

# Early Childhood Learning Development Support through the Participation of School and Community

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**Abstract.** This study aims to examine social capital, a factor to support learning development, and formats of early childhood learning development support through the participation of school and community. The study was conducted on 22 children aged between 0-5 years. Participants in the study comprised teachers, students, community leaders, village health volunteers and local scholars, totaling 30 persons. The tools used in this study consisted of arrangements for a community forum, observation, interview, group discussion and charts depicting the development or sequences of events. Data was analyzed using content analysis. The research findings revealed that: 1) As a factor supporting learning development, it was found that social capital, in terms of a learning resource, included local scholars, school, temple, and social capital, in terms of a learning process, included stories, lullabies, and knowledge of making toys for children 2) Formats of early childhood learning development support through participation of school and community included “learning support through playing activity, storytelling and book reading for children.” These three activities were combined and carried out at family and community levels under the key condition that they must be in accord with the context of each family, and must be stimulated, followed up, discussed and exchanged on a regular basis among all related parties.

**Keywords:** Early childhood, Learning development, Participation

## 1. Introduction

Early childhood is the most significant period of life. It is the basis of physical, emotional, social and intellectual development and is also the most important and suitable time for building a foundation to elevate the development of life quality. Children under this age consequently need to be brought up in the best way and should be valued in terms of their bodies and minds so that all areas of their development can be promoted and stimulated to fulfil their potential. Educators in all fields across the world, therefore, place importance and pay attention to development in early childhood (0-6 years). They believe that learning during this period has a long-term impact on the life quality of human beings because it is the time of fastest growth and the most rapid development in the human brain (Office of the Education Council 2009: 6) and a time when the brain structure, intellect, emotion, virtue and belief of an individual is being formed. [Therefore, this period of time was very important]. Child rearing and the environment provided for children under this age was considered an urgent issue in education for the formation of social quality (Wasi, 1995).

## 2. Problem statements

Problems incurred in the community relating to early childhood in terms of emotional development, found that many children in early childhood were aggressive, spoiled, agitated, and acted violently. Some had slower development than normal, particularly in their language and social skills. Moreover, it was found that most parents did not read stories or books to their children because they thought that their children were too young to understand. In fact, holding, talking, singing, and reading books to children, whether correct or incorrect, could help to stimulate the brain and emotional development of all children. It has tremendous power in helping children to love reading and learning, and to be interested in language, vocabulary, and have ideas and imagination. Most importantly, children will realize that parents recognize their importance and they will feel the warmth as they are being hugged and touched, creating bonding and mental stability, which is the cornerstone of their future. This research aimed to apply concepts of learning support,

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socialization and social capital through the participation of school and community with the goal of allowing all parties involved to jointly support and develop learning, a key foundation for children in early childhood.

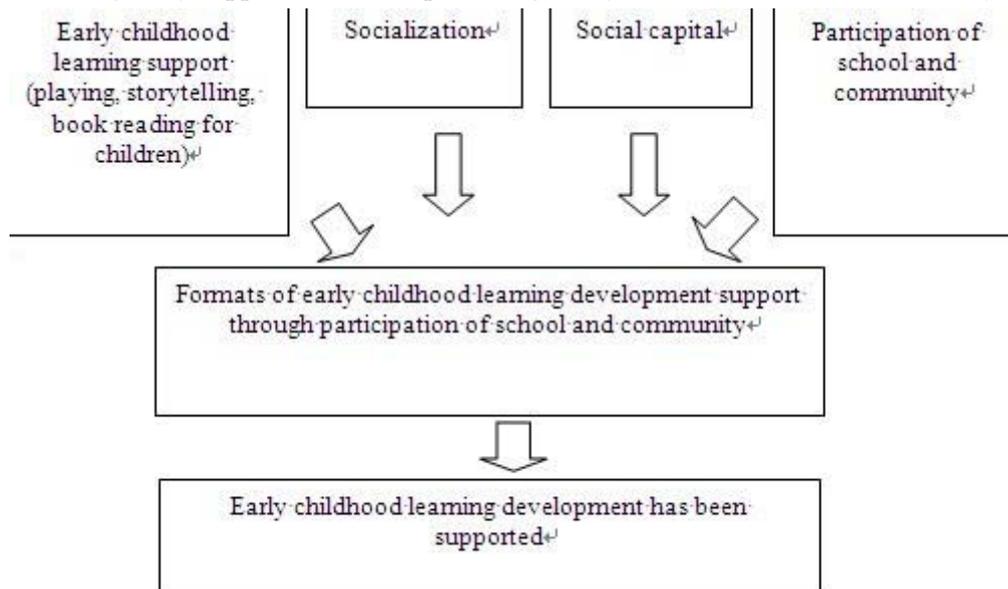


Table1. Early Childhood Learning Development

### 3. Objective

- To examine social capital as a factor to support learning development
- To examine formats of early childhood learning development support through the participation of school and community

### 4. Conceptual Framework

In studying early childhood learning development support through the participation of school and community, the researcher used a conceptual framework including concepts of learning support, socialization and social capital through participation as follows:

#### 4.1. Research Methodology

This was a qualitative research study, conducted on 22 children between the ages of 0-5 years. Those participating in the study comprised teachers, students, community leaders, village health volunteers and local scholars, totalling 30 persons. The tools used in this study consisted of the arrangement of a community forum, observation, interview, group discussion and a chart depicting development or sequences of events. The data was analyzed using content analysis.

#### 4.2. Research Results

1) Regarding social capital as a factor supporting learning development, it was found that there was social capital in terms of learning resource and learning process as follows:

1.1 Social capital relating to learning source was as follows:

1.1.1 Local scholars; a variety of local scholar were available to support children's learning

1.1.2 School; school was very important for the community because it was the source of the children's learning. Local scholars were also available to pass on knowledge to children and young people. Mr. Sa-ard Naowarat, Director of Saen Samran Village School was a key person who propelled several activities in the school and community.

1.1.3 Temple; temple was a religious venue used to purify the hearts of people of all ages, and had a center for people in the community both past to present. Luang Pu Khamdee Chanto was a revered monk who had led the villagers to establish this village

1.2 Social capital relating to learning process was as follows:

1.2.1 Stories were important local wisdom that supported children's learning. Storytelling was one of the methods to create love, closeness, fun and learning in various areas.

1.2.2 Lullabies were another field of local wisdom that was melodious. Rhythm and tone when singing lullabies allowed children to learn about love, warmth, care, concern and the goodwill of parents.

1.2.3 Knowledge in making toys for children; playing with toys in traditional ways was considered as local wisdom that local scholars and parents who had expertise in this area jointly passed on to parents and children to support the children's learning through play.

Social capital in the community was brainstormed by all parties involved in order to support early childhood learning development using ways that were most efficient and suitable in the community's context, the goal of "seeing children become proficient, virtuous and ethical". There was a common conclusion that available resources in the community should be used, for instance storytelling and playing in combination with book reading for children, which would lead to a child development supporting process in the following chronological order:

- Operational planning.
- Dividing responsible target groups.
- Supporting early childhood development at family level by taking into consideration the convenience and difficulty for each family. For the community overall, activities should be jointly arranged each month.
- Stimulating, following up and preparing lessons for each family, organizing parents' meetings, research team meetings, and parent and research team meetings.
- Reflecting overall achievement in order to assess activities being jointly organized whether they had been done as expected or not; bringing problems, obstacles and suggestions into operational planning process in order to adjust them so they are suitable and in accord with family and community's context as much as possible

2) Formats of early childhood learning development support through participation of school and community were "learning support through playing, storytelling and reading activities for children." It was a combination of three activities being done in family and community levels having following characteristics:

2.1 Learning support through playing activity being carried out in overall image of community.

2.2 Learning support through three types of stories including story being composed by parents, story being composed from picture book, and story being heard of or read about.

2.3 Learning support through book reading for children. It was found that book reading format that children liked was to read with different tones based on pattern of sounds or movements, and use storytelling style instead of reading. Most favorite picture books for children were "poetry books for children".

In this regard, formats in supporting children's learning, either by playing, storytelling or book reading, must be undertaken with the key condition that they are in accord with the context of each family, and must be stimulated, followed up, discussed and exchanged on a regular basis among all related parties. The result of learning support using "playing, storytelling and book reading for children" through the participation of school and community had the following impacts on children, family, community and school:

- Children's development in various areas such as physical, emotional and mental, as well as their emotional quotient, social intelligence, intellect, language, concentration, imagination and moral ethics have improved
- Families and the community had created a warm and loving environment in the family, good relationships between people, a learning based society, and a positive attitude towards reading
- School had integrated learning support for children in both early childhood and school-age years

## 5. Discussion

From learning support using "playing, storytelling and book reading for children" through participation of school and community, the researcher suggested a discussion on the results affecting children, the family, the community and school as for example, Children, which result on development in various areas as follows:

## **5.1. Physical**

Playing that had positive impact on physical development included wheel rolling, riding a horse made from a banana tree and weaving a bird, wristwatch and ball from a coconut leaf. Storytelling and book reading had promoted activities and prepped children in early childhood through the development of small muscles as they practiced their skills when drawing, painting, cutting paper or copying book images. This was in accord with Thanapattanakul et al. (2008) and the Office of the Education Council (2009), who stated that books were an important process for language, physical, emotional and mental development. Moreover, while children were playing, their bodies had to move. Playing allowed children to use their strength, so their muscles became stronger. Children who had the opportunity to play and pick up toys using their fingers and hands will have strengthened the small muscles of the hands and fingers.

## **5.2. Mental and emotional quotient (EQ)**

It was found that while playing, children had fun, became cheerful and were in good temper. It was also found that reading books to children affected their emotional and mental development through the content and behavior of story characters. For example, a book called “Missing Moon” had content about sharing and learning how to live happily with other people and a book called “Ivy Gourd along the Fence and a Baby Elephant” introduced the good habits, unaggressive behavior, gentleness and character of good children. Parents commented that both children and adults felt happiness and warm-hearted feelings from reading these books; even though it was in abstract character they were able to feel it by observing behavior, spoken words and expressions of their children, as well as in emotional and mental development, and emotional quotient (EQ). This was in accord with Phonkhaw et al. (2009), Bureau of Health Promotion, Department of Health (2003), Khoo (2007), Office of the Education Council (2009), and Pinpratheep (2009), who stated that playing allowed children to learn how to forgive, apologize, be compassionate, have good temper, be cheerful and calm, and that books allowed emotional and mental development in children.

## **5.3. Intellectual development**

This can be developed through observation and the trial-and-error learning of children while they were playing toys with the natural curiosity of children. For example, three 4-year-old boys, learnt how to weave wristwatches from coconut leaves, and make guns and swords from banana tree from local scholars, which helped to support their intellectual development. This was in accord with Laohanpensand (2003) Khoo (2007), Thanapattanakul et al. (2008), Liawpenwong (2009) and Office of the Education Council (2009), who stated that toys were a medium for forming unlimited imagination, encouraging problem-solving and creativity, and serving as a fun learning process and intellectual training.

## **5.4. Imagination**

Even though imagination has abstract nature, we can observe it when children think and ask questions about stories that have been told or read to them. It was found that playing either alone or in a group, the children normally supposed or imagined incidents from stories or books they had heard, and then combined them into play. Mr. Arak Srichan, who had a 4-year-old nephew, mentioned that his nephew “liked to draw, paint, imagine things and speak while playing and drawing”, this was consistent with Thanapattanakul et al. (2008), who stated that “playing had imagination”.

## **5.5. Moral ethics**

Storytelling and book reading to children with a content that virtues or consideration points which would instill goodness in children such as generosity, kindness, through characters in fun stories. This can be seen from part of parents’ comments. For example, one parent stated that her child “knows what is good or what is bad.” This is in accord with Rumas (2002), who conducted a study on storytelling activities for the development of ethical and moral characteristics in which it was found that storytelling can develop models for children to learn behaviors that manifest ethical and moral characteristics.

## **6. Conclusion**

Early childhood learning development support through the participation of school and community was a joint operation and learning procedure for all parties involved through key processes as follows: 1) planning

the operation together; 2) dividing responsible target groups by the research team; 3) supporting early childhood development at family and community levels; 4) stimulating, following up and preparing lessons; 5) reflecting overall achievement. Format used in the operation included “learning support through playing activity, storytelling and book reading for children”. These three activities were combined and undertaken at family and community levels under the key condition that they must be in accord with the context of each family, and must be stimulated, followed up, discussed and exchanged on a regular basis among all related parties. The operation’s achievement resulted in improved child development in various areas, a warm and loving environment in the family, good relationships in the community, a learning based society, a positive attitude toward reading, and the integration of learning support for children in both early childhood and school-age years by the school.

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