



BELIEFS AND EXPECTATIONS OF THAI TEACHERS AND PARENTS ABOUT IMPORTANT AREAS OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT*

Nittaya Passornsiri and Pusadee Kutintara**
Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, Thailand and
High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, Ypsilanti, Michigan, USA.
nittaya@hotmail.com

Abstract

The purposes of this research were to explore the beliefs of teachers and parents about important areas for young children's development, and to determine each group's expectations about the responsibilities of the other group.

Areas of child development were divided into eight skill areas: language skills, motor/physical skills, pre-academic skills, self-assessment skills, self-expression skills, self-sufficiency skills, social skills with adults, and social skills with peers.

The findings from the interviews of 53 teachers and 212 parents in 17 provinces of Thailand were as follows: (1) Teachers ranked *self-sufficiency skills*, *self-expression skills*,

.....

* This paper presents a part of Thailand Preprimary Project which is under the Preprimary Project of IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement). The study is the joint project of which the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation acted as the International Coordinating Center. The paper is reprinted from the International Yearbook of ICET (International Council on Education for Teaching).

** Researchers: Nittaya Passornsiri, Pusadee Kutintara, Prakairat Pattarathiti, Pornchan Suvannachati, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, and Tipsuda Sumethseni, Educational Official, Office of the Education Council, Thailand.



and *pre-academic skills* as the three most important skill categories. Parents agreed with teachers about the first two, but included *language skills* as the third category. Teachers' and the parents' rank-orderings of the 8 skill categories indicated high agreement. However, both had moderate agreement for sub-skills under various skill categories. (2) Teachers and parents did not view the major responsibilities of teachers similarly. However, there was some agreement between teachers and parents about the major responsibilities of parents.



Introduction

In Thailand, more than half of 4-year-old children attend early childhood programs (e.g., educational programs, child care centers). For the children who attend programs, both parents and teachers who care for them help to shape their future lives. It would therefore seem important to be aware of the beliefs and expectations of these two groups of adults concerning the young children's development in their care, and to explore each group's expectations about the responsibilities of the other group.

This research as one component of the IEA Preprimary Project (IEA/PPP), was conducted by early childhood researchers from 15 nations. The researchers divided young children's development into eight skill areas: language skills, motor/physical skills, preacademic skills, self-assessment skills, self-expression skills, self-sufficiency skills, social skills with adults, and social skills with peers. Appendix A presents brief descriptions of each of these skill categories and subskill categories. The group of researchers then developed interviews for both teachers and parents exploring their beliefs about the importance of these areas for young children's (D. P. Weikart: 1999, 7-10).

In Thailand, a total of 53 teachers and 212 parents from 17 provinces were asked to (1) rank the eight skill categories according to importance, (2) define the skill categories ranked as important, and (3) name which areas of children's development *teachers* are most responsible for and which areas *parents* are most responsible for. The teacher and parent expectations interviews were presented as follows.



1. Teacher and Parent Rankings of the Skill Categories

Each teacher and parent ranked the eight skill categories from 1 to 8 in order of importance, assigning the rank of 1 to the *most important* and the rank of 8 to the *least important* category. Aggregating the data across the group of teachers produces a mean rank score for each skill category. The mean rank score of a given area is calculated by finding the sum of the rank scores assigned by n respondents and then dividing the sum by n . Then, using the mean rank scores for teachers and for parents, a rank-ordering of the eight skill categories from *most important* to *least important* can be developed. The rank-orderings for teachers and parents in Thailand are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Teacher and parent ranks for the skill categories

Skill Category	Teacher Rank	Parent Rank
Self-sufficiency skills	1	1
Self-expression skills	2	2
Preacademic skills	3	5
Motor/Physical skills	4	7
Social skills with peers	5	4
Language skills	6	3
Social skills with adults	7	6
Self-assessment skills	8	8

Teachers named *self-sufficiency skills*, *self-expression skills*, and *preacademic skills* as the 3 most important areas of development for young children in Thailand. Parents agreed with teachers about the importance of the areas of *self-sufficiency skills* and *self-expression*



skills, but included *language skills* as the third member of their group of 3 most important categories. There was general agreement between the two groups of adults for many of the remaining areas of development (e.g., *social skills with adults*: teachers = #7, parents = #6).

How similar are the rank-orderings of teachers and parents? The degree of agreement (or congruence) was assessed by calculating the Spearman Rho correlation between the teachers' and the parents' rank-orderings of the 8 skill categories. A high correlation indicates that the rank-orderings of the two groups are similar and denotes high congruence. A low correlation indicates that the rank-orderings are different and denotes low congruence. The Spearman Rho correlation between the rank-orderings of the two groups in Thailand was $Rho = .71$ ($p < .05$), indicating high congruence or agreement. This result is confirmed by noting the similarity of the two rank-orderings in Table 1.

2. Teachers' and Parents' Definitions of the Skill Categories

To get a better understanding of the definition or "meaning" of the skill categories selected as most important, both teachers and parents were asked to select specific descriptions of the components from a list of 7-11 subskills. The same group of international researchers who developed the list of skill categories also constructed the subskill lists. Appendix A presents a listing of the subskills for each skill category.

For each of the 3 skill categories identified by a teacher or a parent as most important (that is, ranks 1, 2, or 3), the interviewer showed the respondent the list of subskills for that category and asked him or her to select the 2 subskills that he or she believes are very important for that area. The selections provide the answers to such questions as "How do



teachers and how do parents define the various areas of child development that they consider to be most important?" and "Are the definitions of the two groups similar or different?"

In order to present meaningful information from groups with a sufficient number of responses, data are reported only when at least 20% of teachers or parents ranked an area as 1 of the 3 most important. Although these percentages are not included in this report, 20% or more of teachers named all areas except *social skills with adults* and *self-assessment skills* as among the 3 most important, while 20% or more of parents designated all categories except *motor/physical skills* and *self-assessment skills* as such. Thus, subskill findings are presented for 6 skill categories for teachers and for parents.

Self-sufficiency skills -- The 11 subskills for this category focus on such things as the demonstration of general independence in a situation (e.g., dress him/herself, clean up after self); avoid danger; ask for help when needed; show persistence in task; and so forth.

Self-sufficiency skills - Two most important subskills

	<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Parents</u>
Most important	Attend to personal needs	Attend to personal needs
2nd most important	Keep things in order	Dress self

The teachers and parents agreed on the most important subskill (i.e., attend to personal needs). Although teachers and parents named a different subskill as the second most important subskill, both subskills focused on general independence.

Self-expression skills -- There are 8 subskills with this category. One major group of subskills includes those in which the child learns about the world through imaginative play



(e.g., role-play daily life scenes, to play imaginatively with toys). A second major group of subskills relates to music and the arts (e.g., sing songs, dance to music).

Self-Expression Skills - Two most important subskills

	<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Parents</u>
Most important	Manipulate sensory materials	Dance to music
2nd most important	Sing songs/rhymes	Manipulate sensory materials

Both groups of adults included 1 subskill focusing on the child learning about the world through imaginative play (e.g., manipulate sensory materials) and 1 subskill relating to music/arts.

Preacademic skills -- The 11 subskills for this skill category include recognition of object characteristics (e.g., shape, colors); recognition of written symbols (e.g., numerals, letters); counting; ability to attend in a learning environment; and understanding of cognitive concepts (e.g., space, time).

Preacademic Skills -- Two most important subskills

	<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Parents</u>
Most important	Recognize shapes, colors	Concentrate, focus attention
2nd most important	Manipulate small objects	Recognize numbers, letters

While teachers named 2 subskills related to the recognition of object characteristics, parents divided their 2 subskills between general ability to attend and recognition of object characteristics.



Motor/physical skills --As noted above, only subskills for teachers will be reported here because less than the minimum percentage (20%) of parents selected subskills for this category. The 9 subskills in this category include skills of locomotion (e.g., run, skip, jump); manipulation (e.g., throw, catch); and body balance exercises (e.g., do calisthenics routine).

Motor/physical Skills --Two most important subskills

	<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Parents</u>
Most important	Do calisthenics routine	
2nd most important	Use climbing equipment	

Teachers selected 1 subskill focusing on body movement (i.e., use climbing equipment) and 1 subskill focusing on body balance exercises.

Social skills with peers -- The 9 subskills in this category focus on evidence of emotional and social maturity as well as the ability to display skills for successful group participation. The subskills include the ability to cooperate (e.g., play cooperatively, share toys); be comfortable with others (e.g., initiate/form friendships); treat children with respect (e.g., correct mistake with peers); and to be helpful to others (e.g., offer help when needed, comfort child in distress).



Social Skills with Peers -- Two most important subskills

	<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Parents</u>
Most important	Share toys	Correct mistake with peer
2nd most important	Initiate/form friendships+	Initiate/form friendships+
	Correct mistake with peer+	Treat children with respect+

+ = tie

Because of equal percentages (tie), 3 subskills are reported for each group of adults. Teachers and parents agree on 2 of the 3 subskills (i.e., initiate/form friendships, correct mistake with peer). However, for the most important subskill, teachers selected 1 focusing on children's ability to cooperate (i.e., share toys), while parents' third subskill related to children's relationships with each other.

Language skills -- There are 9 subskills in this category including ones that focus on the use of language for communication and social interactions (e.g., to engage in conversation with peers and adults); for obtaining information (e.g., to ask questions when he/she is confused or curious); for conveying information (e.g., to describe an experience clearly); and for learning the correct use of language (e.g., to use new words properly).



Language Skills -- Two most important subskills

	<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Parents</u>
Most important	Engage in conversation	Pronounce words correctly
2nd most important	Pronounce words correctly	Engage in conversation

Teachers and parents agreed on the 2 most important subskills, including a subskill focused on the use of language for communication and a subskill related to the correct use of language.

Social skills with adults -- As noted above, only subskills for parents will be reported here because less than the minimum percentage (20%) of teachers selected subskills for this category. The 9 subskills for this category include skills that focus on children's ability to initiate and attend to discussions (e.g., initiate talks with adults, listen carefully to adults, follow directions); be polite and obedient; and demonstrate honesty and respectfulness.

Parents selected subskills that relate to children's obedience, honesty, and respectfulness.

Social Skills with Adults -- Two most important subskills

	<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Parents</u>
Most important		Correct mistake with adult
2nd most important		Listen carefully to adult+
		Treat adult respectfully+

.....

+ = tie



Self-Assessment skills -- As noted above, subskills for neither teachers nor parents will be reported here because less than a minimum percentage (20%) of each group selected subskills for this category. There are 7 subskills listed under this category. They include subskills that encourage the child's awareness and evaluation of himself or herself (e.g., have own ideas and opinions, feel good about self); ones that encourage risk-taking (e.g., dare to try new things); and ones that encourage judging the appropriateness of one's own behavior.

Self-Assessment Skills -- Two most important subskills

Teachers

Parents

Most important

2nd most important

In summary, the findings indicate that teachers and parents have moderate agreement in their definitions of the various skill categories. Of the 11 subskills listed (teachers and parents for 5 skill categories), the two groups agree on 6 subskills. On average, for each of the skill categories, there is agreement 1 of the 2 most important subskills.

3. Teachers' and Parents' Views of the Major Responsibilities of Each Group

Which skill categories do parents and teachers see as the major responsibility of teachers? Which categories do the two groups see as the major responsibilities of parents? Do teachers and parents agree in the way they assign responsibilities? Table 2 presents, for each skill category, the percentages of teachers and parents who consider the category as among the 3 most important responsibilities of teachers. The skill categories are listed in the table by decreasing teacher percentage and one can see that the parent percentages increase



and decrease throughout the listing. A majority of teachers name *social skills with peers*, *self-expression skills*, and *self-sufficiency skills* as a major responsibilities for themselves. The parent column shows that a majority of parents (63%) name only the *Language skills* category as a primary teacher responsibility. Overall agreement between the ranking of the teachers and that of the parents was assessed by calculating a Spearman Rho correlation. The correlation was $Rho = .70$ ($p > .05$), indicating that teachers and parents do not view the major responsibilities of teachers similarly.

Teachers and parents were also asked to identify the skill categories that were the major responsibilities of parents. Table 3 presents these findings and shows that, as with the teacher responsibilities, there is some agreement between teachers and parents about the major responsibilities of parents. For example, a majority of both teachers and parents named *self-sufficiency skills* and *social skills with adults* as primary responsibilities of parents. In addition, the smallest percentages of both teachers (8%) and parents (10%) identified *self-assessment skills* as a major responsibility of parents. The correlation between the teachers' ordering and the parents' ordering was $Rho = .63$ ($p > .05$), indicating that the orderings of parent responsibilities by the two groups of adults are significantly different. This correlation is understandable when one notes that other than



Table 2 Percentage of teachers and parents stating that each skill category is among the three most important responsibilities of teachers

Skill Category	Teacher Percentage	Parent Percentage
<i>Social skills with peers</i>	57	49
<i>Self-expression skills</i>	57	45
<i>Self-sufficiency skills</i>	57	34
<i>Language skills</i>	34	63
<i>Preacademic skills</i>	32	45
<i>Social skills with adults</i>	28	29
<i>Motor/physical skills</i>	26	8
<i>Self-assessment skills</i>	9	26

the agreement at the top and bottom of the listing, there are differences in the positioning for most of the other skill categories.

4. Summary

Teachers ranked *self-sufficiency skills*, *self-expression skills*, and *preacademic skills* as the most important skill categories, while parents ranked *self-sufficiency skills*, *self-expression skills*, and *language skills* as most important. There was congruence between the rank-order of teachers and that of parents. As for definitions of the various skill categories,



teachers and parents have moderate agreement in their definitions. In addition, teachers and parents have different views about the skill categories which are the major responsibilities of teachers but both have some agreement for parents' major responsibilities.

Table 3 Percentage of teachers and parents stating that each skill category is among the three most important responsibilities of parents

Skill Category	Teacher Percentage	Parent Percentage
Self-sufficiency skills	85	74
Social skills with adults	59	52
Language skills	42	27
Social skills with peers	38	24
Self-expression skills	32	34
Preacademic skills	23	34
Motor/physical skills	15	32
Self-assessment skills	8	10



5. Discussion

Teacher and parent beliefs and expectations are important. By understanding what teachers and parents beliefs regarding children's development, we might add to an understanding of children's developmental differences.

In addition, findings which arise from analyses of data from this part of the study bring to the next questions for further analyses. For examples, whether teachers' actions correspond with their beliefs. Do adults act on their views about what children should learn and about where responsibility lies? These will be revealed by next observations report conducted in early childhood settings and the videotape produced in connection with this study (High/ Scope International Videotape Series, 1994). The videotape showed selected teachers from Thailand (where preacademic skills are considered most important) in actual early childhood settings. In the videotape, teachers seem to devote less time to preacademic activities and to be less directive in their teaching.



Bibliography

High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. (1994). *Sights and sounds of children*, The High/Scope international videotape series.

High/ Scope Educational Research Foundation & Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University.

(1998). *The IEA Preprimary Project Thailand Phase 2 Study Findings*, a report prepared for The World Bank by the International Coordinating Center (High/ Scope Educational Research Foundation) and Nittaya Passornsiri, Pusadee Kutintara, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University.

Weikart,D.P. (Ed.). (1999). *What should young children learn? Teacher and parent views in 15 countries*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

Office of the National Education Commission, Thailand. (1999). *National Education Act, B.E. 2542 (1999)*, Bangkok, Thailand: Prig Wan Graphic Co., Ltd.



Appendix A Expectations questionnaire categories and subcategories

1. *Language skills* - Child learns to express his/her thoughts and feelings verbally in a clear and appropriate manner.
 - 1.01. To engage in conversation with peers and adults
 - 1.02. To pronounce words correctly
 - 1.03. To use new words properly
 - 1.04. To describe an experience clearly
 - 1.05. To ask questions when he/she is confused or curious
 - 1.06. To explain his/her point of view
 - 1.07. To retell stories or make up his/her own stories
 - 1.08. To answer questions about a story



- 1.09. To communicate his/her feelings in words

2. Motor/physical skills - Child improves his/her coordination, balance and agility through large-muscle activities.
 - 2.01. To run, skip, jump
 - 2.02. To throw, kick, hit, or catch a ball.
 - 2.03. To use a slide, swing, or climbing structure
 - 2.04. To ride a bike or other riding toy

 - 2.05. To balance on one leg
 - 2.06. To hop on one foot
 - 2.07. To do a somersault
 - 2.08. To exercise, do calisthenics, or follow a movement routine
 - 2.09. To play organized physical games (e.g., soccer, baseball, chasing games)

3. Preacademic skills - Child learns basic concepts, improves small-muscle coordination, and begins to master skills necessary for reading, writing, and arithmetic.
 - 3.01. To recognize shapes and colors
 - 3.02. To identify opposites
 - 3.03. To understand concepts of size and quantity
 - 3.04. To understand concepts of classification and seriation



- 3.05. To understand temporal and spatial relationships
- 3.06. To build with or manipulate small objects (e.g., legos, stringing beads, puzzles, etc.)
- 3.07. To copy numbers and letters/characters of the native language
- 3.08. To recognize numbers and letters/characters of the native language
- 3.09. To recognize his/her first name
- 3.10. To count from 1 to 10

- 3.11. To concentrate and focus his/her attention on a task or activity (e.g., to listen attentively to stories, to complete a worksheet)
4. Self-assessment skills - Child learns to assess his/her own abilities and behaviors, begins to take pride in his/her accomplishments, and develops a sense of self-confidence.
 - 4.01. To know which skills/activities he/she does well and which he/she could improve
 - 4.02. To learn to judge the appropriateness of his/her own behavior
 - 4.03. To have his/her own ideas and opinions
 - 4.04. To be aware of his/her own emotions and to feel comfortable expressing them appropriately
 - 4.05. To be proud of his/her work
 - 4.06. To feel good about him/herself
 - 4.07. To dare to try new things



ปีที่ 3 ฉบับที่ 2 กรกฎาคม - ธันวาคม 2556

5. Self-expression skills - Child learns to express him/herself creatively through arts and crafts, music, dance, and/or imaginative play.

5.01. To create a picture, design, or three-dimensional object with handicraft materials

5.02. To manipulate sensory materials (e.g., playdough, clay, sand, finger-paint)

5.03. To listen attentively to music

5.04. To create or imitate simple rhythms

5.05. To sing songs, rhymes, fingerplays

5.06. To dance to music

5.07. To play imaginatively with toys

5.08. To role-play daily life scenes with or without props (e.g., puppets, dolls, blocks, trucks, dress-up clothes)

6. Self-sufficiency skills - Child learns to be independent and to care for him/herself and his/her belongings in a responsible manner.

6.01. To play by him/herself

6.02. To dress him/herself

6.03. To attend to his/her personal needs (e.g., use the toilet, wash hands or face, brush teeth)

6.04. To clean or pick up after him/herself



- 6.05. To not lose or forget his/her belongings
 - 6.06. To learn to keep his/her things in order
 - 6.07. To ask for help when needed
 - 6.08. To show persistence in a task or activity and to finish what he/she begins
 - 6.09. To eat what is good for his/her health
 - 6.10. To know how to use a telephone properly

 - 6.11. To recognize and avoid dangerous behaviors, objects, and products in the environment
7. Social skills with adults - Child learns to listen to, cooperate with, and respect adults.
- 7.01. To initiate interactions with adults
 - 7.02. To be quiet when asked
 - 7.03. To be polite
 - 7.04. To listen carefully to adults
 - 7.05. To be cooperative with adults
 - 7.06. To follow directions
 - 7.07. To correct his/her mistake with an adult (e.g., to admit when he/she is wrong, to

