

The Participation of Community Activities in Child Caring in the Community Child-Care Centres in Northeast Thailand

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Abstract: The objectives of the study are to develop and compare the participation of the community activities in the community child-care centres between the municipality and the local administration organization. This research is an action research, which studied during the months of February, 1998-March, 1999. The informants are composed of parents and the related persons. To collect and analyse the data by qualitative and quantitative research methods. The finding of the study were that the persons who have active role in child caring in the child-care centres included: children's family; child-care centres; the related organizations and volunteers who develop child-care centre. Moreover, there were some groups that engage in sub-activities. In the area of the municipality, the sub-activities were the child development supporting activities, food and nutrition activities, healthy young child activities, beautiful house activities and warm child-care centre. In the area of the local administrative organization there were the following activities: beautiful golden mountain activities teen-age development activities and good nutritional activities. When comparing the activities of both areas, they were both similar. However, there were some differences in the quantity, frequency, duration of time and the participation in activities styles. It was found that in the municipality area of child-care, there were more participants joining the activities. More participants attended the activities more often and there was more time spent on proceeding the activities. The participation was more formal. While the child-care of the local administrative office was a simple, in the folk way approach. These activities made everyone accept the child-care centres. It was efficiently found that there were follow-up development: the parents believes and child development.

Key words: Activities, participation, community, care, child, child-care centre, Thailand

INTRODUCTION

Children from early infancy to the age of 5 grow up very fast. Their bodies grow up quickly and there are a lot of developments at the same time. They can remember and learn anything around them fast (Kachapakdee, 2000; Prateapchaikul, 2002; Helen, 1999). So, child-care is very important. The nursery home or the child-care centres have an important role in the children's development. They are one of the choices that parents have to make when taking care of their children. Information from the child-care centre of Thailand revealed that there are some nurseries that do not meet the standards for child-care centres set by the Health Organization. There are also some children who are retarded as to development and nutrition. According to the data of Nongbualumphu Province (2004-2007), there are 193, 204, 202 and 203

child-care centres, respectively. The ones which pass the standard as to child-care centres are 50.3, 70.6, 71.3 and 87.7%, respectively. The ones with good and very good standard assessments are only 37.4, 21.8, 21.6 and 31.4%, respectively. The following numbers are the number of children that need to be cared for: 9;918, 10;124, 12;715 and 12;626 children, respectively. The number of children who are nutritionally normal are 78.0, 75.2, 76.6 and 79.4%, respectively. The number of children who are normally developed are 76.2, 77.4, 69.6 and 79.8%, respectively (The Nongbualumphu Provincial Health Office, 2007). It is obvious that there should be a continuous and efficient furthering of child development and child-care centres. To continuously further child-care development needs, the co-operation of all parties involved. They must administer everything in the best manner possible. This will have to be carried out according to the constitution of the

Kingdom of Thailand (2007) as being enacted in section 87 which states that the government must administer in accordance with the participation of the people (The constituent Assembly, 2007).

Parents participation significantly influences the child development. However, the knowledge base as to the social context and the cultural differentiation is still not perfect. So, the objectives of this study are to develop the participating activities of the communities in order to care for children in the child-care centres and to compare such activities of the child-care centres in between the municipality and the local administrative organization. Then, the development will be sustainable and will meet the set standard. It will be suitable for a child to grow up physically and mentally. The child will become an adult who is integrated in his community, society and his country.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Area of study: An area of child-care centre of the municipality and another one of the local administration organization in Tambol Guddinjee, Amphur Na-Klang and Nongbualumphu Province.

Type of study

Comparative mutual-collaboration action research: The research was carried out from February 2008 to March 2009. The informants were as follows: parents, child-carers, monks, mayors local administrative staffs, the public health officers and the people within the catchment area and all the children in the child-care centres.

Research instruments: Child development evaluation forms, field record book, interview forms, observation lists, the questioning forms for the groups of people, interview guide in-depth, meeting guide lists and many means in recording various activities including supplementary instrument used for data collection.

Data collection

The collection of quantitative data: The data about child development inferred from the evaluation findings, the data about the particular individuals and the opinions of the parents, guardians collected by interviewing.

The collection of qualitative data: The data collection methods were the meetings of the local people and their leaders, group discussions, observation techniques and interviewing, in-depth interview, brainstorming and documentation study.

Data analysis

Quantitative data: The data were analysed by means of the SPSS computer program. The actual data were analysed descriptively for example; the frequency distribution, percentage, average, standard variance and deductive statistics such as the comparison of the variables related to child development. It was analysed by Chi-square statistics. The different levels of the comparative result was from odd ratio and 95% confidence interval of odds ratio.

Qualitative data: This research was conducted by using the typological analysis, content analysis, interpretation, relationship and conclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the information of the child-care centre affiliated with the municipality, the community is half municipal and half suburban. Children come from 10 villages. There are 180 children with 9 child-carers (1:20). Most of the children families are single families, so the mothers and fathers have many responsibilities in taking care of their children. From the data of the child-care centres which are affiliated with the local administrative organization, the community is in a rural area. The children come from 1 village. There are 40 children with 3 child-carers (1:13). Most of the children's families are extended families. Most of the child caring is done by the grandparents. The groups that participated in the researching procedure are:

- The parents or guardians
- The child-care centres
- The related organizations/offices
- The volunteers for developing the child-care centres or as it is called briefly "Or Sor Sor", including some groups which joined the sub-activities

The activities initiated by the municipality child-care centres are as follows: the child development activity; training as to child development for parents or child-carers. The building of the playground toys, the donation of children's toys, the folk song music performance for children, the story-telling, the supporting of love in the families, the preparation of the evaluation forms and child development evaluation in the folk ways, the teaching of morale and goodness to the children and the teaching and advising the disciplines.

Food and nutritional activities: The training as to nutrition for parents and child-carers. There was a campaign of growing and eating vegetables without

chemicals. To guard against the state of risk in having food without the nutritional value. The follow-up and evaluate the state of child's nutrition and home visit.

The good health child activities: Training as to taking care of child's health for parents and the child-carers. The collection of local wisdom in caring for children when they are ill. The child's simple body check. The getting rid of the lice on every Friday. Providing support and giving advice to children to take care of themselves properly.

Good looking house activity: The liveable child-care centres. Training as to environmental sanitation for parents, child-carers and other people. The co-ordination of cleaning and developing the child-care centres. The presentation of plan/project of developing the child-care centres to the municipality. The repair and improvement of the child-care centres by donation and volunteering. For the activities of the child-care centres in the local administration organization are as follows: The liveable child-care centres, the beautiful Phoodinthong. It is the training of the environment sanitation to the parents, the child-carers and general publicity. The co-operation in cleaning and developing the child-care centres and other places. The contest of the beautiful house, the presentation of the plan/project of developing the child-care centres to the local administration organization.

Happy youth age activities: The training of child development to the parents and the child-carers. The leading of exercising by the volunteers. Telling stories by the volunteers. To provide the evaluation forms and child development evaluation forms for folk people.

Good nutrition activities: The nutritional training for the parents and the child-carers. The parents took turns for child-caring and studied about the food. To support and advise the children to choose useful food. To follow-up and evaluate the child nutritional condition. When comparing the research procedure of the activities, it was found that both of the area have the same activities but there are some differences that the activity supporting children's health was found in the municipality area only. The child-care centre affiliated with the municipality has set objectives and more various sub-activities. However, the child-care centre affiliated with the local administration organization can proceed the research quicker, used less budget had the administrative system inside the group which was more simple and assimilated to the ways of life of the folk people. Meanwhile in the child-care centre of

the municipality, the research procedure is more systematic and more manageable. However, after researching in the area of municipality and local administrative organization, it was found that the parents have more confidence in the child-care centres increasing to 38.6 and 26.5%, respectively. The children have normal development progression in every aspect in 7.7 and 17.5, respectively. The analysis of child development compared with related variables showed the weight of the new-born babies, the lack of iodine in the new-born babies, the duration of time in mother's breast feeding and the consumption of food with iodine in the household had no statistic significance. As to the child nutrition in the present time, there was a statistic significance (95% CI = 1.697-4.562, p-value = 0.000) (Table 1). The child-care centres which were affiliated with the municipality and the local administrative organization have their differences in the context and their affiliation offices which is the same as the study of Yolao (2001) and Sunthornthada and Daechakoup (2001). However, the study has shown the co-operation of all sections. They took part in activities from the very beginning, such as the acknowledgement of information, the analysis of the problems, the setting of the objectives, the decision, the practice and action, the inspection, the follow-up, the evaluation, the conclusion of the lessons and adjustment, the extend of the research result and the publication to the public. These are in accordance with the suggestion of Onkham and Srijumnong (2001), Sota (2003) and Robert (1991). The important participants that should be mentioned were the leaders whose name were called Child-care centre development volunteers or briefly called Or Sor Sor who had an important part in rendering activities successful. This is different in the area context when compare with the study of Mick *et al.* (1989), Grason *et al.* (1999) and Hutchins *et al.* (1999). However, there were some similarities for the participation of the parents or other related organization when compared with the activities in both areas. It was found that the research procedure and the result of the study were similar. There were some differences for the quantity, the frequency, duration of time and the types of development. It was found that in the area of child-care centre which is affiliated with the municipality, there were more people joined, attended the activities and had more time in researching and the type of development were more formal. Meanwhile, the research of the local administration organization was simple in the folk ways maybe it was because of the larger area of the municipality.

Table 1: The comparison of the data related to the children and child development after the development

Related information	Suspected child development	Appropriate child development	OR	95% CI OR	p-value
Weight of new born					
<2,500 g	7 (1.7)	11 (2.7)	2.344	(0.881-6.236)	0.080
>2,500 g	82 (20.4)	302 (75.1)			
TSH					
Abnormal	1 (0.2)	1 (0.2)	3.545	(0.220-57.257)	0.341
Normal	88 (21.9)	312 (77.6)			
Length of time of breast feeding					
<2 years	49 (12.2)	161 (40.0)	1.157	(0.721-1.856)	0.315
>2 years	40 (10.0)	152 (37.8)			
The consumption of the food with iodine					
Not consume	80 (19.9)	285 (70.9)	0.873	(0.396-1.926)	0.737
Consume	9 (2.2)	28 (7.0)			
Nutrition					
Malnutrition	40 (10.0)	71 (17.4)	2.782	(1.697-4.562)	0.000
Normal nutrition	49 (12.2)	242 (60.2)			

CONCLUSION

The co-operative study of the child-caring in the child-care centers comprised the following major participants:

- The children's families
- The child-care centres
- Related organization/offices
- Child-care centre development volunteers or Or Sor Sor and all the groups who participated in the sub-activities in the child-care centre affiliated to the municipality

The sub-activities were the activity of supporting child development, the activity of good food and nutrition, the activity of good healthy child, the activity of good looking house and the activities of liveable child-care centre. The activities of the local administrative organization were the activity of the liveable child-care centre, the beautiful Phoodinthong, the activity of the nice teenage development and the activity of good nutrition. When comparing the researching on the activities between the municipality and the local administrative organization, it was found that there were some similarities. As to the differences, they were the quantity, the frequency, time spent and the model of co-operative development. It was found that in the child-care centre affiliated within the municipality, there were more people participating in the activities, attending the activities more frequently having more time to do the research and the develop was more formal. Whereas the child-care centre in the local administrative organization looked simpler as it was the way of life of the people. This may be because of the area of the municipality is much larger. After the study, it was found that the confidence of the parents towards the child-care centres, the health behaviour of the child-carers and the child development were better increasingly in both areas. Also the analysis

of the child development in the child-care centres when compared to the related variables was found that the nutritional condition of the child at present was found to be statistically difference.

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