic and time constraints may be a major barrier to effective communication. Thus, according to Finders *et al.* (1994), to overcome this problem, the teacher can carry out a review at the beginning of the school year to determine the parents' schedule and leisure time, as well as providing information to parents on the manner and timing for the contact teacher.

The level of parental involvement in terms of providing assistance on a voluntary basis as a whole is at a high level. The reason can be strengthened with previous studies that parents need to provide 'supply' of skills and interests to help voluntarily as the school did not know whether the parents want to be as a volunteer (University of Illinois Extension, 2012). In this study, the findings showed that the level of parental involvement in aspects of learning at home as a whole is also at a high level. Thus, the family should be involved in planning for children with special needs because family plays a major role in educating and socializing their children (Wright *et al.*, 2007). For the level of parental involvement in terms of decision-making as a whole is at a moderate

level. This finding seems consistent with previous studies because many studies show that parental involvement in the decision-making is a critical and often conflicting. Chee & Hunter (2011) summarize some previous studies related to aspects of decision-making. The studies that have been conducted also found that in terms of parental involvement on the whole is at a high level. The findings match the implementation of the concept working with the community will only be successful if the school management plays a role as a trigger or drive towards collaboration and smart partnership (Mohd. Salleh, 2004).

economic factors and learning at home with the strength of the relationship is very weak. Aspects of decision-making also shows the value of the correlation obtained is -0.033 with a value of $p = 0.822$. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a negative relationship between socio economic factors and aspects of decision making with the strength of the relationship is very weak.

The result is clearly not in line with several previous studies. For example, Haveman and Wolfers (1995) said that the study found that highly educated parents are able to motivate their child's intellectual potential, which in turn will lead to better performance in school. Highly educated parents are also said to be able to make decisions like the amount of time needed to be spent with their children and how much financial resources should be contributed to the education of their children.

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Conclusion:

The concept of parental involvement in children's education is multi-dimensional. It is based on the scope of behaviors that are considered as an expression of the parents involved. Parental involvement behaviour conceptualized by Epstein in the construction of cross-context IEP identified as home-school-community through six forms of parental involvement namely parenting skills, communication, voluntary aid, learning at home, decision-making and cooperation with the community. Hence, the involvement of parents in the IEP construction raised by the Epstein model is capable of delivering success in the achievement of pupils with special needs in the country.

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